

Medieval Stories



by
Professor
H. Shück
translated from
the Swedish by
W. F. Harvey, M.A.

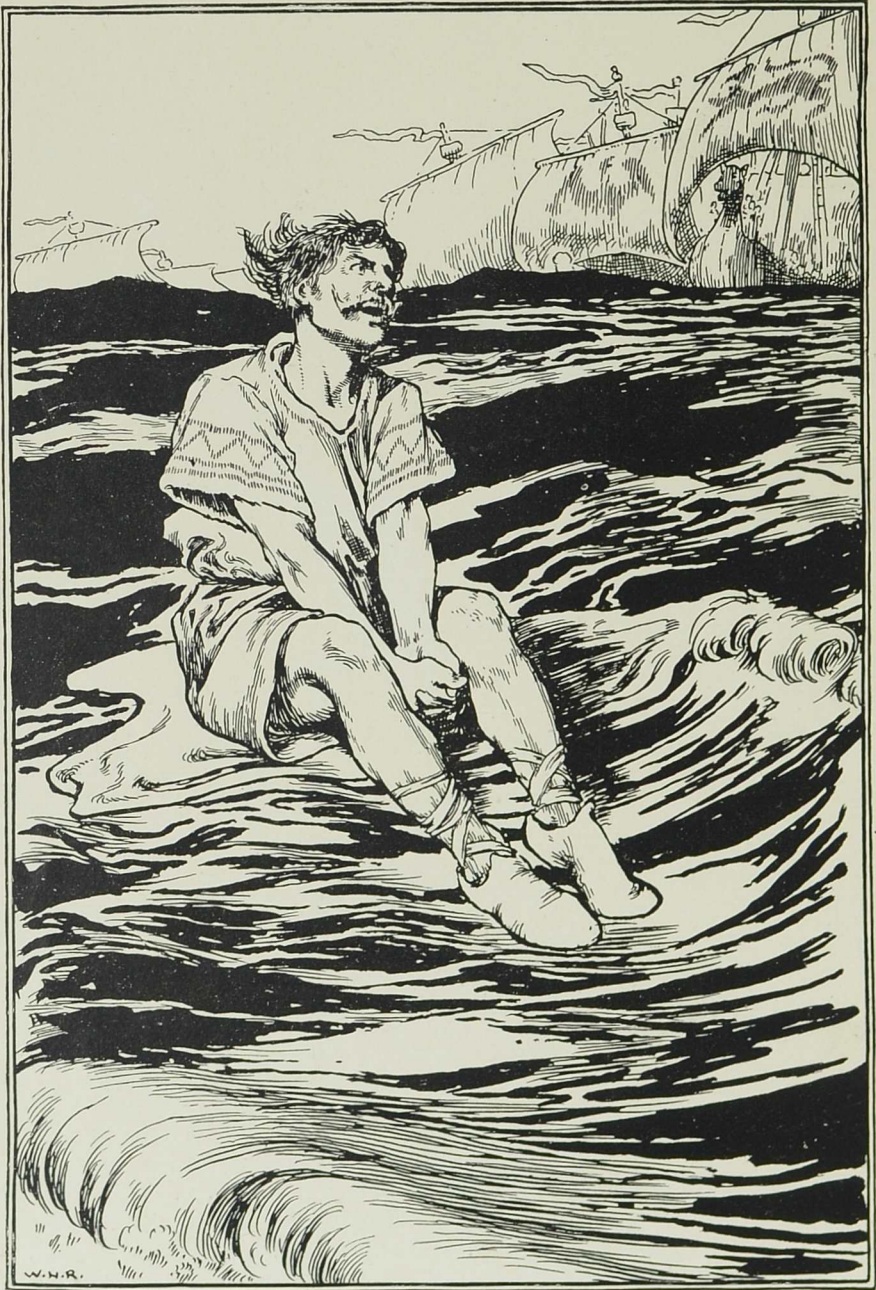
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MEDAEVAL ...
1902



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[Frontispiece.]

"THEY BEHELD A MARVELLOUS SIGHT, NAMELY, DUKE FREDERICK
SITTING ON THE BILLOWS."

Mediaeval Stories

by

Professor H. Shück

translated from the Swedish

by

W. F. Harvey, M. A. Oxon.

Barrister-at-Law; sometime Professor of English Literature
in the University of Malta

illustrated by
W. Heath Robinson.



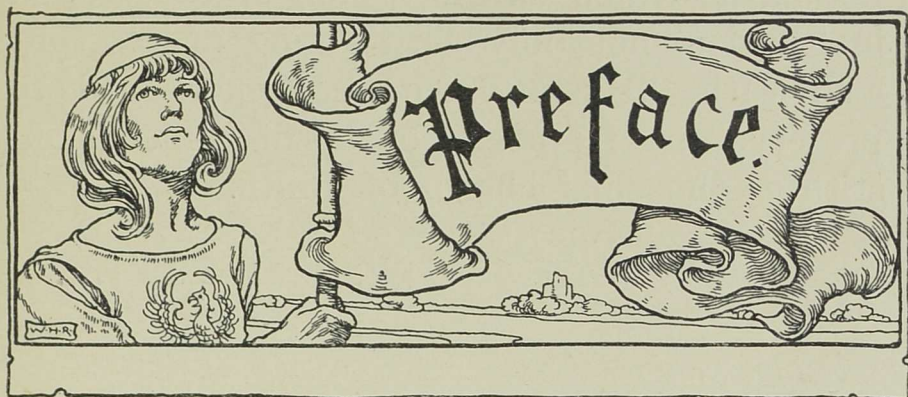
London
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1902



TO MY LEARNED FRIEND
GEORGE MATTHEWS ARNOLD, ESQUIRE,
OF MILTON HALL, NEAR GRAVESEND,
KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF ST. GREGORY,
DEPUTY LIEUTENANT FOR THE COUNTY OF KENT,
FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES, ETC.,
JURIST AND MAN OF LETTERS,

3 dedicate,

IN TOKEN OF PROFOUND ESTEEM,
MY TRANSLATION OF THESE TALES OF A DAY LONG DEAD.



PROFESSOR H. SCHÜCK has the well-deserved reputation among European scholars of being a learned and accurate writer on the history of literature in general, and that of Sweden in particular. Limitations of space prevent me from giving anything like a list of his published works, but I think many of my readers will be interested to learn that some years ago he brought his special knowledge of the masterpieces of the Elizabethan age to bear on the elucidation of Shakespeare's "Sonnets".

As the perusal of the following translation of the original prefaces to *Mediæval Stories* would render any further introduction on my part both superfluous and impertinent, I will

conclude these few remarks by expressing my earnest hope that these tales of a bygone age may enjoy in England some measure of the popularity which they have long since attained in Sweden, not only with young people, but also with all who have been privileged to preserve the freshness of spirit which constitutes the chief charm of youth.

W. F. HARVEY.

INNER TEMPLE,
7th July, 1902.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO VOL. I.,

WHICH CONTAINED THE STORIES OF

FLORES AND BLANCHFLOR; DUKE FREDERICK; JOHN,
THE KNIGHT OF THE LION; AND NAMELESS AND
VALENTINE.

THE stories which are now presented to the juvenile readers of Sweden are identical with those which once amused their forefathers at a time when even old people found delight in letting their fancy revel amid the fantastic forms of old Romance. These stories have a respectable number of years on their shoulders. The first three—"Flores and Blanchflor"; "Duke Frederick of Normandy"; and "John, the Knight of the Lion"—were translated into Swedish verse, by order of the Norwegian queen Euphemia, early in the fourteenth century, for the delectation of her future son-in-law, a Swedish duke named Eric, who was the pattern, in that age, of a "verray parfit gentil knight". The last of them, "Nameless and Valentine," is somewhat younger, though

not written yesterday any more than its predecessors ; that is to say, it made its way into Swedish about the close of the fifteenth century.

None of these tales are of Swedish origin, and, in the domain of romance, it is, on the whole, difficult to find anything that can, with absolute certainty, be pronounced to have belonged originally to any one country in particular. The saga wanders from one land to another, and thus becomes, in course of time, the common property of them all. Such is the case with these stories.

The romance of "Flores and Blanchflor" presents such a striking likeness to the love stories of later antiquity that we may assume, with fairly strong probability, that its cradle lay in some country where Greek and Oriental civilisation came into contact ; but this origin was no obstacle to the story itself becoming one of the most popular in the Western world. In the Middle Ages it was read in Italian, French, German, English, and many other languages. It migrated from France to England, from England to Norway, and it is from the Norwegian version that the mediæval Swedish romance is directly derived.

The nearest prototype of "John, the Knight of the Lion," was also, in all proba-

bility, a Norwegian saga which was itself an adaptation of a French poem composed by the famous mediæval poet, Chrestien de Troyes.* I cannot, however, even accept him as the inventor of the story, although no one knows what prototype he used. The balance of probability indicates that he clothed the legends which the Crusaders of the Middle Ages had brought home from the East in the form of a French romance of chivalry.

But the third tale—"Duke Frederick of Normandy"—lies more remote from the genuine world of legendary lore. This romance was probably written some time in the thirteenth century by a German poet who had read a great many popular contemporary French stories of chivalry, which he afterwards tried to copy in his own work. The subjects themselves are, however, common to the mediæval story-tellers, but the arrangement of them is peculiarly his own. The German original, however, is lost, and the story is only known through the Swedish, and from the Swedish, through the Danish version.

The fourth story—"Nameless and Valentine"—is taken up with subjects drawn from the inexhaustible treasure-chamber of folk-lore.

* This story is found in *The Mabinogion* under the title of "The Lady of the Fountain".—TRANSLATOR.

Lastly, the story originated in France, but did not come to us directly from that country, but wandered over North Germany to Scandinavia.

The first three of these stories are, in their Old Swedish form, in verse ; the fourth is in prose intermingled with verse. A recasting was required on account of the metrical form of the original. This process, however, has not been confined merely to rewriting the old language in a more modern style, and turning the poetry into prose ; but certain excessively complicated adventures have had to be resolved into simpler ones, and certain features which were void of offence to adult readers of the Middle Ages have had their place supplied by others more suitable for juvenile reading. No attempt whatever has been made at rendering these sagas into anything approaching a close and faithful version for the professed student of literature, much less to provide a free translation of them. My aim throughout has been, simply and solely, to tell the children of the present day the stories which, for many hundreds of years, have been relished in our country, although they have, for about as many hundreds of years, lain utterly forgotten.

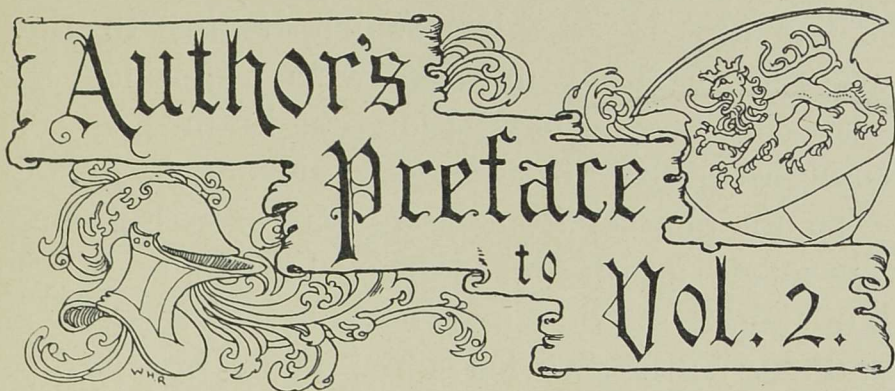
In one respect these stories are distinguished from those most in vogue nowadays. Chival-

rous romance was supplanted by *Owl-Glass*; *Owl-Glass* yielded to Prince Charming, and in our time the poor prince has lost his popularity in favour of the more robust figures of country yokels. But even here idealism and realism have succeeded one another in constant ebb and flow, and both have, possibly, been equally necessary.

Nowadays it is unquestionable that "modern realism" is most represented in the nursery library; and the fact remains that our children have got into the habit of finding their amusement in burlesque descriptions of peasant life. Possibly their imagination has become healthier through this, though at the same time less refined, than was the case with children thirty years ago. If this be so, then these tales may perchance afford a healthy romantic antidote to the naturalism of the story-books of the present day.

H. S.

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Author's Preface to Vol. 2.

WHICH CONTAINS THE STORIES OF

KARL AND ALEGAST; THE JOURNEY TO CONSTANTI-
NOPLE; ROLAND; THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS;
AND AMICUS AND AMELIUS.

THE present collection of the Mediæval Stories of Sweden can lay as little claim as those published last year to be called Swedish in the strictest sense of the term. The tales of the Middle Ages in reality belong to no particular country, but were the common property of all Europe. They found an audience in Italy and France, as well as in Sweden and Iceland, and it is often impossible to decide, with any degree of certainty, where their cradle lay before they began their wanderings from people to people. However, if they cannot be properly called

Swedish Mediæval Stories, they have, nevertheless, a full right to the title of the Mediæval Stories of *Sweden*.

The first three tales, which belong to the cycle of sagas composed with reference to Karl the Great, have their origin in France, though the first of them—"Karl and Alegast"—is no longer extant as an old French poem. These stories migrated from France to England, and from the Norman-French dialect these and many other stories belonging to the Charlemagne cycle migrated to Norwegian prose; and this Norwegian prose-romance—the *Saga of Karl the Great*—was translated into Swedish in the fifteenth century, and from that tongue into Danish. Only the "Journey to Constantinople" (*Voyage de Charlemagne à Jerusalem et à Constantinople*) and "Roland" (*Chanson de Roland*) are now extant in Swedish. The tale of "Karl and Alegast," on the other hand, is now only known through Danish and Norwegian, and is not to be found in Swedish.

Even the story of "Amicus and Amelius" was, once upon a time, a French mediæval poem, although its origin should probably be sought for beyond the limits of Europe. This was one of the most famous stories in the Middle Ages, and occurs as an Epic poem, as a drama, and also as a legend, and is to be

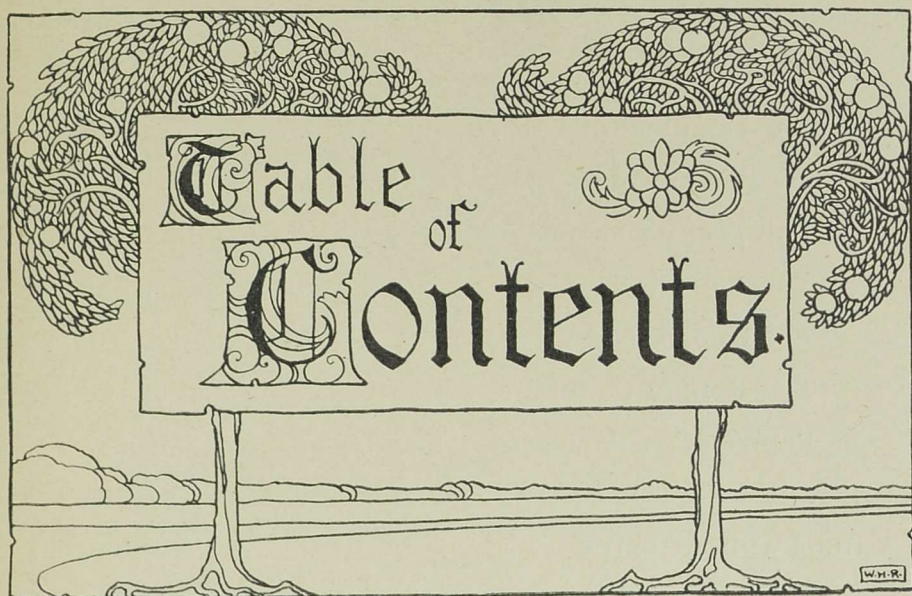
met with in the literature of every country from the Ganges to Cape Finisterre, and, amongst others, it even found a place in that vast collection of legends, *Seelen Troist* (The Consolation of the Soul), and passed with it into mediæval Swedish literature.

Still more widespread was "The Seven Wise Masters," the most famous collection of the Middle Ages, the pedigree of which, in spite of industrious researches, is still not known with any degree of certainty. Its earliest form was probably an Indian manuscript now lost, which passed into Early Arabic, and that translation formed the groundwork of Spanish, Persian, Hebrew, and Syriac translations. This Syriac version became the source of a Greek one. The story appears in Latin and French about the same time, though no one knows with any certainty the immediate prototypes of these versions. The Latin text, however, is probably taken from the Hebrew, and forms the foundation of the Early Swedish, which exists in three somewhat divergent versions.

The treatment of these sagas has, for the reason given in the preface to the first volume, necessarily been free. Among other things I have excluded three stories from the "Seven Wise Masters," and have substituted three

others in their place, the first of which—"The Ash Girl" (*Lai le Freisne*)—occurs as a folk-song with us, as with other nations; the tale of "The Count of Rome" is a rendering of the oldest, or nearly oldest, ballad printed in Sweden; and the third—"Papirius"—is derived from the mediæval collection called *Schacktafrels Lek* (The Game of Chess).

H. S.



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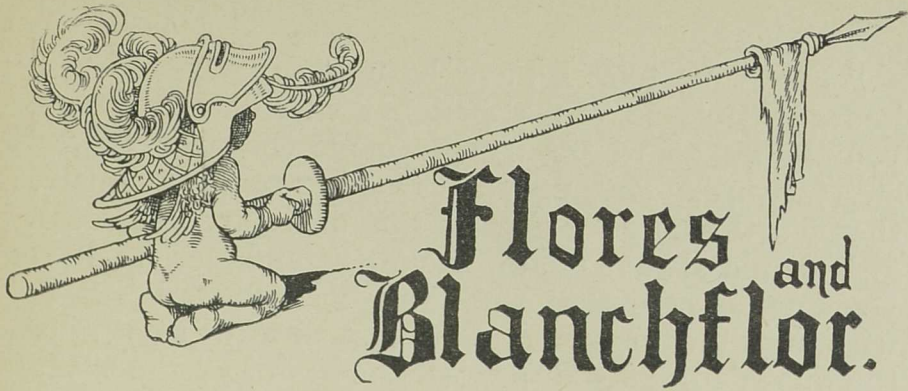




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FAR away in the south there lies a country called Apulia, which, hundreds of years ago, was ruled over by a king whose name was Phoenix. This king journeyed far and wide in quest of war, and, on one occasion, came with his ships to the shores of Spain. There he laid the whole land waste, and carried much booty on board his ships; but, just as he was putting off from shore, he sent out a troop of horsemen to see if there was not some further spoil to be seized. Now, as these horsemen were riding over a mountain, they beheld a band of pilgrims on their way to the tomb of St. James. Amongst them were an old French knight and his daughter, who had lately been left a widow. King Phoenix's men immediately hurled themselves on the poor pilgrims, put the men to death, and carried off the women into captivity. The king was exceedingly glad when he caught sight of the French knight's daughter, whom he found to be a woman of noble birth, for he had just promised his queen that he would get her a handmaid befitting her dignity.

As soon as he had made up his mind to make the queen a present of the captive widow, he set sail and reached his own country in the course of a few days. There he anchored, and was received by his own people. After he had divided the spoils, he said to the queen:—

“For you, too, I have brought a gift which I know will please you, a prisoner who shall wait on your behests,” whereupon he made the poor widow step forward. The queen received her very graciously, thanked the king for this gift, and declared that the girl should always abide in close attendance on her. It came to pass that the captive conducted herself with such lowliness and sweetness as to win not only the queen’s heart, but also the hearts of all the rest.

Not long afterwards the queen gave birth to a son, and on that very same day—it was in the springtide and on Palm Sunday—the captive widow brought forth a child, and this child was a daughter. Both children were as handsome as handsome could be, and both were christened on the same day. The boy was called Flores, which signifies “flower,” and the little girl took the name of Blanchflor, which means “white flower”. They were both brought up together, both were suckled by Blanchflor’s mother, both slept in the same bed at night, and played together by day.

On reaching the age of five they were bigger and stronger than other children of the same age, so the king determined to send his son to a wise master to be further instructed, whereupon he summoned Flores to his presence and said:—

“My dear son, you must now begin to acquire book-learning, and I am thinking of sending you to school at a wise man’s. Work diligently there, so that your time may not be wasted. Rise with the sun, but seek not to take repose when he does.”

“My father,” answered Flores weeping, “I can learn nothing without Blanchflor, wherefore let her come with me.”

“I am loth to part you, and, as you think you can study with greater delight in her society, I had lief that she go with you.”

