"Methinks the youth speaks well and reasonably," said Wilkin Flammock. "Let us e'en make a grace of surrendering his body up to the King, and assure thereby such terms as we can for ourselves and the lady, ere the last morsel of our provision is consumed."

"I would hardly have proposed this measure," said, or rather mumbled, Father Aldrovand, who had recently lost four of his front teeth by a stone from a sling,—"yet, being so generously offered by the party principally concerned, I hold with the learned scholiast, *Volenti non fit injuria*."

"Priest and Fleming," said the old bannerman, Ralph Genvil, "I see how the wind stirreth you; but you deceive yourselves if you think to make our young master, Sir Damian, a scapegoat for your light lady.—Nay, never frown nor fume, Sir Damian; if you know not your safest course, we know it for you.—Followers of De Lacy, throw yourselves on your horses, and two men on one, if it be necessary—we will take this stubborn boy in the midst of us, and the dainty squire Amelot shall be prisoner too, if he trouble us with his peevish opposition. Then let us make a fair sally upon the siegers. Those who can cut their way through will shift well enough; those who fall will be provided for."

A shout from the troopers of Lacy's band approved this proposal. Whilst the followers of Berenger expostulated in loud and angry tone, Eveline, summoned by the tumult, in vain endeavored to appease it; and the anger and entreaties of Damian were equally lost on his followers. To each and either the answer was the same.

"Have you no care of it—Because you love *par amours*, is it reasonable you should throw away your life and ours?" So exclaimed Genvil to De Lacy; and in softer language, but with equal obstinacy, the followers of Raymond Berenger refused on the present occasion to listen to the commands or prayers of his daughter.

Wilkin Flammock had retreated from the tumult, when he saw the turn which matters had taken. He left the castle by a sally-port, of which he had been intrusted with the key, and proceeded without observation or opposition to the royal camp, where he requested access to the Sovereign. This was easily obtained, and Wilkin speedily found himself in the presence of King Henry. The monarch was in his royal pavilion, attended by two of his sons, Richard and John, who afterwards swayed the sceptre of England with very different auspices.

"How now?—What art thou?" was the royal question.

"An honest man, from the castle of the Garde Doloureuse."

"Thou may'st be honest," replied the Sovereign, "but thou comest from a nest of traitors."

"Such as they are, my lord, it is my purpose to put them at your royal disposal; for they have no longer the wisdom to guide themselves, and lack alike prudence to hold out, and grace to submit. But I would first know of your grace to what terms you will admit the defenders of yonder garrison?"

"To such as kings give to traitors," said Henry, sternly,—"sharp knives and tough cords."

"Nay, my gracious lord, you must be kinder than that amounts to, if the castle is to be rendered by my means; else will your cords and knives have only my poor body to work upon, and you will be as far as ever from the inside of the Garde Doloureuse."

The King looked at him fixedly. "Thou knowest," he said, "the law of arms.—Here, provost-marshal, stands a traitor, and yonder stands a tree."

"And here is a throat," said the stout-hearted Fleming, unbuttoning the collar of his doublet.

"By mine honor," said Prince Richard, "a sturdy and faithful yeoman! It were better send such fellows their dinner, and then buffet it out with them for the castle, than to starve them as the beggarly Frenchmen famish their hounds."

"Peace, Richard," said his father; "thy wit is over green, and thy blood over hot, to make thee my counsellor here.—And you, knave, speak you some reasonable terms, and we will not be over strict with thee."

"First, then," said the Fleming, "I stipulate full and free pardon for life, limb, body, and goods, to me, Wilkin Flammock, and my daughter Rose."

"A true Fleming," said Prince John; "he takes care of himself in the first instance."

"His request," said the King, "is reasonable. What next?"

"Safety in life, honor, and land, for the demoiselle Eveline Berenger."

"How, sir knave!" said the King, angrily, "is it for such as thou to dictate to our judgment or clemency in the case of a noble Norman lady? Confine thy mediation to such as thyself; or rather render us this castle without further delay; and be assured thy doing so will be of more service to the traitors within, than weeks more of resistance, which must and shall be bootless."

The Fleming stood silent, unwilling to surrender without some specific terms, yet half convinced, from the situation in which he had left the garrison of the Garde Doloureuse, that his admitting the King's forces would be, perhaps, the best he could do for Lady Eveline.

"I like thy fidelity, fellow," said the King, whose acute eye perceived the struggle in the Fleming's bosom; "but carry not thy stubbornness too far. Have we not said we will be gracious to yonder offenders, as far as our royal duty will permit?"

"And, royal father," said Prince John, interposing, "I pray you let me have the grace to take first possession of the Garde Doloureuse, and the wardship or forfeiture of the offending lady."

"*I* pray you also, my royal father, to grant John's boon," said his brother Richard, in a tone

of mockery. "Consider, royal father, it is the first desire he hath shown to approach the barriers of the castle, though we have attacked them forty times at least. Marry, crossbow and mangonel were busy on the former occasions, and it is like they will be silent now."

"Peace, Richard," said the King; "your words, aimed at thy brother's honor, pierce my heart.—John, thou hast thy boon as concerns the castle; for this unhappy young lady, we will take her in our own charge.—Fleming, how many men wilt thou undertake to admit?"

Ere Flammock could answer, a squire approached Prince Richard, and whispered in his ear, yet so as to be heard by all present, "We have discovered that some internal disturbance, or other cause unknown, has withdrawn many of the warders from the castle walls, and that a sudden attack might——"

"Dost thou hear that, John?" exclaimed Richard. "Ladders, man—get ladders, and to the wall. How I should delight to see thee on the highest round—thy knees shaking—thy hands grasping convulsively, like those of one in an ague fit—all air around thee, save a baton or two of wood—the moat below—half-a-dozen pikes at thy throat——"

"Peace, Richard, for shame, if not for charity!" said his father, in a tone of anger, mingled with grief.—"And thou, John, get ready for the assault."