Whereat he bade the wise master undertake the education of them both. Learning was to them mere play, and there never were children, so far as I have heard, who proved more apt at their studies than did these two; for directly Flores knew anything he told Blanchflor all about it, and when she learnt anything she hurried off at once to Flores in order to communicate her knowledge to him. Moreover, no one ever heard them wrangling or quarrelling. At length they grew so clever that there was not a single priest in the whole of that country who surpassed them in learning, and their love one towards the other waxed stronger at the same time.

But with this the king was ill-pleased, and began to harbour serious misgivings lest the young prince should end by wishing to take Blanchflor to wife, and in his sore anxiety he turned to the queen for counsel.

"What are we to do?" said he. "It is clear that our son loves this poor girl and will on no account be separated from her, but it is unseemly for him to take her to wife, for the spouse of a young prince should herself be of royal birth. If you are of one mind with me, then we should act best for our son's sake by having her slain."

But the queen, who was of a more gentle disposition, and, besides, greatly attached to poor Blanchflor, refused to acquiesce in such a cruel expedient.

"Certainly," said she, "we ought to provide against our son contracting a marriage which would be so little in keeping with his honour, but were we to put the girl to death we should incur great shame, seeing that she has grown up in Flores' company. Wiser were it, methinks, to send Blanchflor far away, without doing her any hurt, for Flores is young and will like enough soon forget all about her, when they no longer get the chance of meeting one another day after day."

“Good!” said the king. “I will do what you say. I shall have a letter written, purporting to come from Blanchflor’s mother to her. In it she shall say that she is sick, and shall beseech Blanchflor to come home to nurse her. Their teacher shall be ordered to feign sickness, which will give me the best opportunity to send Flores to my sister Sybil of Mortaria. Should he make any difficulties about travelling without his playfellow, I can, you know, promise him that she shall follow him as soon as her mother is restored to health. Unless I am mistaken in Madam Sybil, she will soon drive Blanchflor out of Flores’ thoughts.”

It was only at the express behest of the king that Flores departed without Blanchflor, and then not before he had got his father’s definite promise that Blanchflor should be sent to him within two days whether her mother was alive or dead. On reaching Mortaria he was received in the most friendly way by his aunt and her husband, and they brought him into the society of the fairest young damsels one could see, so that Flores might forget his Blanchflor. But all in vain! The prettier they were the more his thoughts ran on her whom he remembered as the fairest of all his eyes had beheld. In grief and ceaseless yearning he waited on her coming, but a fortnight passed without tidings of her, and then he realised that his father had deceived him, and he began to fear that his beloved was dead. He drooped, turned pale, and refused both meat and drink. His pages who had accompanied him to Mortaria, were in despair over the young prince’s languor, and sent in haste word to the king that Flores’ life was endangered by his woes. The king waxed furiously wroth on receiving these tidings, and said to the queen:—

“Without sorcery Blanchflor cannot have inspired

our son with so violent a love as this; but I shall punish her as her crime deserves, and she shall be burnt as a witch at the stake. When Flores learns that she is no longer alive he will straightway forget this madness."

"Gracious lord," answered the queen, "I have better counsel to give you. Here in the harbour bide certain rich merchants from Babylon with their vessels. Let us sell her to them, and they will take her far away so that we shall never hear of her more, and, besides, we shall get for her gold and silver in abundance from the merchants."

The king was by no means disposed to follow this advice, whereby the good queen sought at any rate to save Blanchflor's life, but in the end he agreed and ordered a broker to be summoned, and bade him sell the young girl immediately. The broker took her down to the harbour, and there sold her to the richest merchant from Babylon. And the price he got for her was no small one, twenty marks in gold, twenty in silver, twenty purple raiments, twenty sable cloaks, and twenty velvet robes together with large mantles of silk embroidered with gold. But the most precious thing of all was a gold beaker whereon one could behold depicted all the Trojan war. On the cover one saw the three goddesses, Minerva, Venus and Juno, contending for the apple. The top itself consisted of a carbuncle that gleamed like the sun, and above this costly precious stone one saw a golden bird which was so cunningly wrought that it actually appeared to be alive. This beaker and the other precious things the merchant gave for Blanchflor, and when he saw how beautiful she was, he was convinced he had bought her cheap; nor had he deceived himself. When he came to Babylon the queen bought her at once and paid for her seven times her weight in gold, and would have given even more.

But the broker who first sold Blanchflor went back to King Phœnix and delivered to him all the precious things he had got from the Babylonian merchant. When Phœnix was thus assured that the hated Blanchflor was out of the way, he had a costly vault erected and set over the entrance to it the following inscription: "Underneath rests Blanchflor whom Flores loved so dearly".

When this was done the king allowed Flores to return home. The latter hurried up the steps of the castle to find his beloved Blanchflor, and his first inquiry was of her. But his father and mother turned away and made no answer. Then he hastened to Blanchflor's own mother to find out from her, but she had been constrained to promise the king to keep silence about his treachery, and only answered with tears. At last she said:—

"Alas, fain would I hold my peace and not reveal the sorrow that has smitten me. My poor daughter is no more. Eight days ago she was borne to her grave, and now I am a lonely and forsaken woman."

When Flores learnt that she whom he loved better than everything else in the world was dead, he swooned with grief, and fell to the ground unconscious. As soon as he came to himself he ordered them, in a hollow voice, to lead him to Blanchflor's grave. The king and queen followed him there, but directly he saw the inscription he swooned away again, and lay long unconscious. Then he began to mourn and weep: "Ah, lovely Blanchflor, my playmate. I always hoped to die the same hour as you, and now you have gone away before me. So fair a maid is no more to be found in the world, nor shall such ever be born in my days. I cannot bear you back from the kingdom of death, but ere night fall I shall slay myself so as to reach Paradise and meet you again, my lovely Blanchflor."

After he had uttered these words he arose, drew his dagger, and was about to thrust it into his heart ; but when his mother saw this, she fell into despair, and realised that there was no other course but to disclose everything to Flores. But when he learnt that Blanchflor was not dead but only sold into captivity in a strange land, his joy returned to him and he exclaimed that he would surely find her wheresoever she might be. He wanted to launch straightway out into the world in quest of her without whom he felt he could not exist. Thereupon he went to his father and sought of him leave to travel. The king, on hearing this, waxed sorrowful and furious, and rebuked the queen, in strong language, for having disclosed the secret to Flores ; but she had no answer ready, and said that she would far rather have poor Blanchflor for her son's wife than lose her own son, who would assuredly take his own life unless he had his way. When King Phoenix understood the state of the case, he abased his pride and besought his son in this wise : " My good Flores," said he, " you can hardly wish to grieve your father and mother by going from them now in their old age. We are old, and have not long to live. Stay with us then, for else we may never see you again and our lives will end in sorrow."

But Flores was not to be persuaded ; he could not live without his Blanchflor, and it could not be long before he was back again with her. Then the king, seeing at last that no prayers availed, gave his consent, and bade Flores say what he would have for his journey.

" That is speaking like a father," exclaimed Flores, glad to have got his own way. " Give me seven horses, the best that can be procured ; three to carry all the money they can ; two to be laden with the costliest raiment to be found in the kingdom ; and the two last

to be packed with ermine, sable and marten skins. Seven pages on foot and seven pages on horseback are to accompany the caravan, and, in addition to these, I want a trustworthy man used to buying and selling, for I intend to make out that I am a merchant, and try, under that disguise, to find out where she has gone."

The poor king had to promise to perform all this, though it was with no glad heart that he saw his son preparing to forsake him. When all was in readiness, he gave him at last the precious golden beaker which he himself had received for Blanchflor, and presented him besides with his own courser. The queen drew a ring off her finger and gave it to her son, and the ring had this property, that as soon as Flores turned it round neither fire, nor water, nor iron could do him hurt, however great the peril that threatened him might be, and whatsoever he sought that should he find by the help of the ring. Flores kissed his parents at parting, tried to dry their tears, and leapt on his steed to wend his way through the world in quest of Blanchflor.

When he and his retinue had ridden for four days they came down to the haven where the merchants' vessels were lying. At night, as they were sitting in their inn, Flores had wine and mead presented to all the company assembled; they cracked jokes and were merry, but Flores himself sat silent, and sighed as he thought of Blanchflor. When the hostess heard the sighs and examined her guest more closely, she came to the conclusion that he must be a king's son and not a merchant, so she turned towards him and said: "Not very long ago there was a young girl here who much resembled you, and, like yourself, she was grievously woe-begone. She told us how she had been sold on account of Flores and was to be carried off to Babylon."

You can understand how joyful Flores was at hearing this. He rushed away from the table in such haste that he overturned his beaker, then he embraced and thanked his hostess for the glad tidings, and also informed her that he himself was that Flores for whom Blanchflor sighed. In the morning he at once engaged a sea-captain to take him to Babylon, and ere long they reached a magnificent town called Bondag, which formed part of the dominions of the king of Babylon. There they cast anchor and landed.

As soon as he had properly rewarded the captain, he began to look about him for lodgings, and immediately he met a rich merchant who was willing to receive him. Here, again, fortune was in his favour, for the merchant was the very same person at whose house Blanchflor had stayed when she reached that city. The merchant, as soon as he saw Flores, told him that he had some time previously given hospitality to a young girl named Blanchflor, whom he closely resembled. Again Flores' sorrow was likewise driven away. So Flores took a precious mantle wrought of velvet and lined with sable, and gave it to the merchant, entreating him to tell all he knew concerning this girl, "for," said Flores, "I have heard much talk of her and would gladly make her acquaintance". When the merchant had told him that she abode in a lofty tower in the very town of Babylon, together with other maidens, Flores arose on the morrow, and after riding for three days reached a stream over which there was a ferry. The ferryman too, on seeing him, was struck by his appearance and said:—

"You must assuredly be the brother of that young maiden whom I ferried over this stream some time ago, for you two are strangely alike. Her name was Blanchflor, and she was bewailing bitterly her

separation from her sweetheart. She is now in Babylon, where the king bought her for much gold."

"I thank you, my friend, for this information," said Flores, as he emptied his purse into the ferryman's hand. "I am journeying to Babylon, and shall be much beholden to you if you can give me an introduction to some honest person with whom I might dwell, a man who could serve me as a guide in that city. It were best if you gave me some token whereby he may know that I have come at your behest."

"May God requite you, noble sir. Nobody has hitherto given me such rich gifts since I came hither to this ferry. Blithely will I help you if I can. When you have come to Babylon and ridden over the city bridge, the first thing you will see is a great gate-tower through which every traveller must pass, and where toll is taken. Stop at the first house you come to behind the gate, and there shall you find accommodation, for the house is owned by a wealthy citizen who is my very good friend and partner: half of what I possess belongs to him, and half of what he possesses is mine. When you meet him give him this token and greet him from me: he will help you as far as it lies in his power."

The ferryman gave him at parting a gold ring as a token of recognition, and they bade farewell one to the other. It happened exactly as described. As he rode through the city gate Flores noticed a well-to-do citizen sitting and sunning himself in front of his house. Flores approached and saluted him, then gave him the ring and craved his protection. This man, whose name was Darius, recognised the ring at once, and received him with great cordiality, conducting him and his retinue into his own house, where his wife Sycoris made them further welcome. She had their horses taken to the stables, made the

beds for them herself, and laid a cloth on the table for the worthy entertainment of the newly arrived guests. Notwithstanding this friendly reception, Flores felt his mind ill-at-ease. When he saw the mighty city with all its towers and battlements, the splendid castle and the populous streets, where people swarmed like ants, he began to ponder on the difficulty of the enterprise on which he was about to embark.

"Ah," thought he, "here am I, a stranger without a soul to befriend me. If I mention my daring plans to any one, the king may easily get to hear of them, and I am at once undone. Had I stayed at home instead, my father would have given me a king's daughter for wife, and I should have lived in peace and happiness."

But as he was pursuing this train of thoughts, the image of Blanchflor appeared to him again, and with that his timidity vanished.

"What would it profit me to possess the whole world," he cried, "if I possessed not Blanchflor? It was but a little while ago I was minded to take my own life for her sake, and now I take fright at a trifling inconvenience and danger. Were I to return home it is like enough I should come back here again to encounter all the perils and hardships that lie across my path, for never could I desert the city wherein Blanchflor sojourned; living or dead she must be mine once more."

At that very moment Darius came in and bade his guests welcome, and sought to make Flores of good cheer: for Flores was still sitting with head bowed down.

"If there be aught that troubles you, methinks," said he, "we should set the matter straight. But, now away with melancholy, and look cheerful."

"God grant it may be within my power to reward you for your kindness," answered Flores. "Here

within your house I can take mine ease, nevertheless I sit and rack my brains as to how I, who am a stranger, am to sell my wares in this Babylon of yours without being cheated in the bargain. Will you who are acquainted with the men of this city come to my help?"

"Let us first take our seats at table, eat, drink, and be merry, and afterwards we can talk business."

On this Darius bade his wife take special care of Flores, who seemed to him a courteous youth, and she spread such a feast before them that even the king himself could have had no better.

After they had eaten their fill, Flores turned to Darius and Sycoris, firmly resolved to take them into his confidence; but first he made them make a solemn promise not to reveal to any man what he was about to utter. This done, he addressed them in this wise:—

"I am a king's son, and all the silver and gold that I have with me I will give you if you will help me. Blanchflor, whom I dearly love, has been treacherously snatched away from me, and is now a captive of the king in Babylon, but I have come hither to free her or else lay down my life."

"Alas," answered Darius, "I know not how this may be contrived; all I can advise is that you give up this hopeless quest, for should the king get any inkling of your purpose, then your life is in deadly peril and none can save you. The tower wherein the damsel dwells is so strong that from it no man, by sorcery or main-force, can deliver her, and so great is the king's might that none dare strive to thwart his will. One hundred and fifty kings do him obeisance; the chief city of his kingdom is sixty and five miles long; and the walls which girdle this city are thirty cubits broad and fifteen cubits high. There are seventy gates, all furnished with

lofty towers; in the city itself there lie 700 strongholds, in each one of which never less than a hundred knights abide. In the heart of the town stands a tower which a giant built for the king, and in this tower Blanchflor dwells; and stark it is in good sooth. Its walls are a hundred cubits high and a hundred cubits round about; five fathoms are they in breadth, and none but the costliest marble has been used wherewith to build them. On the top of this tower stands a ball wrought of purest gold and adorned with a precious stone which gleams by night like the sun, and every ray thereof is seen for sixty miles around. Within the tower dwell forty maidens, the fairest that eyes can see. Each of them has a room to herself which leads, by means of stairs, to the king's chambers and those of the other damsels, whence it is termed the Maidens' Tower. In the midst of the tower stands a horse wrought of silver, through the mouth of which the clearest water trickles down into a basin, wherein the damsels disport themselves and bathe when they list; but a fierce warder holds the gate, and soldiers with drawn swords help him keep watch. He never quits his post, and should any one be so rash as to seek to force his way in, that man is assuredly dead, for even if he contrived to evade the warder or the warder's men-at-arms, they have only to call out for 100,000 horsemen that dwell at hand to rush forth to their succour.

"The king," Darius went on to say, "has the peculiar habit of taking, every year, a new wife from these forty maidens, and putting to death his last year's queen. When the year is nearing its close he has all the kings and princes subject to him called together, and the queen is executed in their presence; and, directly this has been done, all the surviving damsels are made to assemble in a garden adjacent

to the tower, and out of their number he chooses himself a new consort. As you may well understand, it is with no thrill of joy that they await this exalted honour, knowing as they do that all this glory only lasts for a year, and that the chosen one will be killed like the rest of those who have shared the king's throne. The garden where the maidens dwell when they are not in the tower is surrounded by a golden wall. Divers sorts of rare birds fly about in it and fill the air with their carols, a river flows through the midst of it, and in the river you can behold all sorts of precious stones, garnets, emeralds, sapphires, rubies, jasper, and others too with the names of which I am not acquainted. The trees stand ever green and laden with blossoms, summer and winter, spring and autumn, and plants which are never found elsewhere on the same spot there grow side by side. In the garden there is also a spring with water as clear as crystal. Now when the king intends to take to himself a new consort, he makes the damsels go down one after another to the brook which issues from the spring; and if she prove a pure and innocent maiden the water retains the clearness of crystal, but if otherwise, the water turns as red as blood, and the damsel is forthwith burnt on a pyre. The rest of them stand up under a tree, and the one on whom the tree casts its blossoms becomes queen for the year, and her fellows crown her with garlands and flowers and become her servants. A month hence to-day a new queen is to be elected, and it is pretty certain who that one will be, for the king holds Blanchflor so dear that he can hardly wait for the day when he may call her his spouse."

"Ah," said Flores with a sigh, "it will cause my death if it happens, and she does not even learn that I whom she loves dearest on earth am here to free

her. Help me with your counsel to find out how I can approach her. You shall get as much gold and silver as you wish, and do not fear exposing me to any peril, for I shrink from nothing where Blanchflor is concerned."

"Good," answered Darius; "if you fear not to risk your life I have a plan which, perhaps, may succeed. Early to-morrow betake yourself to the tower, and feign to be taking the measure of the wall. The warder will assuredly fall foul of you, try to drive you away, and ask what your business is there, but you must answer him meekly and fair that you have a fancy for the tower and purpose, when you reach your own country, to make yourself one like it. He will then probably adopt a milder tone when he finds you are a rich and powerful man. He will certainly ask you to play chess with him, for he is mightily fond of the game, and especially of winning at it. Be sure to take a big bag full of gold with you, for it is idle to play with him without money. If he wins pay him what is his due, but if he loses let him get not only his winnings back, but also a further sum in gold. He is certain to take a liking to such an antagonist, and I am sure he will ask you to come again, and that you must likewise do, and on the following day lend him your winnings again and all the gold besides you have about you; in such wise he will hold you dearer day by day. On the third day, however, you must take with you the precious drinking goblet which your father gave you as a farewell gift, and that you are to show to the warder. As usual, you will let him get all the gold you have about you, but the beaker you must retain. When he sees it he will ask you to meat and regale you sumptuously, finishing by asking you to sell him the beaker; but you must say him nay, and instead give him the beaker for nothing. After so generous a gift

he will assuredly be so devoted to you that you may venture to trust yourself to him. If he cannot help you, neither can I, nor can any one else."

Flores thanked Darius warmly for his sage counsel, bade him good-night, and retired to rest, but as soon as the morrow dawned he was on his feet again and betook himself to the tower, which he began to measure carefully. Directly the warder caught sight of him he cried out:—

"What sort of knave are you? Are you a master-builder or have you some crafty device in your brain? Out with the truth at once."

"Neither am I a master-builder nor am I devising any evil thing," said Flores; "I am only measuring the tower, for it is, I think, a fair and goodly tower, and I am of a mind to build myself one like it when I reach my home."

"If so, then you must have plenty of money. Hark, will you play a game of chess with me?"

Flores blithely agreed thereto, and what Darius predicted came to pass.

The warder got the beaker and swore a mighty oath to help Flores to the uttermost of his power. As soon as Flores received this assurance he said:—

"Since you have sworn to be true to me and help me in my quest, I will reveal to you a secret. My name is Flores and I am the son of a powerful king. Hither have I come to free Blanchflor who is imprisoned in the tower, and who was treacherously carried away from me. You it is who must help me, for you alone can do this thing, and if you cannot, then it only remains for me to die."

The warder on hearing these words became so troubled that it was long before he could find speech. At length he burst out:—

"Would to God I had never set eyes on you. It was an unlucky hour when first I began to receive



[To face page 16.]

“THE WARDER GOT THE BEAKER AND SWORE A MIGHTY OATH TO
HELP FLORES.”

your gifts, for what you ask is about to cost me my life, and for no consideration whatever would I have assisted you in such a rash enterprise if I had not sworn fidelity to you. But I shall keep my word, even if it costs not only my life, but even yours and Blanchflor's. Go back to your lodgings and come again after three days; meanwhile I must think out some plan."

"Three days," said Flores, "is a long time."

"It seems to me rather a short preparation for death, and much longer we cannot hope to retain our lives."

On the day fixed when Flores reached the warder's house the latter had bought a number of baskets big and little, all of which he had filled with roses, and in addition to these he had a woman's garb, red as the roses themselves, and this he ordered Flores to put on. Whereupon the porter laid him in one of the biggest baskets and covered him up entirely with roses. This done he called several pages and ordered them to carry up the baskets to the damsels in the tower, but "that basket," said he, pointing to the one wherein Flores lay, "you are to give to Blanchflor, who is the fairest of them all". The pages went their way, but they had not got very far before they found that something was amiss. Those who carried Flores began to feel the basket too heavy, and were minded to lighten their burden by throwing some of the roses away.