"As soon as I have put on my armor, father," answered the Prince; and withdrew slowly, with a visage so blank as to promise no speed in his preparations.

His brother laughed as he retired, and said to his squire, "It were no bad jest, Alberick, to carry the place ere John can change his silk doublet for a steel one."

So saying, he hastily withdrew, and his father exclaimed in paternal distress, "Out, alas! as much too hot as his brother is too cold; but it is the manlier fault.—Gloucester," said he to that celebrated earl, "take sufficient strength, and follow Prince Richard to guard and sustain him. If any one can rule him, it must be a knight of thy established fame. Alas, alas! for what sin have I deserved the affliction of these cruel family feuds!"

"Be comforted, my lord," said the chancellor, who was also in attendance.

"Speak not of comfort to a father, whose sons are at discord with each other, and agree only in their disobedience to him!"

Thus spoke Henry the Second, than whom no wiser, or, generally speaking, more fortunate monarch ever sat upon the throne of England; yet whose life is a striking illustration, how family dissensions can tarnish the most brilliant lot to which Heaven permits humanity to aspire; and how little gratified ambition, extended power, and the highest reputation in war and in peace, can do towards curing the wounds of domestic affliction.

The sudden and fiery attack of Richard, who hastened to the escalade at the head of a score of followers, collected at random, had the complete effect of surprise; and having surmounted the walls with their ladders, before the contending parties within were almost aware of the assault, the assailants burst open the gates, and admitted Gloucester, who had hastily followed with a strong body of men-at-arms. The garrison, in their state of surprise, confusion, and disunion, offered but little resistance, and would have been put to the sword, and the place plundered, had not Henry himself entered it, and by his personal exertions and authority, restrained the excesses of the dissolute soldiery.

The King conducted himself, considering the times and the provocation, with laudable moderation. He contented himself with disarming and dismissing the common soldiers, giving them some trifle to carry them out of the country, lest want should lead them to form themselves into bands of robbers. The officers were more severely treated, being for the greater part thrown into dungeons, to abide the course of the law. In particular, imprisonment was the lot of Damian de Lacy, against whom, believing the various charges with which he was loaded, Henry was so highly incensed, that he purposed to make him an example to all false knights and disloyal subjects. To the Lady Eveline Berenger he assigned her own apartment as a prison, in which she was honorably attended by Rose and Alice, but guarded with the utmost strictness. It was generally reported that her demesnes would be declared a forfeiture to the crown, and bestowed, at least in part, upon Randal de Lacy, who had done good service during the siege. Her person, it was thought, was destined to the seclusion of some distant French nunnery, where she might at leisure repent her of her follies and her rashness.

Father Aldrovand was delivered up to the discipline of his convent, long experience having very effectually taught Henry the imprudence of infringing on the privileges of the church; although, when the King first beheld him with a rusty corslet clasped over his frock, he with difficulty repressed the desire to cause him to be hanged over the battlements, to preach to the ravens.

With Wilkin Flammock, Henry held much conference, particularly on the subject of manufactures and commerce; on which the sound-headed, though blunt-spoken Fleming, was well qualified to instruct an intelligent monarch. "Thy intentions," he said, "shall not be forgotten, good fellow, though they have been anticipated by the headlong valor of my son Richard, which has cost some poor caitiffs their lives—Richard loves not to sheathe a bloodless weapon. But thou and thy countrymen shall return to thy mills yonder, with a full pardon for past offences, so that you meddle no more with such treasonable matters.'

"And our privileges and duties, my liege?

said Flammock. "Your Majesty knows well we are vassals to the lord of this castle, and must follow him in battle."

"It shall no longer be so," said Henry; "I will form a community of Flemings here, and thou, Flammock, shalt be Mayor, that thou may'st not plead feudal obedience for a relapse into treason."

"Treason, my liege!" said Flammock, longing, yet scarce venturing, to interpose a word in behalf of Lady Eveline, for whom, despite the constitutional coolness of his temperament, he really felt much interest—"I would that your Grace but justly knew how many threads went to that woof."

"Peace, sirrah!—meddle with your loom," said Henry; "and if we deign to speak to thee concerning the mechanical arts which thou dost profess, take it for no warrant to intrude farther on our privacy."

The Fleming retired, rebuked, and in silence; and the fate of the unhappy prisoners remained in the King's bosom. He himself took up his lodging in the castle of the Garde Doloureuse, as a convenient station for sending abroad parties to suppress and extinguish all the embers of rebellion; and so active was Randal de Lacy on these occasions, that he appeared daily to rise in the King's grace, and was gratified with considerable grants out of the domains of Berenger and Lacy, which the King seemed already to treat as forfeited property. Most men considered this growing favor of Randal as a perilous omen, both for the life of young De Lacy, and for the fate of the unfortunate Eveline.

CHAPTER XXX.

A vow, a vow—I have a vow in Heaven,
Shall I bring perjury upon my soul?
No, not for Venice.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE conclusion of the last chapter contains the tidings with which the minstrel greeted his unhappy master, Hugo de Lacy; not indeed with the same detail of circumstances with which we have been able to invest the narrative, but so as to infer the general and appalling facts, that his betrothed bride, and beloved and trusted kinsman, had leagued together for his dishonor—had raised the banner of rebellion against their lawful sovereign, and failing in their audacious attempt, had brought the life of one of them, at least, into the most imminent danger, and the fortunes of the House of Lacy, unless some instant remedy could be found, to the very verge of ruin.

Vidal marked the countenance of his master as he spoke, with the same keen observation which the chirurgeon gives to the progress of his dissecting-knife. There was grief on the Constable's features—deep grief—but without the expression of abasement or prostration which usually accompanies it; anger and shame were there—but they were both of a noble character seemingly excited by his bride and nephew's transgressing the laws of allegiance, honor, and virtue, rather than by the disgrace and damage which he himself sustained through their crime.

The minstrel was so much astonished at this change of deportment, from the sensitive acuteness of agony which attended the beginning of his narrative, that he stepped back two paces, and gazing on the Constable with wonder, mixed with admiration, exclaimed, "We have heard of martyrs in Palestine, but this exceeds them!"

"Wonder not so much, good friend," said the Constable patiently; "it is the first blow of the lance or mace which pierces or stuns—those which follow are little felt."*

"Think, my lord," said Vidal, "all is lost—love, dominion, high office, and bright fame—so late a chief among nobles, now a poor palmer!"

"Wouldst thou make sport with my misery?" said Hugo, sternly; "but even that comes of course behind my back, and why should it not be endured when said to my face?—Know, then, minstrel, and put it in song if you list, that Hugo de Lacy, having lost all he carried to Palestine, and all which he left at home, is still lord of his own mind; and adversity can no more shake him, than the breeze which strips the oak of its leaves can tear up the trunk by the roots."

"Now, by the tomb of my father," said the minstrel, rapturously, "this man's nobleness is too much for my resolve!" and stepping hastily to the Constable, he kneeled on one knee, and caught his hand more freely than the state maintained by men of De Lacy's rank usually permitted.

"Here," said Vidal, "on this hand—this noble hand—I renounce——"

But ere he could utter another word, Hugo de Lacy, who, perhaps, felt the freedom of the action as an intrusion on his fallen condition, pulled back his hand, and bid the minstrel, with a stern frown, arise, and remember that misfortune made not De Lacy a fit personage for a mummery.

Renault Vidal rose rebuked. "I had forgot," he said, "the distance between an Armorican violer and a high Norman baron. I thought that the same depth of sorrow, the same burst of joy, levelled, for a moment at least, those artificial barriers by which men are divided. But it is

* Such an expression is said to have been used by Mandrin the celebrated smuggler, while in the act of being broken upon the wheel. This dreadful punishment consists in the executioner, with a bar of iron, breaking the shoulder-bones, arms, thigh-bones, and legs of the criminal, taking his alternate sides. The punishment is concluded by a blow across the breast, called the *coup de grace*, because it removes the sufferer from his agony. When Mandrin received the second blow over the left shoulder-bone, he laughed. His confessor inquired the reason of demeanor so unbecoming his situation. "I only laugh at my own folly, my father," answered Mandrin, "who could suppose that sensibility of pain should continue after the nervous system had been completely deranged by the first blow."

well as it is. Live within the limits of your rank, as heretofore within your donjon tower and your fosses, my lord, undisturbed by the sympathy of any mean man like me. I, too, have my duties to discharge."

"And now to the Garde Doloureuse," said the baron, turning to Philip Guarine—"God knoweth how well it deserveth the name!—there to learn, with our own eyes and ears, the truth of these woeful tidings.—Dismount, minstrel, and give me thy palfrey—I would, Guarine, that I had one for thee—as for Vidal, his attendance is less necessary. I will face my foes, or my misfortunes like a man—that be assured of, violer; and look not so sullen, knave—I will not forget old adherents."

"One of them, at least, will not forget you, my lord," replied the minstrel, with his usual dubious tone of look and emphasis.

But just as the Constable was about to prick forwards, two persons appeared on the path, mounted on one horse, who, hidden by some dwarf-wood, had come very near them without being perceived. They were male and female; and the man, who rode foremost, was such a picture of famine, as the eyes of the pilgrims had scarce witnessed in all the wasted lands through which they had travelled. His features, naturally sharp and thin, had disappeared almost entirely among the uncombed gray beard and hairs with which they were overshadowed; and it was but the glimpse of a long nose, that seemed as sharp as the edge of a knife, and the twinkling glimpse of his gray eyes, which gave any intimation of his lineaments. His leg, in the wide old boot which enclosed it, looked like the handle of a mop left by chance in a pail—his arms were about the thickness of riding-rods—and such parts of his person as were not concealed by the tatters of a huntsman's cassock, seemed rather the appendages of a mummy than a live man.

The female who sat behind this spectre exhibited also some symptoms of extenuation; but being a brave jolly dame naturally, famine had not been able to render her a spectacle so rueful as the anatomy behind which she rode. Dame Gillian's cheek (for it was the reader's old acquaintance) had indeed lost the rosy hue of good cheer, and the smoothness of complexion which art and easy living had formerly substituted for the more delicate bloom of youth; her eyes were sunken, and had lost much of their bold and roguish lustre; but she was still in some measure herself, and the remnants of former finery, together with the tight-drawn scarlet hose, though sorely faded, showed still a remnant of coquettish pretension.

So soon as she came within sight of the pilgrims, she began to punch Raoul with the end of her riding-rod. "Try thy new trade, man, since thou art unfit for any other—to the good men—to them—crave their charity."

"Beg from beggars?" muttered Raoul; "that were hawking at sparrows, dame."

"It will bring our hand in use, though," said Gillian; and commenced, in a whining tone, "God love you, holy men, who have had the grace to go to the Holy Land, and, what is more, have had the grace to come back again; I pray, bestow some of your alms upon my poor old husband, who is a miserable object, as you see, and upon one who has the bad luck to be his wife—Heaven help me!"

"Peace, woman, and hear what I have to say," said the Constable, laying his hand upon the bridle of the horse—"I have present occasion for that horse, and——"

"By the hunting-horn of Saint Hubert, but thou gettest him not without blows!" answered the old huntsman. "A fine world it is, when palmers turn horse-stealers."

"Peace, fellow!" said the Constable, sternly,—"I say I have occasion presently for the service of thy horse. Here be two gold bezants for a day's use of the brute; it is well worth the fee-simple of him, were he never returned."