You may imagine Flores' distress whilst this conversation lasted. Luckily they were so frightened of the warder that they durst not meddle with the baskets; but something happened which was scarcely more fortunate. They could not find out Blanchflor's room, and carried the basket instead to another damsel whose name was Clares. She thanked them for their trouble and began to cull the roses from the

basket as soon as the pages had gone. When Flores marked that some one was disturbing the roses on him, he naturally thought it was his beloved Blanchflor, and suddenly jumped out of the basket. At this unlooked-for sight, Clares was so frightened that she uttered a loud cry, which brought all the other damsels forthwith hurrying to her room to see what was the matter. Flores, whose first suspicion was that the warder had betrayed him, had, notwithstanding, enough presence of mind to jump down into the basket again and cover himself over with the roses. When the first alarm was past Clares came to, and being a clever and sensible maiden, she at once understood what had happened, and saw that the cause of her alarm was a young man, dressed as a girl, who, concealed in a basket of roses, had tried to smuggle himself in to his sweetheart. Now she was not only clever but good, and therefore did not want to betray any one. When she was asked why she shrieked out she made the following answer:—

“Just as I was leaning over the roses a squirrel darted out of them, and that frightened me so much that I could not help shrieking.”

They all bantered her on her timidity, but she took it in good part and joined in their laughter so that nobody entertained any suspicions. When she had made them a present of some roses they all left her with the exception of Blanchflor, who was her best friend and whose room lay next to her own. When they were alone Clares smiled and said:—

“Come hither, Blanchflor, and I will show you the loveliest rose the earth has yet produced. Make haste! Perhaps you will recognise it.”

“You are happy, Clares,” answered Blanchflor, “in being able to delight in flowers, and in not knowing what it is to love. As for me, sorrow is my portion, and roses give me no joy. When the

year has drawn to a close the king will make me his bride; but neither he nor any one else shall have me, for Flores, whom I loved so dearly, played me false, and nothing now remains to me but to die."

"For Flores' sake," said Clares smiling once more a roguish smile, for she had already an inkling as to who the youth in the basket was, "for Flores' sake you can do me the pleasure of *looking at* the rose which I have here in the basket for you."

When Blanchflor heard the name of Flores she ran and drew nigh to the basket, but that very moment Flores jumped out of the roses and folded her in his arms. You can imagine what a joy was theirs. They were loth to leave off kissing and weeping tears of gladness, but Clares could not refrain from saying:—

"It seems, after all, that you ought to care about flowers and be pleased with the rose I gave you".

"That is nothing to marvel at, for the rose is Flores, my heart's delight. But you must hide us, for our life depends on the king not learning aught of this."

Clares naturally promised not to reveal anything and to hinder the rest from coming to Blanchflor's room; but very shortly afterwards word came from the king that he wanted to talk to Blanchflor and Clares, whose turn it was to wait on him for that month. Clares bade Blanchflor hurry and go at once, and Blanchflor promised to go directly, but when Clares had gone she quite forgot all about it through talking with Flores. They had a thousand things to tell each other. Blanchflor told him how sad she was when she was dragged away into captivity, and Flores related his adventures during his journey, and the conversation ran away with the time without either of them taking thought of the danger in which they stood.

Clares meanwhile had gone to the king, who at once inquired after Blanchflor, but she, believing that her friend was coming directly, said that Blanchflor had set out to go to the king when she herself had started. Time wore on, but no Blanchflor appeared, so the king dispatched a page to her room to bid her come without delay.

The page went and delivered the king's behest. At first they were very frightened when they saw the page entering the room, but as he did not betray any suspicion of Flores being a youth in disguise, they dismissed their fears. Blanchflor had to betake herself to the king without loss of time, but nevertheless they had so much to confide to each other that the minutes sped fast without the lovers noticing it.

The page meanwhile returned to the king, and related how he had found Blanchflor in company with another damsel, that she had promised to wait upon his Majesty at once; but the king, who wondered who this strange damsel could be, resolved to ascertain for himself the reason of Blanchflor's delay. For this purpose he went to her room, and there he found her and Flores, both unmindful of all danger, and simply happy in having found each other again. It did not take him long before he discovered by looking at the pretended damsel that she was in reality a youth in disguise. He was exceedingly wroth at discovering this, and drew his sword with the intention of slaying the pair; but the page who was present fell straightway on his knees before the king, and besought him not to commit any rash act which he might afterwards regret. The king restrained his wroth, turned to Flores, and asked him who he was, and how he came to venture to smuggle himself into the king's castle.

"Ah," answered Flores, "I alone am the guilty

one and Blanchflor is innocent, therefore do her no hurt, but me you are at liberty to punish as much as you think my act deserves. Perhaps you may not find it so nefarious when you learn all the circumstances that led to it. For many years past Blanchflor has been my plighted bride. She was snatched treacherously from me, and carried off to you. It is, therefore, contrary to justice that she should be held captive, nor do I deem that I ought in justice to be punished for having sought to take back what has been stolen from me. Let the knights and kings try the cause and pronounce judgment therein, and I have such confidence in your kingly honour as to believe that you will not punish us unjustly."

"Good," rejoined the king. "It shall be done as you wish, and the court shall pronounce a sentence of life or death."

Thereupon he called to himself forty knights, and bade them closely guard the prisoner. This done, he sent a message to all the chief councillors, kings, earls and knights in the kingdom, and bade them come to the palace to adjudicate in the case. When they had assembled the king stood up and made a speech.

"A great shame has befallen me, and I have had you summoned to judge concerning it. A short time ago I bought a beauteous maiden from Apulia, and paid for her seven times her weight in gold. When I gazed on her loveliness it seemed to me that price was not too high, for she was the fairest damsel I had ever beheld, and I even thought of making her my queen. I held her dear and believed that she loved me; but now you shall hear what happened. Clares and she are in duty bound to come to me every day and do me service, but to-day she came not. I hastened, therefore, to her bower, and there

I found her in company with a young man. I thought of slaying them both on the spot, but they besought me in God's name for clemency, and begged that their cause might be tried. This is why I have had you called, and now you must pronounce judgment, for I have said what I know of this matter. It is your duty to avenge my outraged honour, and give such judgment that others may tremble to cause the mighty king of Babylon shame and dishonour."

The first to stand up was a king named Marsilius, the oldest and wisest of the councillors of the king, and thus he spake:—

"We have all heard what our lord has said, and we ought to pronounce sentence on the guilty ones; but justice demands that he who is accused of a crime ought to be allowed to say what he can in his own defence. For this reason, then, let Flores and Blanchflor come before us, and let us not condemn them unheard. To whatever they can urge in their defence we ought to lend a willing ear; but if we find that they acted as they did to insult the king of malice aforethought, then we shall doom them both to the most painful death."

When Marsilius had said his say a king whose name was Plato arose and spoke.

"It is our first duty to protect our king's honour," he said. "Now if we let the man, who was so rash as to insult the king, speak, he will of a surety serve us up lie after lie till we end by believing his words and declaring him guiltless. Therefore it seems wisest to me to condemn him to death straightway rather than allow him to attempt a defence." This speech gave general satisfaction, and they all began to cry out that Flores ought to be slain and Blanchflor buried alive before either of them had a chance of uttering a word. When the clamour was at its height Earl Gripun ordered silence and said:—

“In no wise can we pronounce sentence without first strictly investigating everything, for that is in accordance with our oath. We must summon the defendants and hear what they have to say.”

This wise speech calmed the excitement, and Flores and Blanchflor were thereupon led before the judgment-seat. The king now asked the captive youth how he contrived to smuggle himself into such a well-guarded tower, and said that he was convinced that the prisoner could not have done so without employing sorcery. But Flores related at length everything that had happened—how Blanchflor was carried away, how he himself had sought for her unceasingly, and how with the warder’s help he had gained the tower. He concluded his speech with these words:—

“And now, I pray you, judge justly between the king and me. I myself will maintain the truth of my words and offer myself to fight in single combat, on horse or on foot, with any knight whom the king shall choose to maintain his cause, and the only boon I crave is the loan of horse and arms for the fray.”

But Blanchflor wept and said:—

“God in heaven knows that Flores has spoken the truth, and I was stolen away from him. I am aware that the king would have me for his bride, but I would rather slay myself than take other husband than Flores. Wherefore I beseech you, good sirs, either to give us both our lives, or else sentence us both to death, for we cannot live without each other.”

Then the warder was also summoned. He appeared loaded with heavy fetters. He too bore witness of the truth of Flores’ words, and it was determined unanimously that the matter should be decided by single combat. The king was to give Flores the best charger he had, and the finest weapons he could procure, as well as range against him a knight with whom

Flores was to do battle. If the knight won the victory then both Flores and Blanchflor were to be burnt alive on a pyre, but if Flores won, he and his lady-love were to gain their freedom and leave to depart from Babylon. Moreover, to requite them for the sufferings they had undergone, the king was to grant Flores sevenfold Blanchflor's weight in gold. Both the king and Flores declared themselves satisfied with this decree, and the king selected the bravest from among his knights to do battle with Flores. Both warriors clad themselves in complete steel, the steeds were led forth, and they vaulted into their saddles without the least effort.

Then they rushed against each other with such swiftness that their lances splintered as if they had been made of glass. But this abated not their courage: they drew their swords, and hurled themselves once more against each other, and neither would yield to his fellow. Flores cleft the knight's shield with a blow and wounded him in the shoulder, but the knight answered with another stroke which rendered his enemy's shield useless, and Flores barely escaped getting wounded. Then the knight again came within sword reach, and Flores gave him two cuts, one of which carried off his left hand, while the other smote his horse, which now tumbled headless down to the ground. Even Flores' own horse lost his foreleg in the joust, and both antagonists leapt to the ground to continue their strife on foot. Hitherto Flores had managed to escape without a wound, whereat the knight became so exasperated that he assailed Flores to the utmost of his power, and gave him such blows that Flores' helmet was cleft, and blood began to spurt from his head. All now thought that the young man's last hour had come, but in that perilous moment he suddenly bethought him of the ring his mother had given him at parting. This he

turned round, and now neither fire, nor iron, nor water could harm him.

With renewed strength he rushed against his foe, cut off his right arm and stretched him on the ground, a corpse. Then he turned to the assembly and said:—

“Now I ask all honest men to say if I have not honourably acquitted myself in this combat, and whether Blanchflor, the warder, and I have not the right to go our way free and unmolested?”

All with one voice replied that he had honourably acquitted himself and his friends, and the king, whose wrath was changed into amazement at the sprightly youth, had the gold brought which, by the verdict of the court, he was bound to give to Flores; but Flores said:—

“God forbid that, after this, I take aught of gold from you”.

The king, on hearing this generous answer, became still more delighted with Flores, and exclaimed:—

“Stay with me, both of you, as long as you list. Be my friend, Flores, and I will bestow on you the best kingdom under my sway. Moreover I will let you rule over all my kingdom, my substance and my servants, retaining for myself only the rank of king and this tower.”

“O king,” answered Flores, “I thank you with all my heart for the honour you would show me, but, with your leave, I would rather return unto mine own land.”

For the space of a year, however, they abode with the king, and enjoyed great marks of his esteem; but when the year drew to a close Flores went to the king, thanked him for all the honours that had been shown him, and told him that he would fain depart on his journey. He ended by recommending to the king's favour all those who had stood by him in his dark days. The king summoned these same to him,

and richly rewarded them. Marsilius received the best kingdom in the whole of Babylon, Earl Gripun got the kingdom of Marsilius, and the warder the earldom that Gripun had previously held. Darius got great riches, and the ferryman all that which Darius formerly possessed.

After the king had taken farewell of Flores and Blanchflor with a kiss, he followed them with all his court as far as the seashore, and did not return until their sails were lost to sight.

After a voyage of some weeks Flores and Blanchflor reached Apulia. There the king and queen had, in the meantime, died, and Flores was consequently proclaimed his father's successor. The first thing he did after ascending the throne was to celebrate his marriage with Blanchflor, and the wedding was solemnised with joy and gladness throughout the country. The twain lived for many years afterwards, had children and grandchildren, and long after their death their people used to sing :—

Grant me, Lord Christ, I Thee implore,
A love as steadfast, loyal, and bold,
As Flores unto Blanchflor bore
When she from him as slave was sold.

For hazarding his fair young life
All for the maid his heart held dear,
They dwelt together, man and wife,
For virtue honoured, many a year.



Duke Frederick.



MANY hundreds of years ago there lived and reigned in Normandy a duke of the name of Frederick, who was the pattern of a perfect knight—friendly and gentle towards all ; generous, trusty and brave, and, for those qualities, beloved and respected by his subjects.

One day he went a-hunting with his knights. Merrily sounded their horns in the wood, and the hounds could hardly be held in check. A herd of deer was seen hurrying into the wood, and the hounds were at once unleashed ; but they only ran a few yards, and then stopped abruptly. All this seemed passing strange, and Duke Frederick at once suspected that there was something in it, and, being of a brave and venturesome disposition, he determined to find out for himself what mystery the wood concealed ; so, separating himself from his companions, he plunged into the thicket, harbouring no dread, for his horse was strong and hardy, and his accoutrements the finest that could be. He wore a white coat-of-mail and a gleaming steel-helmet ; his shield, which displayed a golden bow for badge, had withstood many a blow before, and his sword was keen and doughty.

First he followed a narrow path that wound along a woodland rivulet, but soon he lost his way and no longer recognised where he was ; then he rambled for a long time at random about the dense wood till at length he noticed a mountain which towered above

the tree-tops, and thither he wended his way through thorns and brambles. At last, about midday, when he had forced his way as far as the foot of the mountain, he discovered certain tiny footmarks of what appeared to be an unusually small man. These he followed, and it was not long before he perceived a little dwarf come riding out of the thicket. The horse that carried the dwarf was smaller than a hart but somewhat larger than a roe-buck; and the rider himself was clad in the most costly armour; moreover he wore a red tunic wrought of crimson stuff, under which he had a shirt of mail composed of the lightest and finest rings one could see; his breeches were white as ivory, and his helmet glittered with gold and precious stones. His shield was likewise of gold, and in his hand the little man held a spear which was quite three ells long. As soon as the good Duke Frederick saw him, he greeted him courteously, and the dwarf replied:—

“God requite you for your friendly greeting, but I fear you are not my friend”.

“Why should I not be so? I am conscious of having done no wrong towards you.”

“Good,” answered the dwarf; “I will trust you and tell you who I am and the reason of my present plight, and, perhaps, you will then be able and willing to help me. My name is Malurit, and, until a short time ago, I was a powerful king. Three kings, six dukes, and thirty counts did me service; but now I have lost both land and fee, and only the castle of Caerleon can I call my own. My men have fallen away from me. Only fifty knights have remained faithful to their king. These will risk their heart’s blood in my cause; but the rest have risen up against me, chosen another king over them, and purpose, in three days’ time, to storm Caerleon, wherefore I beseech you, Duke of Normandy, to vouchsafe to

follow me and help me to defend my last stronghold, my children and my wife against the rebels."

"I would fain help you," answered the duke, "to the utmost of my power. So far as I can of myself be of any service I shall not hesitate to risk my life for you."

When the dwarf had thanked him for his generous offer, they rode together towards a small track on the mountain. The dwarf's horse trotted on in front, and Frederick, who did not know the way, followed, until they at length reached a great gate in the mountain. This gate was so high that even the duke could ride through it without difficulty. They now found themselves in the kingdom of the dwarf-king. A fair meadow lay outspread before the duke, and thereon uprose a mighty castle, with lofty towers and battlements.

"To whom does this splendid castle belong?" asked the duke when he had recovered from his first surprise.

"That is Caerleon," answered the dwarf. "There is not a castle in all the country to be compared to this stronghold for size and strength. There I hope, by nightfall, to see you as my guest."

Evening was drawing on; but, fortunately, the castle lay hard by. When they had proceeded a little further the dwarf bade the duke farewell, saying he would ride on first.

"I must needs ride on before and tell my knights that you are coming here as our friend, for were they, without warning, to catch a glimpse of such a giant as you, they would assuredly flee headlong, even if they were a thousand strong, for they are as small of stature as myself. Wait, therefore, without the castle, till I have informed them of your coming."

When the dwarf-king had uttered these words he rode to the castle, but the duke had not long to wait

before Malurit with his folk—knights, minstrels and pages—came towards him and bade the longed-for yet dreaded guest fair welcome. Then they accompanied him to the castle, but the gate was not made for men of Duke Frederick's height. The duke himself could walk, but not ride in, for the horse was too big for the gate, so the rider had to dismount and leave the trusty creature to a tiny dwarf named Klariant, whom he directed to look after the horse and guard it. But Klariant got quite frightened at such a charge, and stared for a long time at the powerful, snorting animal, which was ever so much bigger than all the other horses he had ever seen. Then he bade four other dwarfs assist him, but numerous as they were, they did not know how they would ever manage to unbuckle the saddle. At last one of them hit on the plan of bringing a chair, and by getting on it he made himself tall enough to reach the saddle-girths and unbuckle them. Then they brought out water and provender, and tried their best to carry out the duke's wishes.

Malurit and his little knights had not the same difficulty as the duke in getting through the castle-gate; for them it was wide and large, and they capered on their little steeds merrily into the castle-court. Duke Frederick followed them on foot and was ushered by Malurit into the hall, where he took off his armour. This room was more splendid than any the duke had yet seen; the walls were hung with costly tapestries of woven silk and velvet, and sapphires and rubies glittered at him everywhere.

When Malurit's queen—her name was Grindor—learnt what guest her husband had brought home, she and the ladies of her court proceeded at once to meet him and bid him welcome. Her court was not large, for only six of her ladies had remained faithful; but the little queen, who was hardly taller than an ell,

was so pretty, and greeted him with such dignity and sweetness, that she inspired the same reverence as she would have done in happier days. On her head she wore a golden crown, her mantle was bespangled with jewels, and her dress was fastened at the waist by a girdle, the like of which the duke had never seen.

When the little queen had greeted the duke she took him by the hand and ushered him into the banqueting-hall, which was even finer than the room in which the duke was first received. This room was inlaid with four different kinds of marble; one was as white as snow, another was green, the third brown, and the fourth as red as blood. The windows were of crystal and the benches of cypress wood; and a most splendid feast was set before them. Mead and wine sparkled in goblets, the table was of emerald, and gold and ivory everywhere met the eye; the rarest delicacies were handed round to the company, and the queen was never tired of inviting the duke to partake of all these costly dishes.

When the duke had eaten his fill and quenched his thirst, he arose from the table and was ushered into a bedchamber, where a magnificent bed was ready to receive him. On the morrow when he got up to dress he found in his room a little dwarf named Aribarst, who was Malurit's chamberlain, holding a wash-tub of gold, which he presented to the duke, and other dwarfs stood by with water and towels in readiness. With these they served the duke whilst he dressed, and afterwards they conducted him round the castle and showed him all its marvels.

In this wise two days passed away, but on the morning of the third the duke, as he was standing on the castle turret, saw the enemy advancing in the direction of the castle; troops of dwarfs were marching from all quarters, and when they reached the

great plain in front of Caerleon they encamped and pitched their tents. Now all the tents were magnificent, but their captain's was the most splendid of all, being of cloth of gold laced with silk, and the knob of the tent-pole was wrought of a gold sphere, on which one beheld an eagle with its wings extended in flight.

When King Malurit saw the camp-fires blazing, he called together the few knights who still remained faithful to him, and bade them arm themselves for the final conflict. Duke Frederick also put on his armour and walked to his horse, which Klariant had guarded faithfully, but the dwarf was not able to put on its bridle, and the duke himself had to fix the saddle-girths round its middle. This he did in such a way that they were as firm as a rock, whereupon he vaulted into his saddle and drew his sword. At the same instant King Malurit ran up to him and besought him, in moving terms, not to forget his promise.

"The time is now come," he cried, "when my fate is to be decided! All depends on the assistance you can render me. I shall not prove ungrateful. If you help me to retain my kingdom and my castle, I will give you as much gold and precious stones as you desire."

"Keep your gold and precious stones for yourself, for you are right welcome to them. As for me, I fight not for pay; I have promised to help you according to my power, and that promise I shall keep."

"God reward you. Whatever be the issue of this day, I shall always remain your debtor."