"But the palfrey is an old acquaintance, master," said Raoul; "and if perchance——"

"Out upon *if* and *perchance* both," said the dame, giving her husband so determined a thrust as well-nigh pushed him out of the saddle. "Off the horse! and thank God and this worthy man for the help he has sent us in extremity. What signifies the palfrey, when we have not enough to get food either for the brute or ourselves? not though we would eat grass and corn with him, like King Somebody, whom the good father used to read us to sleep about."

"A truce with your prating, dame," said Raoul, offering his assistance to help her from the croupe; but she preferred that of Guarine, who, though advanced in years, retained the advantage of his stout soldierly figure.

"I humbly thank your goodness," said she, as (having first kissed her) the squire set her on the ground. "And, pray, sir, are ye come from the Holy Land?—Heard ye any tidings there of him that was Constable of Chester?"

De Lacy, who was engaged in removing the pillion from behind the saddle, stopped short in his task, and said, "Ha, dame! what would you with him?"

"A great deal, good palmer, and I could light on him; for his lands and offices are all to be given, it's like, to that false thief, his kinsman."

"What!—to Damian, his nephew?" exclaimed the Constable, in a harsh and hasty tone.

"Lord, how you startle me, sir!" said Gillian; then continued, turning to Philip Guarine, "Your friend is a hasty man, belike."

"It is the fault of the sun he has lived under so long," said the squire; "but look you answer his questions truly, and he will make it the better for you."

Gillian instantly took the hint. "Was it Damian de Lacy you asked after?—Alas! poor young gentleman! no offices or lands for him—

more likely to have a gallows-cast, poor lad—and all for nought as I am a true dame. Damian!—no, no, it is not Damian, nor damson neither—but Randal Lacy, that must rule the roast, and have all the old man's lands, and livings, and lordships."

"What?" said the Constable—"before they know whether the old man is dead or no?—Methinks that were against law and reason both."

"Ay, but Randal Lacy has brought about less likely matters. Look you, he hath sworn to the King that they have true tidings of the Constable's death—ay, and let him alone to make them soothfast enough, if the Constable were once within his danger."

"Indeed!" said the Constable. "But you are forging tales on a noble gentleman. Come, come, dame, you say this because you like not Randal Lacy."

"Like him not!—And what reason have I to like him, I trow?" answered Gillian. "Is it because he seduced my simplicity to let him into the castle of the Garde Doloureuse—ay, oftener than once or twice either,—when he was disguised as a pedlar, and told him all the secrets of the family, and how the boy Damian, and the girl Eveline, were dying of love with each other, but had not courage to say a word of it, for fear of the Constable, though he were a thousand miles off?—You seem concerned, worthy sir—may I offer your reverend worship a trifling sup from my bottle, which is sovereign for *tremor cordis*, and fits of the spleen?"

"No, no," ejaculated De Lacy—"I was but grieved with the shooting of an old wound. But, dame, I warrant me this Damian and Eveline, as you call them, became better, closer friends in time?"

"They!—not they indeed, poor simpletons!" answered the dame; "they wanted some wise counsellor to go between and advise them. For, look you, sir, if old Hugo be dead, as is most like, it were more natural that his bride and his nephew should inherit his lands, than this same Randal, who is but a distant kinsman, and a foresworn caitiff to boot.—Would you think it, reverend pilgrim, after the mountains of gold he promised me?—when the castle was taken, and he saw I could serve him no more, he called me old beldame, and spoke of the beadle and cucking-stool.—Yes, reverend sir, old beldame and cucking-stool were his best words, when he knew I had no one to take my part, save old Raoul, who cannot take his own. But if grim old Hugh bring back his weatherbeaten carcass from Palestine, and have but half the devil in him which he had when he was fool enough to go away, Saint Mary, but I will do his kinsman's office to him!"

There was a pause when she had done speaking.

"Thou say'st," at length exclaimed the Constable, "that Damian de Lacy and Eveline love each other, yet are unconscious of guilt, or falsehood, or ingratitude to me—I would say, to their relative in Palestine?"

"Love, sir!—in troth and so it is—they do love each other," said Gillian; "but it is like angels—or like lambs—or like fools, if you will; for they would never so much as have spoken together, but for a prank of that same Randal Lacy's."

"How!" demanded the Constable—"a prank of Randal's?—What motive had he that these two should meet?"

"Nay, their meeting was none of his seeking; but he had formed a plan to carry off the Lady Eveline himself, for he was a wild rover, this same Randal; and so he came disguised as a merchant of falcons, and trained out my old stupid Raoul, and the lady Eveline, and all of us, as if to have an hour's mirth in hawking at the heron. But he had a band of Welsh kites in readiness to pounce upon us; and but for the sudden making in of Damian to our rescue, it is undescribable to think what might have come of us; and Damian being hurt in the onslaught, was carried to the Garde Doloureuse in mere necessity; and but to save his life, it is my belief my lady would never have asked him to cross the drawbridge, even if he had offered."

"Woman," said the Constable, "think what thou say'st! If thou hast done evil in these matters heretofore, as I suspect from thine own story, think not to put it right by a train of new falsehoods, merely from spite at missing thy reward."

"Palmer," said old Raoul, with his broken-toned voice, cracked by many a hallo, "I am wont to leave the business of tale-bearing to my wife Gillian, who will tongue-pad it with any shrew in Christendom. But thou speak'st like one having some interest in these matters, and therefore I will tell thee plainly, that although this woman has published her own shame in avowing her correspondence with that same Randal Lacy, yet what she has said is true as the gospel; and, were it my last word, I would say that Damian and the Lady Eveline are innocent of all treason and all dishonesty, as is the babe unborn.—But what avails what the like of us say, who are even driven to the very begging for mere support, after having lived at a good house, and in a good lord's service—blessing be with him!"

"But hark you," continued the Constable, "are there left no ancient servants of the house, that could speak out as well as you?"

"Humph!" answered the huntsman—"men are not willing to babble when Randal Lacy is cracking his thong above their heads. Many are slain, or starved to death—some disposed of—some spirited away. But there are the weaver Flammock and his daughter Rose, who know as much of the matter as we do."

"What!—Wilkin Flammock, the stout Netherlander?" said the Constable; "he and his blunt but true daughter Rose?—I will venture my life on their faith. Where dwell they?—What has been their lot amidst these changes?"

"And in God's name who are *you* that ask these questions?" said Dame Gillian. "Husband, husband—we have been too free; there is something in that look and that tone which I should remember."

"Yes, look at me more fixedly," said the Constable, throwing back the hood which had hitherto in some degree obscured his features.

"On your knees—on your knees, Raoul!" exclaimed Gillian, dropping on her own at the same time; "it is the Constable himself, and he has heard me call him old Hugh!"

"It is all that is left of him who was the Constable, at least," replied De Lacy; "and old Hugh willingly forgives your freedom, in consideration of your good news. Where are Flammock and his daughter?"

"Rose is with the Lady Eveline," said Dame Gillian; "her ladyship, belike, chose her for bower-woman in place of me, although Rose was never fit to attire so much as a Dutch doll."

"The faithful girl!" said the Constable. "And where is Flammock?"

"Oh, for him, he has pardon and favor from the King," said Raoul; "and is at his own house, with his rabble of weavers, close beside the Battle-bridge, as they now call the place where your lordship quelled the Welsh."

"Thither will I then," said the Constable; "and will then see what welcome King Henry of Anjou has for an old servant. You two must accompany me."

"My lord," said Gillian, with hesitation, "you know poor folk are little thanked for interference with great men's affairs. I trust your lordship will be able to protect us if we speak the truth; and that you will not look back with displeasure on what I did, acting for the best."

"Peace, dame, with a wanion to ye!" said Raoul. "Will you think of your old sinful carcass, when you should be saving your sweet young mistress from shame and oppression?—And for thy ill-tongue, and worse practices, his lordship knows they are bred in the bone of thee."

"Peace, good fellow!" said the Constable; "we will not look back on thy wife's errors, and your fidelity shall be rewarded.—For you, my faithful followers," he said, turning towards Guarine and Vidal, "when De Lacy shall receive his rights, of which he doubts nothing, his first wish shall be to reward your fidelity."

"Mine, such as it is, has been and shall be its own reward," said Vidal. "I will not accept favors from him in prosperity, who, in adversity, refused me his hand—our account stands yet open."

"Go to, thou art a fool; but thy profession hath a privilege to be humorous," said the Constable, whose weatherbeaten and homely features, looked even handsome, when animated by gratitude to Heaven and benevolence towards mankind. "We will meet," he said, "at Battle-bridge, an hour before vespers—I shall have much achieved before that time."

"The space is short," said his esquire.

"I have won a battle in yet shorter," replied the Constable.

"In which," said the minstrel, "many a man has died that thought himself well assured of life and victory."

"Even so shall my dangerous cousin Randal find his schemes of ambition blighted," answered the Constable; and rode forwards, accompanied by Raoul and his wife, who had remounted their palfrey, while the minstrel and squire followed a-foot, and, of course, much more slowly.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Oh, fear not, fear not, good Lord John,
That I would you betray,
Or sue requital for a debt,
Which nature cannot pay.

Bear witness, all ye sacred powers—
Ye lights that 'gin to shine—
This night shall prove the sacred tie
That binds your faith and mine.

ANCIENT SCOTTISH BALLAD.

LEFT behind by their master, the two dependants of Hugh de Lacy marched on in sullen silence, like men who dislike and distrust each other, though bound to one common service, and partners, therefore, in the same hopes and fears. The dislike, indeed, was chiefly upon Guarine's side; for nothing could be more indifferent to Renault Vidal than was his companion, farther than as he was conscious that Philip loved him not, and was not unlikely, so far as lay in his power, to thwart some plans which he had nearly at heart. He took little notice of his companion, but hummed over to himself, as for the exercise of his memory, romances and songs, many of which were composed in languages which Guarine, who had only an ear for his native Norman, did not understand.

They had proceeded together in this sullen manner for nearly two hours, when they were met by a groom on horseback, leading a saddled palfrey. "Pilgrims," said the man, after looking at them with some attention, "which of you is called Philip Guarine?"

"I, for fault of a better," said the esquire, "reply to that name."

"Thy lord, in that case, commends him to you," said the groom; "and sends you this token, by which you shall know that I am his true messenger."

He showed the esquire a rosary, which Philip instantly recognized as that used by the Constable.

"I acknowledge the token," he said; "speak my master's pleasure."

"He bids me say," replied the rider, "that his visit thrives as well as is possible, and that this very evening, by time that the sun sets, he will be possessed of his own. He desires, therefore, you will mount this palfrey, and come with me to the Garde Doloureuse, as your presence will be wanted there."

"It is well, and I obey him," said the esquire, much pleased with the import of the message, and not dissatisfied at being separated from his travelling companion.

"And what charge for me?" said the minstrel, addressing the messenger.

"If you, as I guess, are the minstrel, Renault Vidal, you are to abide your master at the Battle-bridge, according to the charge formerly given."

"I will meet him, as in duty bound," was Vidal's answer; and scarce was it uttered, ere the two horsemen, turning their backs on him, rode briskly forward, and were speedily out of sight.