Whilst they were speaking, one of the sentries approached King Malurit and announced that the enemy were taking their midday rest. When the king heard this he cried:—

"Now there is no time for delay. I have often

put ten of them to flight, and I doubt not I can do so again. I ride now to the captain's tents, and I dare say I shall affright them there. Only stand by me when superior forces compel me to yield and the knights and squires pursue me."

"Attempt nothing rash," said the duke to him, "and bear in mind that the welfare of your people depends on your life. Do not, therefore, ride alone into the ranks of your foes."

"Of danger there is none. My horse is the best to be found anywhere, and he is protected by an armour of serpent's skin, which is utterly impetrable. Hide yourself behind this tree, and hasten to my assistance when you see me come riding towards you."

As soon as he had uttered these words he dug his spurs into his charger, grasped his lance tightly and galloped bravely against the foe, who were sitting at their ease outside the captain's tent and eating, when they saw the brave King Malurit riding up to them. They jumped up at once and armed themselves in the greatest haste, and twelve knights assailed him ere he had reached the tent, but the first knight was struck by so lusty a blow from Malurit's spear that it hurled both horse and man to the ground. Then Malurit drew his sword, grasped the hilt with both hands and hewed lustily at the enemy, but so many dwarfs now swarmed up that he found he was no longer able to withstand the enemy by himself, so he turned his horse, and galloped to the place where Duke Frederick was hidden, but, although the darts whizzed round him, he managed to escape unscathed, thanks to his good armour and swift steed.

But now the fight took another turn, for Duke Frederick burst from his hiding-place and galloped into the troop of dwarfs, trampling and cutting down

all who came in his way, hurling one dwarf here, another there, and not seldom catching hold of two at once, and flinging them away. Had there been ten times as many of them it would have been all the same, for the dwarfs could not do much against a giant like him; and the end of it was that all who had taken up arms against King Malurit yielded themselves captive in order to save their lives.

When the king's men up in the castle saw this rapid defeat, they took the camp by storm and made of it a huge bath of blood. They captured 1,500 prisoners, and would have captured more if the king had not ordered them to cease fighting. On the duke's advice, he immediately sent a little dwarf as herald to the rest of the host to bid them not to flee, but to remain in the camp without fear, and so great was the terror that none dared stir.

The conflict was over, and all that had to be done now was to muster the prisoners, which, being done, it was found that all the chief rebels had been taken, namely, the leader of them, a king named Otrik; three dukes, amongst whom was Malurit's own nephew Erik, and, besides these, a multitude of counts, knights and high-born men. When Malurit had assembled all these round him he got up from his throne, and, turning to Duke Frederick, said:—

“Now you must judge between me and these nobles, and ask them what plaint they have against me, and why they wish to drive me away from my land and my castle. If they can prove satisfactorily that I have acted unjustly towards them, then I am prepared to answer such charges openly, and you, Duke Frederick, are at liberty to pronounce sentence on me; whereas if they fail to show that I have acted unjustly, then you must judge them as they deserve for having withstood their lord and king.

The duke sat down and summoned the prisoners to

declare what they had against the king or what excuse they could urge. Thereupon a count named Fridel-mund turned to the king, and answered as follows:—

“Alas, my lord, I would rather have been on your side, for you know that I always loved you, but the others constrained me to swear fealty and homage to Otrik”.

“What you say is true,” declared King Malurit, “and I put no blame on you, and I will beseech Duke Frederick to spare your life; but,” he added, “I cannot forgive Duke Erik, for he is the cause and origin of all this rebellion. He is my sister’s son, I loved him more than all the rest, gave him houses and substance, made him rich and powerful, and for all this he requited me only with ingratitude.”

Then King Otrik arose and said:—

“That is God’s truth: none other than Erik was behind all this, and it was he who persuaded the people to proclaim me their lord”.

All declared the same, and Duke Erik was condemned to lose his life for his treachery. A small but powerful dwarf was summoned, and he cut off the traitor’s head so that it rolled along the ground. Immediately afterwards two other dukes, eight counts, and several other mighty lords were summoned, and they, too, paid the last penalty for their traitorous conduct. After these were executed, Duke Frederick turned to King Malurit and asked him why he had spared Otrik, who had been the leader of the revolt, but the king answered:—

“Enough blood has already flowed, and I have no desire for Otrik’s life. Those who have misled the rest have expiated their treachery by death, for justice demanded it; but those, on the other hand, who have been misled I am ready to pardon, and if Otrik will swear allegiance to me he may receive back his kingdom in fee.”

When Otrik had knelt and expressed his thanks for this unexpected clemency, King Malurit turned to those who had remained faithful to him during the revolt, and said :—

“Hitherto I have been able to show you scant honour, but now you shall find that I am not ungrateful for the fidelity you have shown me. I will now bestow on you fiefs and riches, so that you shall be rich all your lives long.”

After he had there and then apportioned to them the fiefs and possessions that were escheated through the execution of the traitors, he turned to Duke Frederick and said :—

“I have you to thank for my crown and all I possess. I know not how to requite such gallant service, but as long as I live I shall recognise my obligation to do you homage, and you must, as my over-lord, rule over myself and all my dominion.”

“It is a happiness to me,” replied the duke, “that it was in my power to render you some assistance, and the memory thereof is sufficient recompense.”

“I might have expected such an answer after the generosity you have displayed, but now I will venture on asking you to do me another service. You have so terrified my subjects that I know that it will not be difficult to govern them henceforward so long as they retain such terror. I would, therefore, ask you to tell my dwarfs that you heard up in heaven how wroth were God and the angel-hosts at the wrong done me, and that God sent you down here to punish the rebels. You may be good enough to add that you heard God say that He would send here twenty giants like yourself in the case of any knight daring henceforward to set himself up against me, and that all dwarfs who refuse to obey me shall be roasted and boiled without mercy. If they hear this, I am inclined to think they will be as meek as lambs.”

Duke Frederick smiled at the little king's cunning diplomacy, and promised to speak as he requested. He therefore turned to the chiefs of the dwarfs, assumed an exceedingly harsh countenance, and said :—

“ Remember well what I am about to say to you, and lay it to heart. I am sent down here from heaven to keep you in order. If ever again you try to trifle with your good king it shall fare far worse with you, for then God will send against you twenty giants much bigger and stronger than I am, and then you may be certain that not one of you will have a whole bone on his back, or a head on his shoulders. I have now spoken this to you, so that you may not henceforth lay the blame on your ignorance and lack of knowledge.”

That speech caused them pain, and they all begged tearfully for their lives, and promised for the future to be so submissive and obedient, that King Malurit should never have any cause of complaint.

Then the duke turned to King Malurit to bid him farewell. The king tried at first to induce him to stay, but when he perceived that the duke was bent on going, he only asked him for leave to accompany his illustrious guest a part of the way. It was not a difficult prayer to grant, and the duke now betook himself to the little queen to bid her adieu. She thanked him with tears, and called down the blessings of heaven on his head, and at last produced a costly chess-board, the squares of which were alternately of emeralds and rubies, and begged him to accept it as a parting gift ; but the duke thanked her for her kindness and refused to accept any presents, for he had all he needed in his land of Normandy. Thereupon King Malurit accompanied him with great pomp, his people following, to the confines of the mountain kingdom. When he reached this spot he ordered his retinue to stop and wait for him while he himself rode on further in the duke's company. When night

approached the duke asked him either to return or accompany him to the hunting-lodge he had in the vicinity, for the wood was dark and dangerous for so small a man. But King Malurit smiled and said:—

“I am not afraid of the wood. I have lain there many a night, and I know more about the chase than you think. I have often been near you without your perceiving it, when you were out hunting, and the last time you were here it was I who frightened your hounds from the chase. I did that for the purpose of drawing your attention to myself, and getting an opportunity of asking your assistance. This help you have honourably rendered me, for which God will reward you. You have refused to accept all the gifts I wished to bestow on you, but this ring you must not decline, for it is a magic ring, adorned, as you see, with four stones, and each of these possesses a peculiar virtue. So long as you wear the first stone no sword can harm you. The second stone is still more remarkable, for were you to lie for twenty years at the bottom of the sea without food or raiment, yet, thanks to this stone, you would neither drown, freeze, nor starve. Even the third stone can be useful to you, for were the house wherein you were staying to burn down, yet the fire would do you no hurt so long as you wore the ring with this stone. But the fourth stone is the noblest of them all, for if you turn the ring so that the stones come inwards, and tie it to your hand in such a way that it is not seen, you will immediately become invisible to all about you.”

When the dwarf had said this he turned the ring round, and closed his hand, and at once disappeared from the duke's sight; but a moment afterwards he stretched out his hand, turned the ring round again, and in that very moment the duke caught sight of him again. The duke, on seeing this marvel,

rejoiced exceedingly, thanked the dwarf for his gift, and accepted the precious ring with pleasure. Thereupon they separated, after further expressions of mutual friendship, King Malurit riding back to his people, and Duke Frederick going further into the recesses of the wood adjoining his territory. He urged his horse into a trot, hoping to reach home before night-fall, but just as he was about to turn off at a bend in the road his ear caught the cry of a woman in distress. The horse came to a sudden halt, and the duke determined at once to find out who it was that wept and was lamenting. He dug the spurs again into his horse, and galloped off in the direction from which the voice was heard. When he had ridden some little distance, he perceived a huge giant who had captured a knight who, bound hand and foot, was hanging under the horse's belly, and in that way was being dragged over stocks and stones, his clothes in rags and his shirt hardly hanging on his back. The giant had taken his arms from him, and, to torture him still further, was striking him with a birch-twigg, so that blood was streaming from the unfortunate wight. The knight's faithful spouse followed him weeping, and uttered piercing shrieks every time the giant struck his prisoner. When Duke Frederick saw this outrage he waxed very wroth, and called out to the giant to release the knight at once, but the monster only jeered at him in return, and said:—

“You mad fool, try first to get yourself out of a fix before you attempt to help another, for you have come so close to me that it hardly seems likely to me that you will escape the death you deserve”.

“My life,” answered Duke Frederick, “is in God's hands and does not depend on your will; but I will gladly venture it to deliver a fellow-creature from your barbarity.”

When the knight's spouse heard these words she regained courage, and ceased her lamentation; but the giant, who was unused to such heroism, got beside himself with rage, grasped a tremendous iron bar which he had in his hand, and aimed with it a deadly blow at the knight. Had the iron touched him, both he and his horse would have been crushed to atoms, but, luckily, it only grazed his shield, which was splintered by it into little bits. Had the knight not had Malurit's ring it would have been most certainly all over with him; but now he merely turned it, and became that very instant invisible to the giant, who was utterly disconcerted when, instead of seeing the knight, he only saw empty space around him. But soon he had further reason for wonder, for while he was thus staring, his arm was struck by an invisible yet sharp-biting sword, which in a second cleft his arm from his body. An instant afterwards he received a fresh blow which laid him level with the ground, so that the mountains and dales resounded with his fall, and while he was recovering from his astonishment his unseen adversary had cut off his head and put an end to his life.

The knight and his spouse hardly knew what to think of this curious strife. When Duke Frederick suddenly disappeared they were both half-frightened, for they foresaw that the giant would make them pay for the threats of the unknown hero. The poor woman raised loud lamentations, for she could not help thinking that Duke Frederick had taken to flight from fear, and had abandoned them, whereas her joy was the more deep when she witnessed the unexpected defeat of the giant. She already suspected who her champion was, and it was not long before she saw him again, for after he had won the victory Frederick turned his wonderful ring, and stood before her in human shape. Overcome with joy she sank

down at his feet and uttered a profusion of thanks, to which he paid little heed, but raised her up and conducted her to the captive knight, whose fetters he removed. The latter, who immediately forgot his recent sufferings, was beside himself with joy at his unexpected release, and declared that he would never forget the service that Duke Frederick had rendered him; but the duke interrupted his expressions of gratitude, and bade him instead say what his name was, and how he had met the terrible giant.

"That I will gladly do," replied the knight. "My name is Gamorin and I am king over Scotland: but henceforward I and all my people will be your servants, and you may rule over me and them, for without your help I had been a dead man. A short time ago I rode out hunting, accompanied by Belafir, my queen, and we rode through valleys and over mountains, but nowhere did I chance to light on any game or come across any living creature. As twilight approached we saw a meadow, and in that meadow we purposed spending the night. We got out some food and wine, and were just about beginning our supper when this giant crept behind me as I little suspected it, gripped hold of me, and perfidiously tied me fast to a tree, and there I spent the whole night. But what made me most desperate was his putting my wife in fetters too, and my seeing no chance of our being rescued. The miscreant took our food and wine, ate and drank, and was merry till he fell asleep. He woke up at sunrise, took my horse which I had tethered the night before, and led him to me. Then he deprived me of my arms and threw away my coat-of-mail and sword, bound my feet and hands again, and finally suspended me to the horse's belly. Then he took off my wife's fetters and gave her leave to go whither she pleased, but Belafir had no heart to be parted from me, but

followed me weeping to the spot where, by good luck, you came and released me."

"Do you think," asked the duke, "you can find your arms again?"

"I hope so," rejoined Gamorin, "for though it is some little distance from here, yet I fancy I know my way pretty well."

Then Duke Frederick wrapped him up in a cloak, and they rode towards the wood in the direction Gamorin pointed out. But the day was far advanced, and darkness coming on constrained them to rest for the night. In the morning, however, they found the weapons and armour, which Gamorin gladly donned. The duke meanwhile found so much pleasure in Gamorin's and Belafir's society that he was loth to part from them, and so invited them to be his guests in Normandy. Gamorin thanked him for his courteous invitation, but said he could not accept it then, as he had promised to go to a great tournament which the king of Ireland was about to hold, and all the foremost knights from every country were coming to it in order to measure their strength one against the other. Duke Frederick was exceedingly glad when he heard this, for, like the brave and venturesome knight he was, he never neglected to assist at a tourney, and his thoughts of returning to Normandy were at once dismissed, and moreover he resolved instead to continue the journey, without loss of time, in the company of Gamorin and Belafir, so as not to arrive later than the day fixed.

They hastened as fast as they could, and reached the town just as the great tournament was about to be held. There all was life and excitement; the streets swarmed with foreign knights and squires in search of accommodation. The knights' shields hung outside the houses, so that every one who knew their coats-of-arms could also find where the knights

themselves dwelt. Gamorin and Frederick forced their way through the crowds to the house which Gamorin had chosen for his lodging. At the door they were met by the Scottish king's pages, who rejoiced at recognising their lord's coat-of-arms, and bade him welcome. They helped the travellers off their horses, took their weapons, and conducted them to their rooms, and there meat and wine awaited them. When they had refreshed themselves sufficiently after their fatiguing journey, they dressed and rode forth into the town to greet the renowned knights that had assembled. Most of the famous knights of the Round Table were there—Gavian, Segramor, Orillus, Lewis, Vigolis, and many others whose names are still known in song and story.

The great tournament began in the afternoon. The pages carried lances for their masters, the heralds exhorted them to bravery, and the ladies waved their greeting to them from the galleries. Every knight jousted in the presence of his lady-love. Gamorin had challenged Lewis, and struck with his lance the latter's golden shield so that both horse and rider fell headlong; but Gavian dashed with such force against Gamorin as to lift him out of the saddle and throw him a considerable distance from his horse. Soon the contest became general, lances were splintered against shields, the horses rolled over each other on the field, and squires hurried forward to hand the combatants fresh lances in place of those that had been broken, or else to help their masters who, clad in heavy armour, could not get up by themselves when unhorsed. It was all a wild confusion of men and horses, dust and shouting.

Duke Frederick, who at first held himself somewhat aloof from the fray, was now seized with a desire to take part in it; he snatched a lance from the hand of a squire standing by, and rushed against the brave

Gavian. It was not long before he *met* his new adversary, and both clashed against each other with such sudden fury that the lances broke off short at the shaft, but the horsemen themselves sat on their saddles as motionless as statues. They resolved to test their strength once more, took fresh lances, and tilted against each other; but even then the victory was undecided, for though the lances were shattered as before and the horses thrown on their haunches, yet the riders themselves were not thrown from their saddles. It ended in both being declared victors, but just as the prize was about to be bestowed on them, a new competitor entered the lists. He was a knight named Tidonas, who, out of jealousy, could not brook the honour which Duke Frederick had reaped through being declared equal to the invincible Gavian, the foremost knight in the world. He therefore challenged Duke Frederick again, but this act of rashness cost him dear, for in the first joust Frederick threw him to the ground, and he had to be carried off the field unconscious by his squires. His horse which, according to the rules that regulated tournaments, became the property of the victor, allowed Frederick to do what he pleased with him; and now no one dared any longer to dispute the prize the duke had won in this display of chivalry.

Towards evening the knights foregathered at the inn, and loud rang the merriment as the beakers were filled and emptied. Frederick sat beside Gamorin and conversed with him, and, among other questions, he asked him if the king of Ireland had a daughter.

"I think I do remember," said he, "having heard of the king possessing an only daughter, remarkable for her dazzling beauty, but perhaps I am mistaken, for I did not see her among the ladies of the court, and it was not she who awarded the prize of victory."

"Alas, no," replied Gamorin, "the king does indeed

possess a daughter who is said to be the loveliest maiden 'neath the sun, but he is so jealous of her that he has shut her up in a lofty tower with no other company than the Mistress of the Robes and a few other maidens. No one, not even her most intimate friends, may see her, and, apart from her maidens, she has no one to associate with. None but the king and queen visit her, and they cherish her so dearly that they have resolved that no one in the whole world shall have her for wife."

Frederick became somewhat pensive when he heard these words, and made up his mind, without saying anything about it to any one, at least to see this princess whose beauty was so belauded. Night meanwhile approached, and the knights betook themselves to bed in order to be fresh and in good condition for the tournament on the morrow.

When day was dawning, Duke Frederick arose and went to church, for, like a pious knight, he wished to hear Mass before beginning the labours of the day. Next, he arrayed himself in armour, mounted his charger, and rode to the lists, for the drums and trumpets were already announcing the beginning of the tournament. The result was the same as on the previous day. Gavian and Frederick once more measured their strength against each other, but, as neither could overcome the other, both were declared victors, and that brought the tournament to a close.

Gamorin invited Frederick to accompany him to Scotland, and the duke thanked him, but said that that was impossible. He had inwardly resolved to remain where he was, so as to get an opportunity of meeting the fair Princess Floria, and for this he only waited the departure of the other knights. At length they left the town, and only Gamorin and his queen now remained in Frederick's company. On the departure of the stranger knights, Frederick went out to

examine more closely the tower wherein Floria was shut up. It lay immediately outside the town, and abutted directly on the sea. It had thick, impenetrable walls; the windows were placed high up, and guarded by strong iron-gratings; and its gate was defended by a drawbridge—in short, it was palpably impossible to gain access to it by main force, and the only thing to do was to resort to cunning. As he was racking his brain about this he met an old knight who had taken part in the tournament, but had not gone away, inasmuch as he abode in the town. Frederick began asking him questions about the tower and the princess, and the old knight corroborated Gamorin's story.

"She is," said he, "the loveliest maiden you could see, but the only man she meets is the king when he pays her a visit. She is waited on by the Mistress of the Robes and twelve maidens, and the gate is always kept locked, except when certain pages carry food there for those confined in the tower. The pages themselves are not admitted, but remain at the gate, and there hand over their load to a girl, who carries it up to the princess; otherwise the gates are always shut, and that I dare say is necessary, for it is said that the king has all his treasures stored there."

These tidings were very welcome to Duke Frederick, and now he bethought himself of his wonderful ring and the help it could afford him. On the following day he went to the tower again, and waited for the pages who had to take the princess her food, and directly he saw them he immediately turned his ring and followed them without their seeing him. It was just as the old knight had said: the gate was opened, a maid received the pages, but, while they were delivering their baskets to her, the knight stole in through the open doors, followed the maid up to the apartments of the princess, and there saw Floria surrounded by her attendants.