It was now four hours past noon, and the sun was declining, yet there was more than three hours' space to the time of rendezvous, and the distance from the place did not now exceed four miles. Vidal, therefore, either for the sake of rest or reflection, withdrew from the path into a thicket on the left hand, from which gushed the waters of a streamlet, fed by a small fountain that bubbled up amongst the trees. Here the traveller sat himself down, and with an air which seemed unconscious of what he was doing, bent his eye on the little sparkling font for more than half an hour, without change of posture; so that he might, in Pagan times, have represented the statue of a water-god bending over his urn, and attentive only to the supplies which it was pouring forth. At length, however, he seemed to recall himself from this state of deep abstraction, drew himself up, and took some coarse food from his pilgrim's scrip, as if suddenly reminded that life is not supported without means. But he had probably something at his heart which affected his throat or appetite. After a vain attempt to swallow a morsel, he threw it from him in disgust, and applied him to a small flask, in which he had some wine or other liquor. But seemingly this also turned distasteful, for he threw from him both scrip and bottle, and, bending down to the spring, drank deeply of the pure element, bathed in it his hands and face, and arising from the fountain apparently refreshed, moved slowly on his way, singing as he went, but in a low and saddened tone, wild fragments of ancient poetry, in a tone equally ancient.

Journeying on in this melancholy manner, he at length came in sight of the Battle-bridge; near to which arose, in proud and gloomy strength, the celebrated castle of the Garde Doloureuse. "Here, then," he said—"here, then, I am to await the proud De Lacy. Be it so, in God's name!—he shall know me better ere we part."

So saying, he strode, with long and resolved steps, across the bridge, and ascending a mound which arose on the opposite side at some distance, he gazed for a time upon the scene beneath—the beautiful river, rich with the reflected tints of the western sky—the trees, which were already brightened to the eye, and saddened to the fancy, with the hue of autumn—and the darksome walls and towers of the feudal castle, from which at times, flashed a glimpse of splendor, as some sentinel's arms caught and gave back a transient ray of the setting sun.

The countenance of the minstrel, which had hitherto been dark and troubled, seemed softened by the quiet of the scene. He threw loose his pilgrim's dress, yet suffering part of its dark folds to hang around him mantle-wise; under which appeared his minstrel's tabard. He took from his side a *rote*, and striking, from time to time, a Welsh descant, sung at others a lay, of which we can offer only a few fragments, literally translated from the ancient language in which they were chanted, premising that they are in that excursive symbolical style of poetry, which Taliessin, Llewarch Hen, and other bards, had derived perhaps from the time of the Druids:

"I asked of my harp, 'Who hath injured thy chords?'
And she replied, 'The crooked finger, which I mocked in my tune.'
A blade of silver may be bended—a blade of steel abideth—
Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth.

"The sweet taste of mead passeth from the lips,
But they are long corroded by the juice of wormwood;
The lamb is brought to the shambles, but the wolf rangeth the mountain;
Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth.

"I asked the red-hot iron, when it glimmered on the anvil,
'Wherefore glowest thou longer than the firebrand?'—
'I was born in the dark mine, and the brand in the pleasant green-wood.'
Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth.

"I asked the green oak of the assembly, wherefore its boughs were dry and seared like the horns of a stag?
And it showed me that a small worm had gnawed its roots.
The boy who remembered the scourge, undid the wicket of the castle at midnight.
Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth.

"Lightning destroyeth temples, though their spires pierce the clouds.
Storms destroy armadas, though their sails intercept the gale.
He that is in his glory falleth, and that by a contemptible enemy.
Kindness fadeth away, but vengeance endureth."

More of the same wild images were thrown out, each bearing some analogy, however fanciful and remote, to the theme, which occurred like a chorus at the close of each stanza; so that the poetry resembled a piece of music, which, after repeated excursions through fanciful variations, returns ever and anon to the simple melody which is the subject of ornament.

As the minstrel sung, his eyes were fixed on the bridge and its vicinity; but when, near the close of his chant, he raised up his eyes towards the distant towers of the Garde Doloureuse, he saw that the gates were opened, and that there was a mustering of guards and attendants with

out the barriers, as if some expedition were about to set forth, or some person of importance to appear on the scene. At the same time, glancing his eyes around, he discovered that the landscape, so solitary when he first took his seat on the gray stone from which he overlooked it, was now becoming filled with figures.

During his reverie, several persons, solitary and in groups, men, women, and children, had begun to assemble themselves on both sides of the river, and were loitering there, as if expecting some spectacle. There was also much bustling at the Flemings' mills, which, though at some distance, were also completely under his eye. A procession seemed to be arranging itself there, which soon began to move forward, with pipe and tabor, and various other instruments of music, and soon approached, in regular order, the place where Vidal was seated.

It appeared the business in hand was of a pacific character; for the gray-bearded old men of the little settlement, in their decent russet gowns, came first after the rustic band of music, walking in ranks of three and three, supported by their staves, and regulating the motion of the whole procession by their sober and staid pace. After these fathers of the settlement came Wilkin Flammock, mounted on his mighty warnorse, and in complete armor, save his head, like a vassal prepared to do military service for his lord. After him followed, and in battle rank, the flower of the little colony, consisting of thirty men, well armed and appointed, whose steady march, as well as their clean and glittering armor, showed steadiness and discipline, although they lacked alike the fiery glance of the French soldiery, or the look of dogged defiance which characterized the English, or the wild ecstatic impetuosity of eye which then distinguished the Welsh. The mothers and the maidens of the colony came next; then followed the children, with faces as chubby, and features as serious, and steps as grave as their parents; and last, as a rear-guard, came the youths from fourteen to twenty, armed with light lances, bows, and similar weapons becoming their age.

This procession wheeled around the base of the mound or embankment on which the minstrel was seated; crossed the bridge with the same slow and regular pace, and formed themselves into a double line, facing inwards, as if to receive some person of consequence, or witness some ceremonial. Flammock remained at the extremity of the avenue thus formed by his countrymen, and quietly, yet earnestly, engaged in making arrangements and preparations.

In the meanwhile, stragglers of different countries began to draw together, apparently brought there by mere curiosity, and formed a motley assemblage at the farther end of the bridge, which was that nearest to the castle. Two English peasants passed very near the stone on which Vidal sat.—"Wilt thou sing us a song, minstrel," said one of them, "and here is a tester for thee?" throwing into his hat a small silver coin.