Her beauty surpassed all the descriptions he had heard. She had a slender, noble figure, and a countenance that spoke of goodness and courtesy. The duke stood in mute admiration before her, and, when the others had departed, he could not restrain his feelings, but stooped down and imprinted a kiss on her lips, whereat she was so astonished and frightened that she uttered a shrill cry, which alarmed the Mistress of the Robes and the rest of those in the room. The only answer Floria could give to their questions was that she thought a knight had kissed her. You can fancy what a hubbub ensued. They searched everywhere in the room, under benches, tables, and beds, but nowhere could they detect any human being, for, thanks to the ring, the duke was invisible. The Mistress of the Robes rated her soundly for her fantastic imagination, and bade her not be so silly another time. Then they went their way. But as soon as they had gone the duke resolved to venture on another visit, and, by turning his ring, stood before Floria in the guise of a handsome knight, at which she got even more frightened, and uttered a fresh cry still louder than the first; but while the Mistress of the Robes was hurrying in, the knight turned his ring and the attendants only saw, as before, an empty room. When Floria told them how she had, on this occasion, seen a handsome knight before her, there was, of course, a fresh search, and every nook and corner of the room was ransacked again, but with the same result—the knight was nowhere to be seen, and the Mistress of the Robes got more and more convinced that it was nothing more whatever than a fancy on the part of the princess. As she was a harsh old woman, who was not inclined to be made a laughing-stock of in that way, she brought out a stout birch-rod, which she showed Floria, and at the same time promised her a taste

of it next time she shrieked out and talked about knights or kisses. With this threat she went her way, leaving Floria utterly perplexed at these singular occurrences.

Duke Frederick now found that he had acted too rashly and only succeeded in frightening poor Floria, so, as soon as she had recovered from her first alarm, he bent down to her ear and told her in a whisper not to be frightened, for he who approached her in an invisible form meant her no harm, and had made his way into the inaccessible tower merely for love of her. The voice Floria heard sounded so sweet, and the words his lips uttered were so delicious to her ears, that she would not have screamed out in alarm this time even if she had not remembered the threat of the Mistress of the Robes. Duke Frederick proceeded to tell her who he was, how he had acquired the ring that rendered him invisible to all, and ended by saying that he had gained access to her only for the purpose of revealing his love and asking her if she would follow him to Normandy and there become his bride. After saying that he turned his ring, and once more stood before Floria in his natural shape.

The stately knight had not to wait long for the princess's joyful consent to exchange her prison tower for the castle in Normandy, and they now agreed to flee together from Ireland. When Duke Frederick received this promise, all he had to do was to steal out of the tower to prepare everything for their flight. When the pages came on the following day with their baskets, Duke Frederick followed the maid whose duty it was to receive them, and when the door was opened he passed the pages without being noticed, and was again in the open air.

He bade his friend Gamorin assist him in this difficult enterprise, and began to enlist followers from among the knights of that town. His liberality

and chivalrous demeanour made this no difficult task, and in a short time he had gained over to his side twelve knights and more than thirty squires on whom he could safely rely, and to whom he could trust himself without danger.

"I will proclaim to you," said he to them, "the honour that has befallen me, inasmuch as the noble maiden Floria has fallen in love with me and promised to flee with me to Normandy, but without your assistance I cannot carry her off. Help me therefore and I shall not forget to reward your loyalty. Gifts and lands will I bestow upon you. In my Normandy there are many castles and estates which I shall divide among you, so that you will all be rich and mighty."

All the knights swore they would remain loyal to him, and even the host in the inn promised to help the knight to the best of his ability. Frederick told him to procure a ship which would hold a hundred men, and such an one lay fully equipped in the harbour by the following day. The host also had it so amply stocked with meat and drink that the provisions might well last out for a whole year.

When all was ready, and day was slowly passing into night, Duke Frederick went up to the king to take leave of him and thank him at the same time for the honour he had bestowed upon him at the great tournament. The king replied graciously, and invited him to stay on in that town for some time, and did not leave him until he had wished him a prosperous voyage.

Duke Frederick smuggled himself into the tower in the same manner as before, and there met Floria, and said to her:—

"Floria, will you follow me, abandon your home and your people, and be mine?"

She answered him without hesitation:—

“Everything in the world, father and mother, home and country, will I give up to follow you”.

When Duke Frederick received this promise and had arranged with her the details of their flight, he took advantage of the door being opened again for the purpose of returning the baskets, and hurried home to his inn.

Floria now had recourse to the only one of her attendants whom she fully trusted, and asked her to accompany them in their flight, and this the maid promised to do, and everything was prepared for the journey. Duke Frederick, on his part, was not idle, and on reaching home he turned to his friends and exclaimed:—

“The night I trow is long and the sea wide, but time tarries not, so let us hasten”.

Then all hurried to the ship and got it ready for sailing, but the duke, together with five squires, betook himself in a little boat to the tower, which had a postern gate that looked on the sea, to which Floria's maid had obtained the key; and, on the appointed signal being given, the gate was opened and Floria and her maid stepped into the boat, which immediately glided noiselessly to the ship. When the fugitives had got on board the sails were unfurled, and the vessel, borne on a stiff breeze, made for the open sea. All was merriment and rejoicing on board; Gamorin and Belafir welcomed the beautiful Floria; a splendid banquet was spread, and the minstrels played and sang. Meanwhile the wind rose and increased to a gale; the billows began to lash the ship with all their force; the merriment was hushed, and the vessel was tossed hither and thither by the angry winds. At last a mighty wave surged over the ship, caught Duke Frederick and hurled him away into the foaming ocean, wherein he instantly disappeared before the gaze of the rest. Ere they

could recover from their consternation the ship was already a long distance off from the scene of the mishap, and help was now out of the question. Wild despair reigned on board, and Floria, overcome by grief, would have jumped into the sea if Gamorin had not caught hold of her the very instant she was in the act of following her beloved. In speechless despair she kept staring at the ever-receding spot in the sea wherein Frederick had disappeared, and after a while she gave vent to her sorrow by bursting into tears.

Gamorin now ordered the ship to be steered straight for Scotland, and, turning towards the bereaved maiden, said: "God is my witness that I would sooner have lost all I possess on earth than have been deprived of him who was my best friend; but our grief cannot call him back to life again. I beseech you, therefore, follow us and abide with us in our kingdom, for you will always find in us loyal and loving friends who with you will keep the dead man's memory green."

Poor Floria had no choice but to accept their hospitality, and shortly afterwards the ship landed at the capital of the Scottish king, and there Floria, Gamorin and Belafir kept with great solemnity Duke Frederick's funeral feast. On the morrow after Floria's departure, the king, her father, received information that the princess was missing, and he was naturally beside himself with rage thereat.

In his wrath he was at first of a mind to put the Mistress of the Robes and her maids to death, but the queen pleaded for them, and managed to abate his rage to a certain extent. He therefore bestowed a grudging pardon on them for their negligence, and began instead to make search after the person who had carried off the princess, and it was soon evident that Duke Frederick, who had gone away the very night that the escape took place, had stolen away his

daughter. He first tried to induce the host to confess to this ; but the host was loyal to the duke, and answered : " All I know is that he was a worthy and generous knight, who paid me lavishly for all the services I rendered him. When he wanted to go hence he bade me procure a ship, and that I did, but whither he has steered his course, that I know not."

But the king even before he learnt where Duke Frederick had fled with his daughter, had four great ships fitted out immediately, manned them with 400 men, and gave his admiral command over this fleet, with orders to sail in all directions on the sea, for the purpose of capturing Duke Frederick's vessel. In addition to this he laid on him another injunction : " If," said he, " you are lucky enough to seize the robber and his mates, let none of them escape, but kill them all ruthlessly. If you succeed in doing this, I will make you and your family rich for ever more."

Whereupon he left the admiral, who now ordered the anchors to be weighed, and steered with all canvas outspread out to sea, nor had they sailed far before they beheld a marvellous sight, namely, Duke Frederick sitting on the billows, as calm and secure as if he were on solid earth, for even on this occasion his wonderful ring had rescued him, and the stone which King Malurit had pronounced to be a protection against drowning had stood the test splendidly. The admiral caught sight of the man he was searching for, ordered the ship at once to be steered towards him, and threw out a grappling-hook, which the duke seized, and dragged him on board. They found that the sea had not harmed or even wetted him, and no one could tell from his clothes that he had ever quitted the vessel.

When he was conducted to the admiral, the latter addressed him angrily as follows :—

“Tell me now where my king’s daughter is whom you perfidiously stole”.

“I do not know.”

“Good; but whether you will out with the truth or not, it shall cost you your life.”

Then he ordered them straightway to cut off the duke’s head, but even on this occasion the magic ring preserved him from all danger, for the first stone, as you know, had the property of protecting its wearer against sword-cuts. Duke Frederick, therefore, willingly stretched forth his neck, and the strongest man there was on board hacked and hacked, but did not succeed in even hurting him: not a single tiny drop of blood followed from all these tremendous blows.

When the admiral saw that, he had the heaviest fetters that were to be found in the ship brought, and, placing the duke in them, he asked him once more if he would not now disclose the whereabouts of Floria. The duke who was afraid that the admiral would, directly he learnt the fact, set out after the fugitives, and, likely enough, overtake them, said with a sigh:—

“Alas, both she and all the others who accompanied us have been drowned, and I alone am saved”.

“Your rescue,” replied the chancellor, “shall profit you little, for you have not escaped me yet, and it will not be long before you die the death.”

Then the admiral set sail for home, and when the ship anchored and the prisoner was got on shore, they led him to a great pyre which had been raised just on the outskirts of the town.

“Since neither sea nor sword can harm you at all,” said the admiral, “you shall now be thrown on the pyre, and it is not at all likely that your sorceries will succeed in saving you from that.”

But the admiral did not know the power of the third stone. The wood crackled and the flames blazed

when they threw Duke Frederick on the pyre, but the fire did him no hurt, and though his clothes were consumed, yet he himself escaped without a burn, and stood in the midst of the flames well and hearty. After remaining there a moment he turned his ring and became suddenly invisible to the whole of the crowd, who, naturally, thought he was now reduced to dust and ashes. The crowd then dispersed, and the admiral rode to the king to inform him that the criminal had received his punishment, but this news hardly afforded the king any satisfaction. He thought of his daughter whom he now believed he had lost for ever, and it seemed a poor consolation to him to have slain the man who carried her off; in fact, he would rather have heard that both of them were still alive.

In the meantime, Duke Frederick remained calmly on the pyre till night fell and darkness came, on which he returned, unseen by any one, to the town, and wandered about the streets until he came to a great house in which a light was shining. This house was the king's armoury, and there his clothes and arms were stored. He entered in, and as he was quite naked, took what he required so as to be able to show himself in public, and then proceeded, without any one observing him, down to the stables, where the king's horses stood ready bridled at their stalls so as to be prepared in the event of the king wanting to send some message in haste. He chose out of them the fleetest courser the king had, then jumped into the saddle and galloped away, before any of the stablemen could catch a glimpse of an invisible rider putting spurs into a horse that rushed past their very noses.

He now made his way to Scotland, and you may imagine what rejoicing there was when he made his appearance again. Floria forgot instantly her grief, and Gamorin gave a banquet the like of which had not been seen in that country for a thousand years. It lasted

for fourteen days, and at its conclusion Frederick and Floria, loaded with rich presents and accompanied by a hundred knights and forty high-born ladies, returned to Normandy. The report of their return spread like wild-fire, and knights and squires, minstrels, matrons and maids assembled everywhere to welcome their beloved duke and his bride. Their journey through the country was nothing less than a triumphal procession, with feasts and entertainments, joy and mirth. On reaching the castle the duke began to think about celebrating his marriage with Floria with pomp and splendour, and sent invitations to it all over the country, even to Scotland and Ireland. Whitsuntide was the day chosen for the wedding, and all had to be assembled by that date.

While everything was being furbished up and made ready for the feast, the knight rode a-hunting in the same wood as before. The hounds had driven up a stag and were pursuing it through the covert, but at last they lost trace of it and the stag got away. The duke rode on among the trees searching for a way out of the wood and, in the course of his wanderings, he reached the mountain where he had, on a previous occasion, met Malurit. Just as he was calling to mind this meeting another stag ran past him, pursued by two of the smallest hounds he had seen, and immediately afterwards he heard the loud blast of a horn, and perceived a little dwarf riding towards the mountain on a horse no bigger than a roebuck. The duke, who did not remember having seen him before, rode up and called to him. The dwarf stopped at once and returned the duke's greeting, although the duke perceived that the dwarf eyed his gigantic figure with some trepidation. To calm him the duke said:—

“Fear not, for I mean you no hurt, but only tell me what lord you serve”.

"My lord is King Malurit, the mightiest monarch among us dwarfs. If you wait you may see him, for he is coming here immediately."

The blast of a horn was heard that very moment, and on its being answered by the dwarf, King Malurit came riding out from the wood to the spot where the duke was, and the latter hastened to fold him in his arms. The king was beside himself with joy at meeting his rescuer again, and straightway bade his huntsmen spread a splendid feast in the midst of the wood. After he had welcomed the duke to this, the latter proceeded to relate to him all the marvellous adventures he had met with since they parted, and thanked him once more for the ring, without which he would have been either drowned or burnt to death, or have had his head chopped off, to say nothing of the fact that, without its help, he would never have won the lovely bride whom he was to marry in the course of a few days. He ended by expressing his wish that Malurit, who had done so much for him, should assist at the wedding in person.

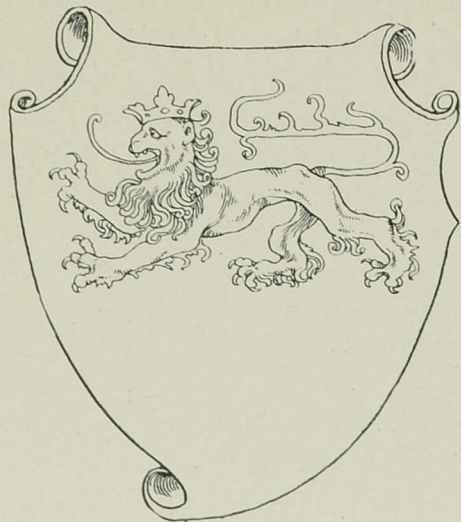
"My lord," answered the dwarf, "your invitation does me great honour, and I would fain come, but you must first promise me that I and all who are with me shall be protected against all violence, and shall be allowed after the wedding to pursue our way free and unmolested. I do not ask this on account of you, who are good and just, but all lords are not like you, and your guests might perchance have a mind to offer violence to us dwarfs."

"Believe it not," said the duke; "no one shall do either you or your people any hurt, for in my country such order prevails that no one takes from another even the value of a groat. You will be welcome six weeks hence, and meanwhile I will see about lodging and camp accommodation for you."

With this they separated, but when Whitsunday

dawned, troops of guests came streaming into the courtyard of the house where the wedding was to take place. First came King Malurit with a majestic train of knights and dames, headed by his little queen on horseback. When they reached the place assigned to them they pitched their silken tents, which gleamed with all the splendour of the gold and precious stones in the mountain kingdom. Shortly afterwards, King Gamorin and his queen were seen followed by the proudest knights in Scotland, and lastly Floria's father, the king of Ireland, appeared: he had come to forgive them the great grief they had caused him, and this was the most joyful event that marked the whole feast. The king became so delighted with his venturous son-in-law that he instituted him his successor. The wedding could now be celebrated without any misgivings. It lasted a long time, and great was the feasting and merriment, and none in Normandy had ever seen its like.

With this wedding the story of Duke Frederick's adventures comes to an end.





MANY a long year ago there reigned a mighty king in England whose name was Arthur. He was the finest warrior of his time, and kings' sons, dukes, earls, and counts came from far and wide to his court to gain instruction in courtesy and the practices of chivalry; but only the bravest were received, and these formed themselves into a league which, under the title of the Knights of the Round Table, became feared and famous throughout the whole world. A knight of the Round Table never shrank from any adventure however daring it might be, and had always to be prepared to take the field for the protection of the weak and persecuted. He had to be brave, generous, faithful and high-minded, and show tact and delicacy of feeling in his behaviour, and for these reasons membership of the Knights of the Round Table was regarded as the highest honour that a knight could attain.

Once upon a time King Arthur held his court at Caerleon, and the noblest knights in that country had foregathered there. The day began with a magnificent tournament, and at night the king gave a banquet in his castle, where the knights, who had now doffed their armour, led the dance with the fair ladies whom King Arthur's queen Guenevere had brought together. During the dancing the king sat



JOHN
The
KNIGHT
of The
LION

[To face page 58.]

on his throne, watching the dancers and listening to the songs which were sung as an accompaniment, but suddenly he was seized with an unaccountable sleepiness and had to withdraw to his chamber, where he was followed by his queen and a few attendants. His knights accompanied them, and remained outside the door, and soon they got into conversation about the adventures they had severally met with. There sat Segramore, Gavin, Kalegrevanz, John, and many knights far-renowned for bravery; but there was also with them a knight named Kay who was disliked by the rest for his sharp tongue and his spitefulness.

At length Kalegrevanz related an adventure with which he had recently met. He told it without any embellishments or any attempt to make it appear that his own share in it was more glorious than it actually was. When he had finished there arose a murmur among the rest, and the general opinion was that Kalegrevanz had only reaped shame and infamy in the incident he had related. Kay naturally pronounced this opinion more strongly and pitilessly than the others.

The queen, who was attracted to the spot by the murmuring, inquired what they were talking about, and when Kay in a few scoffing words had hinted at the thing, she upbraided him for his discourteous way of speaking, and went on to say:—

“It almost seems to me, my dear Kay, as if it were an absolute necessity for you to speak ill of your friends. It is well they never pay you back in your own coin, for you have, I doubt not, some weak points, and would possibly not come off quite so well in the verdict of ungentle tongues. In any case, it is better not to turn others to ridicule, but to treat all with modesty and friendliness. Let me now hear the adventure of which Knight Kalegrevanz was speaking.”

"I will not wrangle with Kay," said the latter. "Whatever I say he turns into ridicule against me, and, with my gracious queen's permission, I would much rather keep silence about the matter."

"Do not trouble yourself about Kay's revilings," answered the queen, "but tell us your adventure. I know you to be a noble knight, and am convinced that you have no cause to blush for any deed you have done."

"Although I should prefer not to speak of this matter again, yet I will comply with your wish and tell my adventure once more. I beg only that you will put the best construction on it."

"A short time ago," he began, "I clad myself in full armour and rode out from Karidol. On taking a turning to the right, I came to a narrow bridle-path which led me to a dark and dense grove, and after riding a whole day without halting, towards evening I perceived a strong castle surrounded by broad ramparts and approached by a drawbridge. On this bridge I met the lord of the castle, who had just returned home from hunting, and was still carrying a falcon on his hand. He greeted me in a friendly manner and said :—

"I was fortunate to meet you. Pray alight from your horse and rest the night at my house. We will do all we can to make you comfortable."

"I thanked him and sprang off my horse, and followed him into the hall, and there he again bade me welcome. Then he went to a table wrought of melted bell-metal, grasped the hammer that lay on the table and struck it in such a way that there was a sound like thunder all over the house. At this summons the knights and squires who were up in the tower hurried down at once to the drawbridge, welcomed me, and took my horse and led it to the stables. With them came the most lovely damsel I had ever

beheld. She greeted me with modest dignity, took off my armour, and had some other raiment brought with which she arrayed me. The mantle she threw over me was of scarlet lined with ermine, and fastened round the neck by a clasp of gold set with precious stones. After this she conducted me to a grove where lilies and roses bloomed amid the trees, and there we enjoyed ourselves for some while, she and I alone, and gradually I utterly forgot all else in the world for her.

"I declared to her that my sole desire was to remain near her; but just as I was on the point of making my meaning plainer, the owner of the castle came and bade us come into supper, which was now ready. It was as exquisite as everything else in that hospitable castle, and the amiability of my host made the dishes on the table even more delicious. He asked me to promise that I would again claim his hospitality when I returned from my journey, and this promise I was naturally not loth to make, and then I was ushered into my chamber.

"At the dawn of day I arose, thanked the people of the house for their hospitality, took my horse and rode away. After riding for a while I met a whole herd of wild beasts, lions, buffaloes, bears and panthers, which were fighting with each other amid an awful din; but with these creatures I noticed a shepherd whose appearance was even more appalling. He was blacker than a negro and uglier than any human being I had ever beheld. His head was bigger than a horse's, his nose was as crooked as a ram's horn; his hair was, in stiffness and roughness, like the thorns on a briar-bush; his lips were blue, and his chin hung down over his chest. His face was as hairy as a bearskin rug; his beard bristly and matted; his back adorned with a hump; his feet had claws like a griffin's, and were flat and misshaped.

His clothes consisted of two ox hides, and he held a sledge hammer in his hands; serpents and lizards were crawling over him. When he saw me he ran up a hillock, and stared at me like an idiot, without uttering a word. After looking at him for a while, hesitating what I should do, I said:—

“‘What kind of being are you? Are you an evil spirit or what?’

“‘I am what I am,’ answered he, ‘and no man has seen me better looking than I now appear to you.’

“‘Well, and what is your calling?’

“‘I tend the beasts which you see here.’