"I am under a vow," answered the minstrel, "and may not practise the gay science at present."

"Or you are too proud to play to English churls," said the elder peasant, "for thy tongue smacks of the Norman."

"Keep the coin, nevertheless," said the younger man. "Let the palmer have what the minstrel refuses to earn."

"I pray you reserve your bounty, kind friend," said Vidal, "I need it not;—and tell me of your kindness, instead, what matters are going forward here."

"Why, know you not that we have got our Constable de Lacy again, and that he is to grant solemn investiture to the Flemish weavers of all these fine things Harry of Anjou has given?—Had Edward the Confessor been alive, to give the Netherland knaves their guerdon, it would have been a cast of the gallows-tree.—But come, neighbor, we shall lose the show."

So saying, they pressed down the hill.

Vidal fixed his eyes on the gates of the distant castle; and the distant waving of banners, and mustering of men on horseback, though imperfectly seen at such a distance, apprized him that one of note was about to set forth at the head of a considerable train of military attendants. Distant flourishes of trumpets, which came faintly yet distinctly on his ear, seemed to attest the same. Presently he perceived, by the dust which began to arise in columns betwixt the castle and the bridge, as well as by the nearer sound of the clarions, that the troop was advancing towards him in procession.

Vidal, on his own part, seemed as if irresolute whether to retain his present position, where he commanded a full but remote view of the whole scene, or to obtain a nearer but more partial one, by involving himself in the crowd which now closed around on either hand of the bridge, unless where the avenue was kept open by the armed and arrayed Flemings.

A monk next hurried past Vidal, and on his inquiring as formerly the cause of the assembly, answered, in a muttering tone, from beneath his hood, that it was the Constable de Lacy, who, as the first act of his authority, was then and there to deliver to the Flemings a royal charter of their immunities.

"He is in haste to exercise his authority, methinks," said the minstrel.

"He that has just gotten the sword is impatient to draw it," replied the monk, who added more which the minstrel understood imperfectly; for the Father Aldrovand had not recovered the injury which he had received during the siege.

Vidal, however, understood him to say that he was to meet the Constable there, to beg his favorable intercession.

"I also will meet him," said Renault Vidal, rising suddenly from the stone which he occupied.

"Follow me, then," mumbled the priest; "the Flemings know me, and will let me forward."

But Father Aldrovand being in disgrace, his influence was not so potent as he had flattered himself; and both he and the minstrel were jostled to and fro in the crowd, and separated from each other.

Vidal, however, was recognised by the English peasants who had before spoken to him. "Canst thou do any jugglers' feats, minstrel?" said one. "Thou may'st earn a fair largess, for our Norman masters love *jonglerie*."

"I know but one," said Vidal, "and I will show it, if you will yield me some room."

They crowded a little off from him, and gave him time to throw aside his bonnet, bare his legs and knees, by stripping off the leathern buskins which swathed them, and retaining only his sandals. He then tied a parti-colored handkerchief around his swarthy and sunburnt hair, and casting off his upper doublet, showed his brawny and nervous arms naked to the shoulder.

But while he amused those immediately about him with these preparations, a commotion and rush among the crowd, together with the close sound of trumpets, answered by all the Flemish instruments of music, as well as the shouts in Norman and English, of "Long live the gallant Constable!—Our Lady for the bold De Lacy!" announced that the Constable was close at hand.

Vidal made incredible exertions to approach the leader of the procession, whose morion, distinguished by its lofty plumes, and right hand holding his truncheon, or leading-staff, was all he could see, on account of the crowd of officers and armed men around him. At length his exertions prevailed, and he came within three yards of the Constable, who was then in a small circle which had been with difficulty kept clear for the purpose of the ceremonial of the day. His back was towards the minstrel, and he was in the act of bending from his horse to deliver the royal charter to Wilkin Flammock, who had knelt on one knee to receive it the more reverentially. His discharge of this duty occasioned the Constable to stoop so low that his plumes seemed in the act of mixing with the flowing mane of his noble charger.

At this moment, Vidal threw himself, with singular agility, over the heads of the Flemings who guarded the circle; and, ere an eye could twinkle, his right knee was on the croupe of the Constable's horse—the grasp of his left hand on the collar of De Lacy's buff-coat; then, clinging to his prey like a tiger after its leap, he drew, in the same instant of time, a short, sharp dagger—and buried it in the back of the neck, just where the spine, which was severed by the stroke, serves to convey to the trunk of the human body the mysterious influences of the brain. The blow was struck with the utmost accuracy of aim and strength of arm. The unhappy horseman dropped from his saddle, without groan or struggle, like a bull in the amphitheatre, under the steel of the tauridor; and in the same saddle sat his murderer, brandishing the bloody poniard, and urging the horse to speed.

There was indeed a possibility of his having achieved his escape, so much were those around paralyzed for the moment by the suddenness and audacity of the enterprise; but Flammock's presence of mind did not forsake him—he seized the horse by the bridle, and, aided by those who wanted but an example, made the rider prisoner, bound his arms, and called aloud that he must be carried before King Henry. This proposal, uttered in Flammock's strong and decided tone of voice, silenced a thousand wild cries of murder and treason, which had arisen while the different and hostile natives, of which the crowd was composed, threw upon each other reciprocally the charge of treachery.

All the streams, however, now assembled in one channel, and poured with unanimous assent towards the Garde Doloureuse, excepting a few of the murdered nobleman's train, who remained to transport their master's body, in decent solemnity of mourning, from the spot which he had sought with so much pomp and triumph.

When Flammock reached the Garde Doloureuse, he was readily admitted with his prisoner, and with such witnesses as he had selected to prove the execution of the crime. To his request of an audience, he was answered, that the King had commanded that none should be admitted to him for some time; yet so singular were the tidings of the Constable's slaughter, that the captain of the guard ventured to interrupt Henry's privacy, in order to communicate that event; and returned with orders that Flammock and his prisoner should be instantly admitted to the royal apartment. Here they found Henry, attended by several persons, who stood respectfully behind the royal seat, in a darkened part of the room.

When Flammock entered, his large bulk and massive limbs were strangely contrasted with checks pale with horror at what he had just witnessed, and with awe at finding himself in the royal presence-chamber. Beside him stood his prisoner, undaunted by the situation in which he was placed. The blood of his victim, which had spirted from the wound, was visible on his bare limbs and his scanty garments; but particularly upon his brow, and the handkerchief with which it was bound.

Henry gazed on him with a stern look, which the other not only endured without dismay, but seemed to return with a frown of defiance.

"Does no one know this caitiff?" said Henry, looking around him.

There was no immediate answer, until Philip Guarine, stepping from the group which stood behind the royal chair, said, though with hesitation, "So please you, my liege, but for the strange guise in which he is now arrayed I should say there was a household minstrel of my master, by name Renault Vidal."

"Thou art deceived, Norman," replied the minstrel; "my menial place and base lineage were but assumed—I am Cadwallon the Briton—Cadwallon of the Nine Lays—Cadwallon, the chief bard of Gwenwyn of Powys-land—and his avenger!"

As he uttered the last word, his looks encountered those of a palmer, who had gradually advanced from the recess in which the attendants were stationed, and now confronted him.

The Welshman's eyes looked so eagerly ghastly as if flying from their sockets, while he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise, mingled with horror, "Do the dead come before monarchs?—Or, if thou art alive, *whom* have I slain?—I dreamed not, surely, of that bound, and of that home blow?—yet my victim stands before me! Have I not slain the Constable of Chester?"

"Thou hast indeed slain the Constable," answered the King; "but know, Welshman, it was Randal de Lacy, on whom that charge was this morning conferred, by our belief of our loyal and faithful Hugh de Lacy's having been lost upon his return from the Holy Land, as the vessel in which he had taken passage was reported to have suffered shipwreck. Thou hast cut short Randal's brief elevation but by a few hours; for to-morrow's sun would have again seen him without land or lordship."

The prisoner dropped his head on his bosom in evident despair. "I thought," he murmured, "that he had changed his slough, and come forth so glorious all too soon. May the eyes drop out that were cheated with those baubles, a plumed cap and a lacquered baton!"

"I will take care, Welshman, thine eyes cheat thee not again," said the King, sternly; "before the night is an hour older, they shall be closed on all that is earthly."

"May I request of your nobleness," said the Constable, "that you will permit me to ask the unhappy man a few questions?"

"When I have demanded of him myself," said the King, "why he has dipped his hands in the blood of a noble Norman."

"Because he at whom I aimed my blow," said the Briton, his eye glancing fiercely from the King to De Lacy, and back, "had spilled the blood of the descendant of a thousand kings; to which his own gore, or thine, proud Count of Anjou, is but as the puddle of the highway to the silver fountain."

Henry's eye menaced the audacious speaker; but the King reined in his wrath when he beheld the imploring look of his servant.—"What wouldst thou ask of him?" he said; "be brief, for his time is short."

"So please you, my liege, I would but demand wherefore he has for years forborne to take the life he aimed at, when it was in his power—nay, when it must have been lost but for his seemingly faithful service?"

"Norman," said Cadwallon, "I will answer thee. When I first took upon me thy service, it was well my purpose to have slain thee that night. There stands the man," pointing to Philip Guarine, "to whose vigilance thou owed'st thy safety."

"Indeed," said De Lacy, "I do remember some indications of such a purpose; but why didst thou forego it, when following opportunities put in thy power?"

"When the slayer of my sovereign became God's soldier," answered Cadwallon, "and served his cause in Palestine, he was safe from my earthly vengeance."

"A wonderful forbearance on the part of a Welsh assassin!" said the King, scornfully.

"Ay," answered Cadwallon; "and which certain Christian princes have scarce attained to, who have never neglected the chance of pillage or conquest afforded by the absence of a rival in the Holy Crusade."

"Now, by the Holy Rood"—said Henry, on the point of bursting out, for the insult affected him peculiarly; but suddenly stopping, he said, with an air of contempt, "To the gallows with the knave!"

"But one other question," said De Lacy, "Renault, or by whatever name thou art called. Ever since my return thou hast rendered me service inconsistent with thy stern resolution upon my life—thou didst aid me in my shipwreck—and didst guide me safely through Wales, where my name would have ensured my death; and all this after the crusade was accomplished?"

"I could explain thy doubt," said the bard, "but that it might be thought I was pleading for my life."

"Hesitate not for that," said the King; "for were our Holy Father to intercede for thee, his prayer were in vain."

"Well, then," said the bard, "know the truth—I was too proud to permit either wave or Welshman to share in my revenge. Know also, what is perhaps Cadwallon's weakness—use and habit had divided my feelings towards De Lacy, between aversion and admiration. I still contemplated my revenge, but as something which I might never complete, and which seemed rather an image in the clouds, than an object to which I must one day draw near.—And when I beheld thee," he said, turning to De Lacy, "this very day so determined, so sternly resolved, to bear thy impending fate like a man—that you seemed to me to resemble the last tower of a ruined palace still holding its head to heaven, when its walls of splendor, and its bowers of delight, lay in desolation around—may I perish, I said to myself, in secret, ere I perfect its ruin! Yes, De Lacy, then, even then—but some hours since—hadst thou accepted my proffered hand, I had served thee as never follower served master. You rejected it with scorn—and yet notwithstanding that insult, it required that I should have seen you, as I thought, trampling over the field in which you slew my master, in the full pride of Norman insolence, to animate my resolution to strike the