“‘Your answer seems to me strange. I do not think you can be minding the beasts that are roaming about the woods here, and they do not appear to me to be tied up.’

“‘They are as gentle as lambs. As soon as they hear my voice they come immediately; but should one of them prove refractory I merely seize him by the horns and throw him on the ground; then the others tremble, become tame, and run to me as if to plead for the froward ones. They obey me without a murmur, but I should not advise any one else to try the same thing, for it would not go well with him. But tell me, pray, what you yourself are.’

“‘I am a knight who has ridden out in quest of adventures. Tell me, therefore, if you know of any difficult enterprise that I might perform and so win renown.’

“‘Readily, if such be your pleasure. Not far from here there is a spring, the loveliest you could see. Yonder path leads to it, but I fear you will not return if you actually venture to approach the spring of which I am now going to tell you more. Rose bushes and trees rich in foliage hem it in, and they never lose their leaves even in winter. These trees extend their greenery so thickly over the spring that the rays of

the sun can never reach it, and the water remains as chilly as ice. On a post hard by the spring there hangs a golden cup attached to a chain of such length that by means of it you can fetch water out of the well, and near the post there stands a chapel. Now, if you fill the cup with water from the spring, and throw it over the post a hurricane of such awful violence breaks out that all the beasts near—lions, bears, and birds tremble and flee before the rain-floods and hailstones that stream from the sky. Thunderbolts will whiz round you, and thunderclaps boom in your ears. If you escape unscathed you will be luckier than other knights that have ventured on the same quest.'

"After uttering these words he bade me farewell, and I rode along the way he had showed me to the spring. After riding for some time, I saw the loveliest grove I had ever beheld, and in it I discovered the spring as the shepherd had said. It was entirely hidden by foliage, so much so that hardly a drop of rain could trickle through it. I also noticed the precious cup and the post which was of emerald set with rubies. On dismounting from my horse I filled the cup with water, and poured the contents over the post, but instantly I regretted my daring act, for suddenly the sky grew overcast, and certain violent gusts of wind came and shook the trees. Then the inky clouds belched forth a pattering shower of hail, and the lightning began to flash, so that I feared that I must needs perish. I swooned away and fell like a corpse to the ground, and had not our Lord been specially gracious to me, I should, in good sooth, have been killed by the trees that the wind broke and uprooted.

"After I had lain unconscious for some time, I began to recover my senses, and now I heard the nightingales singing and trilling as before, and lifting

up my eyes I again saw the sun shining, and at the sight I forgot the peril through which I had lately passed. I arose to my feet, and observed the grove, which again seemed like a paradise, but I had scarcely recovered from my swoon before I saw a knight in full armour come galloping towards me. When I perceived that he was alone and none were in his company I rushed to my horse, mounted the saddle, and hurried to meet him, glad at having at length come across some one with whom I might measure my strength. The knight who approached me was in a terrible fury. He cried out to me:—

“‘Halt, you knave! For this you shall pay. Had you had grounds of complaint against me it would have been your duty to challenge me to single combat; but now you have insulted me out of sheer wantonness, and dearly you shall smart for it. You have destroyed a great part of my wood, and not even in my own castle can I rest in peace by reason of the hurricane which you, in your folly, have raised. I will give you something to remember this by, and that you won’t forget in a hurry.’

“After he had uttered this, he drove at me with his spear, but I caught the blow with my shield; however, I could not long contend against him, for his horse was as swift as a hind and his blows rained thick. Finally, my lance broke on meeting his helmet, and with a single blow he hurled me, there and then, off my horse. Then he took my charger from me, and rode right away without bestowing a glance at me. I have never yet come across a knight so stalwart.

“I lay for a long time on the ground utterly bewildered at my overthrow, but when I perceived that day and night were at odds, I got up, mangled in all my limbs, and approached the spring. I was now without a horse, and did not know what to do.

In a shamefaced way I wandered through the wood back to the castle where I had, on the previous evening, been received with such hospitality, and I now stood once more blushing before the master of the castle. He received me, however, with the same cordiality as before, and even the other inmates of the castle—the maidens, knights, and squires—treated me quite in the same way, and showed me no lack of respect, but, on the contrary, congratulated me on having got off so easily, for hitherto no one who had striven with Red Vadoin—such was the name of the knight at the spring—had escaped with his life.

“Such then is my adventure. I have added nothing to it which could redound to my honour, and I have concealed nothing which might lessen the shame of my defeat.”

“By the saints,” said John, “I am ill pleased with you, my kinsman, for not having told me this adventure before, but, by God’s help, I will avenge you or lose my life.”

“John,” exclaimed Kay, in his usual irritating way, “vaunts his bravery overmuch, but it seems to me that he has fetched his courage from the wine-bowl that he so industriously emptied this evening. He will sing another song when he has slept over the matter, for I’ll warrant he will dream such horrible dreams about Red Vadoin that, when morning comes, he will have lost all desire of venturing on a bout with such a redoubtable antagonist.”

The queen then chided Kay for his malice, and said:—

“It almost seems as if your heart must have burst if you had forborne discharging your spleen; but shame on every evil tongue. We blush for you, and, as for you, sooner or later, this malice will occasion you misfortune.”

“Noble queen,” said John, “don’t bandy words

with Kay, for it is part of his nature to revile and flout, but when it comes to manly exploits he holds aloof. A gallant man is quick in action, but cautious in judging."

Kay was about to retort when the king, who had been disturbed by the wrangle, came out and asked what the brawl was about. The queen told him, in a few words, about Kalegrevanz's defeat, and ended by recommending his cause to the king. Then the king waxed mighty wroth, and swore a great oath that he would, within fourteen days, proceed with all his knights to the spring, and there avenge the insult which Red Vadoin had put on the Round Table.

When this was known all rejoiced at the thought of the adventures and frays that awaited them. John alone heard of this expedition with other feelings, for he had hoped to have avenged the wounded honour of his kinsman ; so, in order to prevent the rest from robbing him of this opportunity, he resolved that very same night to betake himself immediately to the spring, without waiting for the others. He therefore hurried home to his squire, and bade him straightway saddle his charger. Then he strictly forbade his squire to reveal anything about his departure, especially before Kay, and, without wasting time in further talk, he mounted his steed and rode into the dark wood. Without other adventures than those Kalegrevanz had experienced in the course of his journey, he reached at length the wonderful spring, and there found everything as his friend had described.

He immediately grasped the drinking-cup, filled it with water, and dashed its contents over the post. That instant, just as Kalegrevanz had related, a furious hurricane, accompanied by thunderbolts and hailstones, arose, but John endured it without quaking. When the clouds dispersed and the sun again broke

forth, he saw a knight dashing towards him at a furious pace. John was not loth to meet him, and they rushed at one another with such violence that their lances were splintered like glass, strong and heavy as they were. When Red Vadoin saw John sitting calmly in his saddle, he was beside himself with vexation, and shouted to him :—

“Never before has the shame befallen me that one who has met my lance has not been forthwith hurled to the ground ; but you shall not escape me”.

Then they drew their swords and dashed against each other again. Blow followed blow with such violence that fire glinted from their helmets when the strokes told, their shields were shattered, and their coats of mail hacked to pieces ; but neither would yield to the other. At last John dealt Vadoin a blow which cleft his helmet and reached his head, so that a stream of blood gushed down over his armour. When Vadoin received that crushing blow he collected his remaining strength, turned his horse, and fled back to his castle, closely pursued by John.

When those that were in the castle perceived this unwonted spectacle they let down the drawbridge and opened the gates to admit Vadoin ; but John pursued him over the bridge, and pressed in through the small outer door immediately after him. There was a portcullis over this, which was let down as Vadoin rode through, and John very narrowly escaped being cut into pieces by the sharp iron of the gate. His horse was cloven in twain just behind the saddle, so that its hinder part fell outside the drawbridge, whilst the foremost part tumbled down in front of the portcullis. Even both John's spurs were cut off by the fall of the portcullis, and it was only by the gain of a second that the rider did not share his horse's fate. However, he fell down and Vadoin disappeared through the principal gateway, which was

closed upon him at once, so that John now found himself shut in the little passage between the two gates. The situation he now found himself in was anything but agreeable. He was a prisoner in a strong castle, the master of which was his deadly enemy, and his valour could avail him little against the latter's numerous retainers. As he was vainly searching for the means of rescuing himself from this danger a maid came to him.

"Good knight," said she, "why tarry you still here? My master has just died of the wound you gave him; my mistress is beside herself with despair, and all the people in the castle are burning with eagerness to avenge his death; but know that, though you are hidden here, still you are not forgotten. They will be up on you directly."

"Ere they overcome me," he answered, "many lives will be lost, for they shall not take me captive without a struggle."

"Resistance against such superior force is of no avail, but you once stood by me, and so I will help you. Once I came wretched and abandoned to King Arthur's court, and it was you who took care of me. The courtesy and kindness you then showed me I will now try to requite."

With these words she pressed a golden ring into his hand and said:—

"The stone in this ring is from India, and the man who wears the ring and closes his hand becomes that moment invisible. Employ it to extricate yourself from your peril, but let me have it back afterwards."

"God reward you, noble maiden, for this gift. I shall never forget your goodness."

"Let us now flee at once from here. Shut your hand so as to become invisible, and follow me, and I will conduct you to a hiding-place where you can be concealed till I can free you altogether."

Then he followed her across the vast courtyard, where all was bustle and confusion, by reason of Vadoin's death to a little chamber, and there she showed him a bed on which he threw himself down and soon fell asleep, exhausted by all the struggles and hardships he had undergone.

Some hours afterwards the maid returned and brought him wine and food. John helped himself to the refreshments, and looked down through the window and saw how they were searching for him everywhere. Swords rattled and bows clanged as Vadoin's men rushed about to find the man who had slain their master.

First they hurried to the arch in which John had been shut, but they found to their astonishment that it was empty, though the locks were unbroken. John heard them talking among themselves and exhorting each other to make further search, "for," said they, "unless he is a bird and has wings he cannot have cleared the wall". Then they at once began to make a fresh search, and poked about in all the nooks and crannies in the castle. They even went into the room John was in, and almost touched him, but not a trace could they find of the vanished knight.

While they were engaged in searching, the body of the deceased lord of the castle was carried across the courtyard, accompanied by a crowd of women and squires uttering lamentations. At the head of them walked the dead lord's widow, a tall and beautiful woman, whose countenance, however, was disfigured by grief. She wept and lamented aloud, and, when her glance happened to fall on the bier, she shrieked wildly and fell to the ground in a swoon. As soon as those about her had restored her to consciousness, a messenger was dispatched for priests and monks to say masses for the soul of the

dead man, and then they all went in procession to the castle chapel, where the bier was laid on the ground, and the priests began to intone the service.

John had, without being perceived, contrived to mingle with the funeral party and entered the chapel with them ; but, as he drew near the body, its wounds began to bleed afresh, and then every one was aware that the slayer was somewhere near the slain. The knights began therefore to search afresh, and the châtelaine burst out sobbing again.

“ There is sorcery at work here,” said she, “ for the murderer is in the midst of us without our being able to see him. Alas, my God, I shall never be able to bear the sorrow of not even looking on him who wrought me such great affliction ! He would never have slain my noble husband if he had not employed treachery, for no braver knight was ever born. No one dared to await his onset, much less engage him in battle, and even this man would have failed to win the fight had he not had recourse to sorcery.”

With weeping and wailing they carried the body to the grave and buried it. Then masses were sung for his soul, and at last all departed ; but when the burial was over the maid who had succoured John—her name was Luneta—went to the chamber in which she had hidden the knight, and to which he had withdrawn himself.

“ Noble knight,” said she, “ you heard yourself how they were searching for you everywhere. Now, give thanks to God that they failed to find you.”

“ For my rescue I have, methinks, to thank God in the first place, and you too for having shown me such kindness. You have saved my life, and this service might be deemed sufficient, but I have still a boon to crave of you, and that is that I may see just once the noble lady who owns this castle.”

“ I will readily satisfy you in this request. You

have only to cast a glance through this window to see what you desire. She is sitting in mourning weeds in the midst of the other dames."

When John looked at her, he found her again lamenting in their presence the hard lot that had befallen her, and marked how her gestures betrayed deeper and deeper despair, so that at last she swooned away again for grief. John's first impulse was to go up to her and crave her pardon and seek to console her, knowing that he himself was the cause of her despair, but Luneta held him back.

"Now you must obey me and not stir from your place here. Should any one see you here, then your fate is sealed, for no one will show you mercy. Keep quiet where you are, and where you can observe without danger the course of events. I shall meanwhile tell you all that it is important for you to know, and my only fear is that my lady, or one of her attendants, may grow suspicious at my absence, and suspect that I am with you."

After she had said this she left the knight alone to his reflections. He now began to consider his position more calmly. He determined not to steal secretly from the castle without having revealed to some one that it was he who had defeated Red Vadoin, for he stood in fear of Kay's jeers if he was not in a position to prove that Vadoin had fallen by his sword and not by another's. On the other hand, his life would be in danger if any one discovered him in the castle.

Whilst engaged in these thoughts he again cast his eyes at the poor châtelaine who was now slowly recovering from her swoon, and when he saw her beauty he sighed and thought to himself:—

"Would to God you were mine. Could I but gain your love I would willingly renounce all the honours in the world; but that can never come to pass, for I have done her so much wrong that she can never

forgive me. I have slain him whom she loved best in this world, and she has every reason to hate me. Loving her is sheer madness, and I well know she would rather see me dead ; but, nevertheless, I have heard a certain man who knew human nature assert that women's feelings often change, and perhaps even her hate may be turned to love. All things rest in God's hands, and He has power even over her heart. Possibly He may induce her to grant me pardon and love."

While he was thus musing, the lovely châtelaine arose and went, accompanied by her dames, into the castle. John gazed at her for a long time, and acknowledged to himself that it was not merely fear of Kay's gibes that kept him in the castle, but also love for Red Vadoin's widow. He knew he would rather die than flee from where she was.

After a while Luneta came back to him, and on perceiving his sadness she asked him what had occasioned it.

"When you come here," replied John, "I forget my sorrows altogether and wax as merry as of yore. Let us therefore not speak of them."

"Open your heart to me if there is aught that makes you sad. Possibly I may be of some help to you."

"Well, then, know that it is love for your mistress that makes me so downcast: I cannot live without her."

"I guessed that already, and will, to the best of my ability, advance your cause; but first you must ride away from the castle, where your life is every moment in jeopardy."

"In this respect I cannot obey you. I will not steal away from the castle secretly, but ride hence so that every one may see me."

"Do what seems good to you. I shall watch over

your safety as well as I can, and now I am going to my mistress to endeavour to question her heart. I shall not tarry long ere I return to tell you what my impressions are."

Then she went to the châtelaine, whose name was Laudine, and, after falling on her knees before her and saluting her, she said:—

"Noble lady, try and calm your bitter grief, and think of this: he whom you are now weeping for can never come back".

"Alas," answered Laudine, "I know full well I can never have him again, though I loved him with all my soul. Nothing remains to me but to weep till I die of weeping."

"Rather than that should be I hope that God may bestow on you another husband who shall be as good a knight as him you have lost. Even you yourself ought to admit that that would be best for you."

"You ought to blush to talk like that. *His* peer is not to be found in the whole world."

"Oh, yes," replied Luneta, "I know one who quite equals him. Please God he may be your husband."

"Now I really ought to be angry with you for saying that; the like of it I have never heard."

But Luneta held her ground bravely and proceeded to say:—

"My noble lady, there is still another thing to be thought of, and that is, if King Arthur with all his troops and knights were to come here to lay your lands waste, who is there to defend them against him? Out of all your people I cannot find a knight capable of performing such a deed. They could not do it in a body even if they were to enlist us women to help them. No doubt they could ride to the spring, but as for protecting it, that they could not; so listen to my advice, and try and find some knight capable of protecting your land and yourself. Take

him for your consort, and hold him dear, for both you and your country will be the gainers by it."

Laudine acknowledged to herself that Luneta not only spoke wisely, but to the point; yet she was not of a mind to let herself be persuaded quite so readily, but pretended to get very angry, and cried:—

"Go your way, you silly wench. I do not fully understand your meaning; some hidden purpose lies, methinks, behind your words. Never will I follow your advice."

"Say not so, for I venture to prophesy that, in the end, you will do what I have said."

After saying this Luneta got up and departed, but Laudine sat where she was, engrossed in her thoughts.

"What knight can that be," thought she, "that Luneta alluded to? A brave and famous man must he be, forsooth."

Her curiosity was now aroused, and she could no longer restrain it, so she summoned Luneta again into her presence for the purpose of questioning her. The artful girl came and repeated her previous conversation.

"Away with dull care," she exclaimed. "What boots it your longing after one who is departed never to return? It is absurd, you know, to shorten your life in that way; besides, you are mistaken if you think that chivalry and honour died in this world with Red Vadoin. Marry, no; brave as he was, there are many braver knights than he to be found."

"Name me one, then," cried Laudine, "and if you can prove you have spoken the truth, I am ready to listen to you."

"That I will," answered Luneta, "but you must first promise me not to be angry if I happen to name one whom, perhaps, you have cause to hate."

Luneta, after she had extorted a solemn promise from Laudine, went on to say:—

"As we are now sitting quite by ourselves, with

no one to hear us, I will gladly reply to your question, and only hope you will bestow your love on the knight I am now going to tell you of; but first answer me one question. If two knights fight together, which do you deem the superior—he who is slain, or the one that slew the other?”

“Luneta, I think I suspect what you are driving at. With cunning words you are seeking to lead me astray.”

“That I cannot admit. What I am saying is simply the truth, and that is that the knight who slew Vadoin was braver and stronger than he.”

“You are mad to talk in the way you do. Never again let me hear any hint at such a thing, or you will forfeit my friendship for ever. How can you imagine I could bring myself to love the man who slew my husband?”

But Luneta was not a girl to be easily frightened by a few angry words. She remained, and began her speech once more, but with greater caution, and thus, little by little, Laudine began to repent of her impetuosity. What seemed to her at first an all but mad idea now appeared, at any rate after what the artful Luneta had said, something worth considering. She turned to the zealous girl and said:—

“Pardon me the words that escaped me ere my wrath subsided, and tell me more of this knight who seems to have grown so dear to you. I would know of what lineage he is, and if he be my equal in birth.”

“You need harbour no misgivings on that score. A knight more courteous or of gentler birth cannot be found than he.”

“Tell me the name of the man whom you vaunt so highly.”

“His name has often sounded in your ears, for he is known everywhere where knightly sports are prized. He is called John.”

“ True it is that I have often heard speak of him,” cried Laudine, “ and his bravery is not unknown to me, for no finer knight than John, King John’s son, is to be found if you search the wide world over. Where is he, for I would fain speak with him ? ”

Luneta began to laugh at her eagerness, and when she found she had gained a complete victory, she could not refrain from making some little fun of her mistress. Then, assuming a serious countenance, she said the knight was a long distance off from them, and it would take him five days to reach the castle ; but when she noticed from the lady’s dejected mien that the time seemed to her to be too long, she added :—

“ A bird could not fly quicker, so long is the journey ; but I have a squire who is a fleeter messenger than the rest. Him I will send to the knight, and try if the latter can come in three days hence—quicker than that I do not think it could be done. Meanwhile we will assemble all your knights and squires, and ask them the question if there be one among them who would dare take it upon himself to defend your land and castle against King Arthur when he comes hither ; and I tell you for certain beforehand that not a single one would venture to take upon himself so hazardous a task. If such be the case, then no one will wonder at your choosing for yourself a consort that can defend your kingdom, especially when he is so renowned a warrior as John, King John’s son. This must not appear to be your own proposal, but ask the advice of your friends and kinsmen, and let them propose this expedient.”

Laudine found this plan excellent, and, on the date fixed, she summoned her council ; but, ere that, Luneta went to John to impart to him the intelligence which he was awaiting so impatiently. After greeting him, she said :—

“Now you can be happy, for everything has come about as you have wished. Soon, perhaps, the woman you love will be yours.”

Then she gave him a detailed description of the conversation between Laudine and herself, and depicted the gradual awakening of her mistress' heart on being told that it was John, the famous Knight of the Round Table, who had defeated Red Vadoin; but she refrained from telling him that her lady had fully pardoned him, and was ready to take him for her husband, for that was a sudden shock which she wished to spare him as yet.

After Luneta had in this wise restored heart and interest in life to the knight, she had a bath prepared for him, brought out some precious raiment—a cloak, jerkin, and baldric—in which she attired him, in place of the damaged armour he had worn in the fight with Red Vadoin; and she herself combed his hair and made him so trim that she herself thought, when she had put the finishing touches on, that she had never seen a more handsome or stately knight.

Then she went to Laudine and said:—

“The squire I sent after John has now returned. He has fulfilled his commission, and the knight is now here only awaiting your behests”.

“Send him to me at once,” said the châtelaine, “but take particular heed that none in the castle see him. For the present this must be a secret between us three.”

Luneta did as her mistress bade her, and went to John; but even at the very last she could not refrain from teasing the love-sick knight.

“My lady,” said she, “now knows that you are hiding here in the castle, and she is very angry with me for having deceived her so long; but I hope you will put me right with her again, and regain me her favour. You are to go to her now. Entertain no

fears, but should things go awry and she take you captive, resign yourself submissively to that fate."

"Alas," replied John, "you know as well as I do that there is no one whose prisoner I would rather be than hers. For good or evil I yield myself up to her."

"I do not think," said Luneta laughing, "that this captivity is likely to bring any disgrace on you. But let us go at once."

They betook themselves forthwith to Laudine's room without being noticed by any one, and when the lady of the castle saw John's manly figure before her, she was so struck by his beauty that it was long before she was able to speak; even John was disconcerted at this interview, and did not quite know how to begin his speech. Luneta, on perceiving their embarrassment, could not repress a smile, and, turning to John, said:—

"Noble knight, why are you so faint-hearted as not to venture on a yea or a nay? I presume you did not come here to be silent. Take heart and approach my mistress. I can now tell you to your face that she has granted you full pardon for Red Vadoin's death, that it was she herself who summoned you to tell you this, and that no one can be more welcome to her than you."

When John heard this he fell on his knee before the lovely châtelaine and said:—

"Noble lady, I came here to give myself to you for weal or woe: my life is in your hands".

"I shall do you no hurt," answered Laudine. "I have already forgiven you everything."

"I know, unfortunately, that I have caused you a great sorrow, but I am ready to make all the reparation in my power. I will hold all my life at your service."

"You acknowledge, then, that you did me sore wrong when you killed my husband."

“Judge for yourself. He assailed me with all his might, and I am not used to brook defeat. I had no choice between killing or being killed, and every man defends his own life.”

“You are right, and I cannot refuse you my pardon. I pardon you willingly, for all that I have heard of you is good. Sit here by my side, and tell me how it came about that you conceived such a passion for me as to love me beyond all other women.”

“Can you ask that? As soon as I gazed on your beauty I felt that my life depended on your returning my love.”

Laudine listened to his words with pleasure, but interrupted him after a while by asking this question:—

“Tell me now on your honour as a knight if, in the event of King Arthur coming here to lay waste my land, would you venture to do battle with him in my defence?”

“That I swear to you on my honour as a knight.”

When Laudine received this promise she plighted him her troth, and both swore that nothing but death should part them. Then they proceeded together to the hall, where all Laudine's knights and squires were assembled for the conference to which she had summoned them; and when they saw John they said among themselves that they had never beheld a more majestic knight.

“Just such another man we want for our lord. Our mistress should take him for her husband, and that would be as great an honour to her as if she got the imperial crown in Rome.”

Laudine bade them all be seated, and after they had sat down, the chamberlain called for silence and said:—

“You know full well how great a loss we have lately suffered through the death of our lord Red

Vadoin, and just now we are more than ever in need of a leader, for King Arthur has now armed himself to attack us with shield and sword in order to conquer our kingdom. He will be here within fourteen days, and then our future fate will hang in the balance. It seems to me necessary, on that account, that our lady should marry again and choose herself a husband who could protect her kingdom. No one shall be able to censure her for such a step, and we therefore hope that she will, for our sakes, agree to take it, though, possibly, out of love for Vadoin, she be reluctant to comply with our wish."

All agreed with this speech, and they besought her, on their knees, to choose a consort fit to direct the helm of her state and maintain its ancient renown. But the châtelaine feigned that this request was highly objectionable to her, and made them beseech her for a long time before she would say yes, but, nevertheless, she finally suffered herself to be prevailed on by their necessities, and said:—

"As this matter is of such grave importance to you I will sacrifice my personal feelings to the common weal. This knight whom you here see" (pointing to John) "has long desired me for his spouse. He is both wise and courteous, in birth my peer, being a king's son, and pre-eminent in valour and might in war. I surrender to you the choice of my husband, and ask you, therefore, if you will accept him for your lord."

When they had all expressed their consent in a loud voice, she went on to say:—

"Since this marriage is thus decreed, it seems to me foolish to long delay that which must some time or other take place, and my will, therefore, is that this wedding be celebrated at once".

All the knights waxed marvellously glad thereat, and thanked her warmly for having met their wishes

with such exceeding readiness, and the marriage was at once celebrated with mirth and merriment. Minstrels from all directions flocked together to exhibit their skill, and returned home laden with rich gifts, and extolling the generosity of the bridegroom. Squires and maidens threaded the dance with each other, and the dance-songs chimed merrily in the vast banqueting-hall, but, outside, the more veteran knights contended in a grand tournament, and the clash of their arms was heard far and wide. John was now radiantly happy; he had gained for himself a kingdom and a bride, and the dead man was already forgotten. The new bridegroom was loved and honoured by all, and he marked that they greatly preferred him for their leader to Red Vadoin.

But the marriage mirth was soon to be troubled by the din of war. King Arthur had not forgotten to avenge the insult put on Kalegrevanz, but summoned all his knights, and marched to the land whose lord was now John. They reached the spring on Midsummer-day, and there encamped. At the council which was opened at once, Kay was the first to speak; and, in accordance with his usual practice, he began to slander the absent John.

"I wonder," said he, "where John can now be lurking, seeing he came not hither with the rest of us. When the wine had mounted to his head he bragged valiantly, and swore that he would alone avenge his kinsman, contentious that we should leave him this honour; but it comes to pass that his courage seems to have vanished after he had considered the matter more closely. Well, yes, a man in his cups says much that he cannot afterwards perform, and this proves the truth of the saying, 'Big in words, little in deeds'."

"If John is not here," Gavian answered him, "there is some cause for his absence. Who knows

what may have happened to him. After he rode from Caerleon much may have occurred to hinder him from reaching here ; but one thing I *do* know is that John would never have spoken ill of a man absent, and so unable to defend himself ; and we all know well enough that never yet has John kept aloof from a perilous venture out of fear."

"I will not bandy words with you," replied Kay, "but the truth of my words is sure to be established, and I venture, moreover, to assert that he fled from the palace like one distraught."

This wrangle ended, King Arthur approached the spring, took the cup, filled it with water, and poured the contents over the post. At once a pelting shower of rain came down, as on the previous occasion, followed by thunder and lightning. As soon as John perceived this from the castle, he put on his armour, and leapt on the best courser Red Vadoin had, and dug his spurs into its flanks, and galloped at full speed towards the well. When Kay caught sight of the strange knight he went into the king's presence and eagerly sought his permission to break the first lance with the defender of the spring, and as King Arthur did not refuse him this favour he hurriedly donned his armour and rode against John. The latter recognised his adversary at once, and his heart was filled with joy at having at length found an opportunity of punishing the man who had so long disparaged and flouted him. He grasped his lance with a lusty grip, and struck it into Kay's breast with such force that both horse and knight rolled over, and each wallowed in the mire. Kay experienced no sympathy as he lay there helpless and beaten.

"God help you," said they all. "You, who used to gibe at every one else, have now got a lesson that you will not forget. Lie where you are, a laughing-stock to all."

He got on his feet at last in a shamefaced sort of way, but he did not dare to return to the camp and expose himself to the jeers of the rest. John took no further notice of him, but led his horse by the bridle, and rode with it to the tent without any one recognising him. When he reached it he exclaimed :—

“Although, by the law of battle, this horse belongs to me, yet I will not carry it off, for I do not wish to appropriate to myself anything that belongs to King Arthur or his knights, so take the steed, and treat him well, while I pursue my journey”.

When King Arthur heard this he said :—

“Who are you who speak such words as these? I do not remember having seen your badge before.”

“My lord,” replied the unknown knight, “perhaps you will know when I tell you my name. I am called John.”

Great was the rejoicing now, and all hastened to bid John welcome. After they had partly got over their surprise, King Arthur bade him explain the mystery, and tell what had taken place since the night he quitted Caerleon. John then recounted all his adventures, the victory over Vadoin, whereby he gained a kingdom and a wife, and ended by inviting King Arthur and all his suite to his castle. The king expressed his thanks, and John rode home to inform his wife that the dreaded enemy was now coming as a welcome guest, and had promised to stay in their castle for eight days. When Laudine heard this news she rejoiced exceedingly, and at once gave orders for receiving the king in the most sumptuous fashion.

On the following morning King Arthur sallied forth from his camp, and was greeted first by a troop of knights and squires, who came out to meet him with drums and music. When these saw the king they alighted from their horses, and bade him, in their

mistress' name, welcome to the castle. Immediately afterwards he was met by another company composed of minstrels and musicians, who played their instruments in his honour. The castle itself was adorned with precious cloth of gold and costly stuffs which swayed from every nook and corner, even the walls were hung with mats of various colours. The mistress of the castle, followed by a bodyguard of knights, met the strangers at the drawbridge, in order to accompany them to their quarters, and soon her retinue mingled with King Arthur's.

The eight days were taken up with chivalrous exercises, hunting, and sport, and when they were over King Arthur resolved to take his departure. He had John summoned secretly to his presence, and ordered him to come with him, and even his kinsman Gavian advised him to accompany them.

"It ill-beseems you," said he, "to lie idle henceforward in this castle and let all the honour you have won fade away; neither is it honourable to your bride. As a knight it is your bounden duty to fare from court to court where joust and tournament are held, and break a lance in her honour. And is it not far more noble to hazard life and lands in her honour than to lie at home like a woman? You shall never lack a trusty comrade-in-arms, for in sunshine and in rain I will follow you, so that only death shall part us. Do not think I say this because I grudge you and your spouse the happiness you enjoy in mutual love, or that I would lure you to forget her, but that both she and you may gain the highest renown by following my counsel and again setting out in quest of adventures."

John, who was rent between his wish to stay with Laudine and his desire to resume the life to which the knights of the Round Table were accustomed, answered that he would follow his comrades-in-arms,

provided his wife gave her consent thereto. He went to her at once and said :—

“I venture to approach you with a petition. You are my wife, and as such it is within your rights to grant or refuse it. Let me once more for a season go forth in quest of adventures, for I am loth to hear it said that I laid aside all chivalrous exercises on the very day I won myself a bride.”

His wife could not rightly understand his wishing to abandon her so soon, but she gave in to his wish, and granted him leave to go.

“But,” she added, “I give you this permission only on one condition—you must return before the lapse of a year; if not you will have lost my love for ever, and I should then look on you as a recreant knight.”

When John heard these strong words he grew exceedingly rueful, and sighed :—

“God forbid that I should not come back to you as speedily as I can, but none can provide against accidents, and mayhap sickness or captivity may hinder me from returning within the year”.

“Harbour no fears of dangers such as those,” answered she, placing a ring on his finger. “So long as you wear this ring and think of me sickness shall not reach you, nor shall any man take you captive; but guard it well, for it is a miraculous ring which I can bestow only on him who is dearest to me of all the world. Now God be with you.”

John thanked her with many kisses for this precious gift and then they parted. John rode with King Arthur's company, pleased at finding himself once more among his brethren-in-arms, but at the same time melancholy, for his heart still tarried with the fair lady of the castle whom he had been constrained to give up.

Gavian and he soon parted from the others, and set out in quest of adventures.

In every tournament that was held they took their part and always came off conquerors, and, consequently, there was but one universal, unanimous opinion, and that was that no braver knights were to be found elsewhere. But, as time went on, months slipped away without John, in his eagerness for the fray, paying any heed to them, and soon the year was gone without his having remembered his promise. At the beginning of the new year King Arthur called all his knights together to a meeting, and thither went John and Gavian, who received much praise for the feats they had recently accomplished ; but whilst they were sitting at the Round Table they saw a maiden come riding up to them. On reaching their tent she alighted from her horse, divested herself of her mantle, and courteously stepped into the presence of the assembled knights. John recognised her as one of his wife's maids, and then remembered with dismay his promise. The damsel greeted King Arthur and said :—

“ My mistress has sent me to you to give you and all your knights her greeting ; but for John I have a special message. I declare him, in my lady's name, to be a liar and a recreant knight that has broken the word he gave a woman. Despite his promise, he has not returned to her within the year, and so she declares through me that he has forfeited her love, and she will never more look with favour on him. The ring she gave him at parting she now demands back, for he is no longer worthy of wearing that symbol of her troth.”

While she was speaking John sat mute and motionless without replying, and it seemed as if her words had deprived him of his senses ; but the damsel hurriedly walked up to him, pulled the ring off his finger without his even making an effort to resist her.

“Blush, false knight!” exclaimed she, “and never dare show yourself among men of gentle breeding or where manly deeds are done. May you be dead to all as you are to my mistress. And now farewell, King Arthur. God shield you and your knights.”

Then she rode away, but John remained as it were unconscious, only brooding over the shame that had befallen him. At length he rushed wildly from the table, and ran off without uttering a word. Madness instantly clouded his brain so that he tore his clothes to pieces, and he scourged himself with thorns and twigs. People tried to stop him and lead him back, but he ran away and sped towards the woods, and so all traces of him were soon lost. After running for a good while he saw a man hunting in the wood, and assailed him, and snatched the bow and arrow from him, and disappeared before the hunter could recover from his amazement.

Without regaining the use of his reason, he lived for some time amid the woods and fells, where he wandered about without shelter or any sort of clothing wherewith to cover his nakedness. Thanks to the bow, he was not without food, for he brought down by his arrows the wild creatures of the wood. He ate his food raw, for he no longer understood the use of fire; he had no bread, and took no notice of the herbs in the wood.

One day, in the course of his wanderings, he came to a hut in the wood, where a poor hermit dwelt. When the hermit saw the naked and almost black man he became dreadfully frightened and thought the latter had come to rob him, so he called to him out of the window:—

“Of my own free will I will readily give you all I possess, but there is nothing here save water and coarse bread. I have nothing else to live upon. You may have that and welcome.”

Through the little window-hole he handed him all the bread there was in the hut, and John sat down and ate up ravenously every bit, as if it had been the most dainty food. After he had finished he got up and ran again to the woods, but though he had long been weak in intellect, nevertheless he preserved a sense of gratitude. He carried to the hermit the first beast he shot, and laid it down before his cottage by way of repayment for the bread the hermit had given him. The good hermit, who was touched by this silent gratitude, sold the animal and bought with the money meat and wine which, on the following day, when John returned, he handed to the latter through the window. This was repeated day after day, for John came daily to the hermit with some bird or beast he had shot, and the hermit boiled or baked the meat for him, as well as gave him bread and wine for the parts of the animal he had sold.

One day, as John lay sleeping under a lime tree in the wood, there came a bevy of ladies riding past him, to wit, a châtelaine of the name of Murina and three of her handmaids. On their remarking the queer black figure, one of the handmaids was moved by curiosity, and stepped off her palfrey to observe the strange object. His skin had become black through the savage nature of the life he had been leading, and his face was hidden by a long matted beard. Well, the more closely she scrutinised his features the more familiar they seemed to her to be, and at last she noticed a scar on his forehead, and then recognised the unhappy knight, for John had received this scar in a tourney that had been held in Murina's castle. She was seized with sorrow and amazement at seeing the ghastly state to which he had been reduced, and hurriedly remounted her horse and rode back to her mistress.



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"THE MORE CLOSELY SHE SCRUTINISED HIS FEATURES, THE MORE FAMILIAR THEY SEEMED TO HER TO BE."

"My lady," cried she, "the man who lies there is the bravest knight that ever splintered a lance: it is John, King John's son. I cannot conceive what has happened to him, but it is clear that some great misfortune has overtaken him, and he has lost the use of his reason. God grant that he may be again the man he was when last I saw him, for, in good sooth, he would avenge all the wrongs that Arlan the earl has committed against you."

"If he would only remain there long enough for me to ride home," answered her mistress, "I think I have a remedy which will make him hale and hearty again. My godmother, the fairy Morgana, has given me a salve which possesses the marvellous virtue of being able to drive madness from the brain, and this salve I will blithely give him. After saying this the lady of the castle rode home as fast as she could, opened her coffer, and took from it a box which she delivered to the damsel who had first caught sight of John. She not only gave her the box of ointment but also a store of rich garments with which John might array himself, as well as two splendid coursers, one for her, and the other for the knight. She then told her to ride back fast to the luckless wight to release him from his misery.

The damsel, on returning to the lime tree, found John still asleep, so she alighted from her horse, stepped up to him cautiously, not without some trepidation, for she knew, of course, that he had not the use of his reason. Then she rubbed him with ointment from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, laid the raiment beside him, and concealed herself right in the wood, so that he should not suspect, when he woke up, the part she had played in his recovery. After a while the sun began to shine through the leaves, and warmed the wonderful ointment, and, as this penetrated his body, reason slowly

returned to John. Then he awoke and looked about him in amazement, without any recollection of the long season during which he had been wandering about the wood, like one bereft of his senses. He was seized with shame at discovering his nakedness, and at once hastened to don the handsome suit of raiment that lay beside him on the grass. Directly he had done this he looked round to discover some human being who might tell him where he was, and help him to find his way out of the wood. When the damsel perceived from her hiding-place that he was completely cured, she resolved to conceal herself no longer, but walked towards him, without letting him suspect that she had been there. When he saw her he rejoiced exceedingly, and called out to her:—

“Noble damsel, tell me where I am, and help me out of here”.

But when she affected not to notice him he repeated his request, and begged her fervently not to abandon him. She stopped her palfrey and asked him courteously what he wanted. He replied that he could not tell her how miserable and forlorn he felt, and ended his speech by asking her if she would lend him the horse she was leading.

“I will let you have it willingly, provided you will bear me company.”

“Where do you live, then?”

“In a castle that lies not very far from here.”

“With your leave I will gladly escort you. I know not how I shall repay your kindness. Is there no service I can render you?”

“Perhaps there is,” replied she. “Only follow me, and it will not be long before I shall remind you of the offer you have made.”

They rode away, and soon they reached Murina’s castle, and there the châtelaine met and received him with marks of deep respect. She had a luxurious

bath prepared for him, and her servants not only washed him, but clipped his long hair and shaved his matted beard. The châtelaine did all she could to make his stay at the castle as pleasant as possible, and all her dependents were only too ready to satisfy his lightest wishes. Thus the days passed by, and, little by little, he got back his health, his strength returned to him, and he began anew to long for the combat. He had not long to tarry ere such an opportunity came into his way.

I should mention that the châtelaine had an enemy named Arlan, the earl with whom she had a feud of long standing, and this fellow attacked her territory, laying it waste far and wide, even going so far as to burn the houses that lay immediately under the castle-hill. All the inmates of the castle donned their armour, knights and squires, and strove as to which of them should first be ready to confront the earl's people. John, who had now recovered his old lust of fighting, was the first to get his armour on, and galloped on his battle-steed out of the castle in advance of all the rest. The first knight he encountered was struck so violently by his spear that he fell to the ground never more to rise from it. Then John rode like a nettled lion into the very ranks of the foe, gripped with both his hands the hilt of his broad falchion, and hacked wildly about him so that his enemies fell round about him like corn before the sickle. The knights who were in his train were encouraged still further by his valour, and exhorted each other not to abandon so brave a leader. From the castle towers the châtelaine and her dames looked on the savage strife and recognised John's helmet in the midst of the hostile ranks. They marked how he hurled himself, like a hawk, down on his enemies and slew such as failed to yield themselves up at once. They thought they had never

seen a braver knight before, and there was many a maiden who would fain have had such a warrior for her husband.

The enemy was just meditating flight when one of their bravest knights galloped up to John, and attacked him so valiantly that the tide of victory almost turned. With a single blow he cleft John's shield, and Murina's champion narrowly escaped being dangerously wounded; but he managed to snatch another shield from one of the enemy, and levelled his spear against the knight with such force that both horse and rider were overthrown. Then John waxed wroth and hacked away at the foe until his sword streamed with blood. Resistance was no longer to be thought of, and those who escaped his steel sought safety in flight. John, on perceiving this, put spurs into his horse and pursued them. He observed Arlan, the earl, amid the ranks of the fugitives, recognising him by his arms, and then directed his onslaught against him, having sternly resolved not to let the earl escape, but to kill him or take him prisoner. The earl put his spurs into his jaded horse to try to escape, but both horse and rider were too much exhausted to get the start of John. At last he overtook the earl, and raised his sword over him, and as the latter was alone, his man having ridden away, he had no choice but to surrender.

"For God's sake," cried he, "leave me my life, and then you are welcome to hold my lands and castle as your own."

"It is possible that I may spare you; but it is not I who shall pronounce your doom, for I shall lead you to Lady Murina, and it rests with her to grant you mercy or withhold it."

Then John deprived him of his arms and carried him captive to the castle. When they came before the châtelaine, and John had delivered to her the

captive earl, the latter fell on his knees before her and craved for mercy.

"I acknowledge," said he, "that I have wronged you, but I will offer you all the reparation that lies within my power, money and goods as much as you desire, and for what you suffer me to retain I will be your vassal."

When John had pleaded for the captive earl the Lady Murina agreed to pardon him for John's sake. The earl then rose up gladly and thanked his generous foe, but John advanced to the châtelaine, and asked her leave to go his way now the strife was over. Although she would have liked to keep him even longer with her, she said she could not hinder him from going, and thanked him with tears for the help he had afforded her.

John now rode from the castle the same way he had come. He was utterly alone, for his gloomy spirits caused him as much as possible to shun the society of his fellows. When he had journeyed a while he heard a terrible roaring in the thicket, and saw, on riding there, a serpent and a lion engaged in deadly strife with each other. The serpent had wound itself round the lion, and was holding it in such a tight embrace that it could not move. When John saw that the poor beast could not resist any longer, but would be choked, he was moved with compassion, jumped off his horse, and tied it up a good distance from the scene of combat, where the serpent's venom could not harm it. Then he held his shield in front of him and nimbly attacked the serpent. With the first blow he cut its head off, and the lion was then able to release itself from its adversary's fatal embrace. John next put himself on the defensive, thinking that the lion would now attack him, but when the lion saw the serpent lying dead, it walked up to John, laid itself at his

feet, and tried to express its gratitude as best it could. John noticed a wound in the lion's neck—the result of the serpent's poisonous bite—and, in order to prevent the poison from spreading, he promptly cut off the flesh round the wound. It seemed as if the lion understood the service he had rendered it, for it made no resistance, but stretched its neck forward and glanced gratefully at its deliverer. When John rode away the lion followed him, and, showed, as well as an animal can express, that it meant to serve and follow him for the future; and so it did constantly. The lion followed him as faithfully as a dog, and this companionship caused him to be known everywhere by the name of the Knight of the Lion.

The faithful beast, determined to manifest its attachment in every way, ran before the rider into the wood, seized a buck, and hurried off to overtake him with it. The lion then laid down its prey in front of the horse, and when John did not stop, but pursued his journey, the lion would not delay to consume the animal, but ran along by the knight. When night came on, and John interrupted his ride, the lion seemed to understand that he was hungry, and rushed off at once amongst the trees to hunt for some game. It knocked over and killed the first stag it saw, threw it on its back, and hurried with it to John, who drew his hunting-knife and flayed the creature, giving the lion its entrails, liver, lungs and heart, and roasting the rest for himself. When he sat down to eat, the lion stretched itself at his feet, and refused to leave him. Even by night the faithful animal kept watch over his master when he laid himself down to sleep on his shield beside the camp fire.

When day dawned John rode on, and so they lived together for fourteen days, hunting and roaming about the wild wood, but on the evening of the fifteenth day they came to a spring, and when John

saw it he recognised it as being the very same spring beside which he had done battle with Red Vadoin. All his sorrowful memories surged through his soul, shame and despair overwhelmed him once more with such violence that he fell to the ground unconscious. As he fell his sword slipped out of its sheath and wounded him in both shoulder and breast, so that blood poured forth from beneath his coat of mail. When the lion saw this it began to tremble with anxiety, and crept cautiously up to the fallen knight, grasped his sword with its teeth and carried it off some distance so that it should not further hurt him; then it laid itself at his feet and waited until he returned to life. On opening his eyes, John's first thought was of his broken promise to his wife, and then his despair began afresh.

"Why should I seek further to avoid my fate?" he sighed; "all my happiness in life is over, and sorrow alone is left to me. It is best, then, that I end my days. There is none to see me here, and I can kill myself without a soul knowing it. The only creature to mourn me would be this poor lion."

As he uttered these words he was standing near a chapel which had been built just beside the fountain. In this chapel there was a captive maid who, hearing his voice, interrupted her melancholy reflections and asked, in moving words, to have speech with him. John, much amazed, went to the chapel and asked who was in there.

"I am," answered the captive, "the most luckless being the sun shines upon."

"Do not say that," said John, "for my sorrow is many times greater than yours."

"You, indeed, are free, and your time is your own; you can ride whither you will; but I am sitting in captivity here on a false charge, and to-morrow they will burn me on a pyre."

"Tell me what they have charged you with, and why they have condemned you to such a painful death."

"Let God be my judge. If I be guilty may He never succour me in body or in soul. The chancellor and both his brothers accuse me of having betrayed my mistress, and on this false charge I am doomed to lose my life, unless I can find a knight willing to fight single-handed on behalf of my innocence against all my three slanderers."

"Then your misfortune is less than mine," said John, "for you can get help; but as for my grief, that no man can cure."

"Who do you suppose will be my champion? There are only two knights in the whole world in whom I dare hope. God grant I may find them."

"Let me hear who these are who would dare to fight against three knights at the same time."

"One is the knight Gavian and the other is John, King John's son. It is because of him that I am to die on the morrow."

"What is it you say?" shouted John. "It is because of him that you are accused? Well, then, know that he whom you are now addressing is John, King John's son, and by God's help I will set you free if it be that you are the girl who so generously helped me after I had slain Red Vadoin. You saved my life, and what you did for me then I will do for you now. But tell me what has happened since that luckless hour when I rode away from the castle."

"You remember that I helped you in your direst need, and you remember also that it was I who brought you and your lady together—and these things I do not regret. Afterwards you rode away with Knight Gavian, and the year went by without any tidings being heard of you. Then my mistress

waxed wroth, and blamed me for having treacherously brought about this marriage. When the chancellor perceived that I had lost her favour, his old spite against me broke out ; he began to slander me, and ended by charging me formally with treason towards my mistress. He bade me get a knight who would dare single-handed to vindicate my innocence against him and his two brothers ; but if none would or could do this, the pyre awaited me. No one in the castle ventured to stand forth as my champion, and all in vain I made my supplication at other courts : not a soul would take up my cause. Then I rode to King Arthur at Caerleon, and inquired after Knight Gavian, but there I heard sad tidings. A knight had been there and carried the queen off by main force, and Gavian had been sent by the king to take vengeance on the ruffian, and bring back the stolen queen. I could find neither you nor Gavian, and I was forced, woe-begone as I was, to return hither. So, I am now sitting in captivity. To-day a priest prepared me for death, and to-morrow I must die, unless you will, of yourself, do battle single-handed with the three."

"Fear not," answered John, "to-morrow I shall come hither ere the judgment falls on you, and I will either save you or fall in the lists ; but, whatever may happen, you must promise me that you will reveal my name to none : that must remain a secret 'twixt us twain."

"I would rather die than utter aught which you have bidden me keep secret ; but, alas, they will perhaps kill you and then burn me."

"Say not so, for were they ten instead of three, I should vanquish them to-morrow. I shall now ride off to seek lodging for the night and bait for my horse, but do not fear my not appearing in the lists. God forbid that I should betray you, so, good-night, noble damsel, and rely on my word."

John remounted his horse and plunged into the wood, followed by his lion. Soon the trees began to grow less numerous, and he perceived a castle before him, the walls of which were strong and high, but the country round about was desolate and laid waste. Not a habitation appeared, and he failed to find even bait for his horse. Seeing this he rode straight to the castle, and when he reached it the drawbridge was lowered for him, and its lord and his men came out and received him with great courtesy. They asked him, however, to chain up the lion outside the gate, for they feared that it would otherwise do mischief, but John answered :—

“That I cannot do, for he and I have promised never to be parted, and I myself will answer for us both ; but have no fear, the lion shall not do any one harm”.

They answered that he might do what seemed best to him, and then they went into the castle, and there John was welcomed by the dames and damsels, who met him with torches, and lighted him into the banqueting-hall. There they took off his armour and gave him other raiment, and then ushered him into supper. John could not, however, help noticing that their merriment at table was occasioned more by politeness to him than by cheerfulness of mind ; and when he heard his host heaving deep sighs, and saw him unable any longer to conceal his tears, John thought he ought to ask him the cause of his distress.

“Right gladly will I tell you,” replied his host, “concerning the misfortune that has befallen me. Hard by there dwells a fierce giant of the name of Harpin, and he is moved by hatred towards me. He has laid waste my land ; my manors and castles are burnt down, and now nothing remains to me of all my possessions save this castle, which has hitherto

resisted his attacks, though he has come hither day after day. I had six sons—the bravest knights you could see—and this giant has succeeded in taking the whole six prisoners. Two of them he slew outside this castle. I witnessed the deed with my own eyes; and to-morrow he is coming back with two others to slay them in sight of us all. There is only one means of my escaping this, namely, the monster has demanded my only daughter, not to take her to wife himself, but to give her to the foulest and most scoundrelly scullion he has; and I would rather suffer death than an indignity such as this.”

“It seems to me passing strange,” said John, “that you have not informed King Arthur of this matter, for there are many at his court who would willingly help you, and do battle with this giant, however strong he be.”

“I have done what I could and sought to find the brave Gavian, for my wife and he are sister and brother. However, as ill-luck would have it, he was not in Caerleon, but had ridden off in quest of the queen, who had been carried off. Had he been aware of what his sister has to suffer he would assuredly have been here long ere this.”

“If I can do anything for you,” said John, “you may count on me, and should the giant come here early to-morrow morning, ere I ride hence, I will do battle with him whatever the issue be, but I cannot tarry longer than daybreak, for I have promised to fight at midday on behalf of a captive maiden whose life depends on my being present, and that promise I must irrevocably keep.”

The lord of the castle was beside himself with joy at this promise, and could not say enough to express his thanks; but, while he was talking, his wife and daughter came into the banqueting-hall, both with tear-stained faces, which they sought to conceal under

their veils. On seeing them the lord of the castle cried out:—

“Now, dry your tears, for God has sent us this noble knight to assuage all our grief”.

When they heard this, and learnt that John had promised to fight the fierce Harpin, they grew exceeding glad and fell on their knees before him in thanksgiving; and when the daughter lifted her veil John beheld the loveliest face he had ever looked upon. He hastened to raise them up, and said:—

“You ought not to go down on your knees before me, and you must put off your thanks until the morrow. What the issue of this fray will be, even supposing I can wait for it, no man can tell; but it is high time to sleep and recruit our strength for to-morrow’s fight.”

John, followed by his faithful lion, then proceeded to the bed-chamber assigned to him. Shortly before daybreak a priest knocked at his door and asked him if he would like to hear Mass. John expressed his thanks, clad himself hurriedly in his armour, and went down to the chapel to prepare himself by devotion and prayer for the perilous encounter which he would have to sustain that day. When Mass was over he went out into the courtyard to look for the giant. The sun had already risen, but not a glimpse of the giant was yet to be seen. After waiting a while, he turned to the lord of the castle and said:—

“God knows how gladly I would stay with you, but my promise prevents me waiting any longer for your enemy; so, farewell, and may God retain you in His keeping”.

He then took farewell of them at once, and as he was about to mount his horse the damsel fell on her knees before him, entreating him not to abandon them, and her parents offered him lands and gold if he would but stay, but he said:—

“God forbid that I should sell my service. Never let Gavian or any other valiant knight hear that you made me such an offer.”

“Then stay for Blessed Mary’s sake,” entreated the damsel in tears. “Stay for your friend Gavian’s sake, and forget not that my mother is his sister.”

John knew not quite what to answer them. It cut him to the heart to see the young girl’s tears, but he could not break the oath he had sworn to Luneta, and he knew he could never survive the grief and shame which would befall him if she were to suffer death through his broken promise. In his perplexity he turned to the damsel and said :—

“I leave this matter in God’s hands, and, relying on His succour, I will bide yet awhile”.

He had hardly uttered these words before he saw the giant rushing over the plain like a madman, and carrying on his shoulder a tremendous bar of steel, so heavy that ten men could hardly have managed to carry it. He had brought with him the two knights, both bound hand and foot. He had thrown each on a horse, and there they lay across the saddles, with their heads hanging down towards the ground. The horses themselves were wretched, half-starved jades, hardly able to go by themselves, and driven by a miserable dwarf, who lashed with his scourge not only them, but also the poor knights, whose clothes were torn to rags, and from whom blood was flowing in streams. When the giant reached the castle gate he lifted up his voice and ordered that the damsel should be given up to his scullion, otherwise they would have reason to repent it.

John then turned to the lord of the castle, who was bewailing his hard lot, and said :—

“I have never heard of such an outrage before, but, with God’s help, we will hinder him from getting your daughter into his power”.

Then he called for his horse and arms, the draw-bridge was let down, and he galloped over the plain towards the astonished giant.

"Who are you?" cried the latter, as he saw the knight; "who dare fight against me? They are no real friends of yours who urge you to such a fool-hardy act."

"I have not come here to waste time in bandying words," answered John. "Your threats do not alarm me, and you shall see I have no intention of running away from you."

Having said this he dug his spurs into the horse's sides and rushed towards the giant. The giant wore for armour a thick bear's hide, but that was pierced by John's lance so that the blood gushed out in a stream. But he troubled himself little or nothing about the wound, but seized hold of his iron bar and aimed a blow at John which shattered his shield into splinters. John waxed mightily wroth, and swore that the giant should pay dearly for this, whereupon he grasped his sword with both hands and gave the giant such a tremendous cut across the forehead that a piece of flesh, the size of an ordinary man's head, dropped off at the blow. Harpin shrieked with pain and rushed blindly at his enemy. His steel bar glanced so close to John that the knight reeled in his saddle and looked, for an instant, as if he was about to fall to the ground; but the lion, as soon as it perceived the peril in which John stood, rushed up and took his share in the sport. The faithful beast hurled himself on the giant, tore his bear's skin to tatters, dug his claws into the monster's body, and tore and rent it till the flesh and muscles flew about. The giant managed, after some few minutes, to extricate himself; but it was in vain that he tried to reach the lion with his iron bar. It was too unwieldy and the lion far too nimble.

In spite of all his blows, it knew how to avoid them, and at last the giant, in aiming a crushing blow at this enemy that constantly eluded his efforts to reach him, directed his weapon with such force that the bar fastened itself into the ground and there stuck. John then rushed forward and buried his sword right in the monster's body. The fight was now finished, and the giant tottered to the ground a dead man.

The people in the castle, who had trembled as they watched the varying fortunes of the fray, now hurried out when they saw the giant fall. Their joy at their deliverance from the monster knew no bounds, and the lord of the castle said to John :—

“ I do not know how I shall ever thank you enough for delivering us all. Unfortunately, I know I must not keep you longer with me, but I hope you will not be long before you come back, so that I may prove to you that you have helped no ungrateful man.”

“ Let us say nothing more on this score,” replied John, “ but only ask your sons to take the dwarf that was in the giant's retinue, and send him to Gavian as a gift from me.”

“ We will willingly do that,” said they, “ but if he asks us who has sent him, what are we to say ? ”

“ Well, only say it was the Knight of the Lion, and that his friendship for Gavian induced him to fight this battle for his sister's sake ; but naught further than this are you to tell him.”

After saying this he waved his hand to them in farewell, and galloped at a furious pace to the enchanted spring.

The sun indicated that noon was already past when he reached the spot, and poor Luneta had already been brought from the chapel and conducted to the pyre. The fagots had been carried there, and only needed to be lighted, just as John came galloping up to order them to desist from their work. When the

people saw the steel-clad knight galloping up at full speed they scampered away so as to escape the horse's hoofs, and a broad road was opened out between the rider and the pyre. John saw where Luneta lay. Her clothing consisted only of coarse linen, which hardly concealed her nakedness. When John arrived she had already made her confession and prepared herself for death. Around her stood a crowd of women lamenting and shedding tears. John shouted out that he had come to vindicate her innocence, and urged those who accused her to step forth and do battle with him, after which he approached the pyre, and sought to comfort her with some kindly words.

"My poor Luneta," said he, "tell me now who they are who have so shamefully belied you. I have come to vindicate you, and I shall compel them to withdraw their charges or else perish in the attempt."

"God requite you, noble knight, for having come," answered Luneta. "Had you been but a few minutes later, I had been undone; but now I hope my sorrow will be turned to joy. My accusers are standing here close by the pyre, but I know that God will grant you the victory, as surely as I am innocent."

When the chancellor and his two brothers heard her say this, they bade her hold her peace.

"Do not put any faith in what she says," cried they to John. "You are bereft of your senses if you mean to risk your life for such a liar. Be wise and ride away; and venture not to fight one against three."

"I am not going to run away for your big words," answered John. "It is true enough that I have no friends or kinsmen here; but I put my trust in God and my good sword, and I shall not blench from you, though I am one and you are three. You must either withdraw your words or else maintain them sword in hand."

“Since you refuse to follow good advice, then let your death be on your own head. But before the combat begins be good enough to order your lion to quit the lists.”

“Should the lion attack you then you must strive to protect yourselves as well as you can.”

“We will not fight against both of you ; either tie up your lion or ride off. In any case we will not begin the fray.”

John made a sign to the lion to go away, and the sagacious beast went off at once and lay down at a distance. John fastened his helmet tighter on his head, seized a lance, and the fray began. The chancellor and his brothers immediately attacked the solitary knight with the greatest fury, but John carefully reserved his strength. When they rushed against him he avoided their attack by a clever movement, but they had hardly passed him before he turned his horse and made for the chancellor. He tilted against him with all his might, and caught him full in the chest with his lance, so that he was lifted out of his saddle and hurled to the ground, where he lay long in a swoon. When the brothers saw this they brought their horses close together, and rode against John. Dexterous as his movements were and doughty his blows, yet he found it difficult to defend himself against their furious attack, and, worse still, the chancellor, having recovered consciousness, and frantic at his overthrow, seized his arms and joined his brothers. There was now three of them again, and he felt that his strength was beginning to desert him in the unequal fight.

But the lion, when it saw the peril in which John stood, could no longer keep still ; it rushed up and hurled itself on the chancellor, throwing him to the ground. With its powerful teeth the savage beast caught hold of the rings in his coat-of-mail,

wrenched them apart one from another, and then dug its claws into his side, and butchered him instantly. John was now released from his most dangerous enemy, but the two others now attacked him the more fiercely, and he thought he had never before been so hard pressed. The lion, however, again came to his assistance by jumping up from the lacerated corpse of the chancellor, and rushing on both the brothers. They were not unprepared, but received the lion's onset so that it fell down before them sorely wounded. However, when John saw the faithful beast's fall, he was beside himself with rage, and fell on the two knights with such fury that they were constrained to give themselves up and declare themselves vanquished, in order to save their lives. But this did not avail them much, for when John pointed his sword at their breasts, and forced them to acknowledge that they had slandered poor Luneta out of nothing but malice, the multitude waxed so frantic that both her traducers were dragged to the pyre, instead of her, and there died the death they had devised for her.

Luneta's innocence was now established, and she descended from the pyre to thank her preserver, but, according to her promise, pretended that the knight was a stranger to her. No one else knew who he was, and not even his own wife suspected who the Knight of the Lion in reality was. She approached him, however, in a courteous manner, and invited him to accompany her to the castle to stay there until the lion's wounds should be healed. John bowed low in his saddle, and expressed his thanks without lifting his visor.

"God requite you for the honour you would show me, but I cannot enter any man's house, or find joy or gladness in life, until I have regained my wife's love which I forfeited through my own fault."

The châtelaine answered that she thought it strange for a woman not to love so brave a knight, and added that she did not suppose he had committed such a serious crime against his wife that it was beyond the reach of forgiveness.

"I must not reveal my crime : it is a secret between her and me."

"Tell me, noble knight," she went on to say, "is it only you two who are aware of the way in which you displeased your wife?"

"Only we two. If any third party could suspect it, it is you."

"Now I do not understand you any longer. Tell me, then, your name that I may have some clue to solving your riddle."

"People call me the Knight of the Lion. I possess no other name."

"The name itself sounds strange to me, and I have never heard the Knight of the Lion spoken of."

"The reason of that is not far to seek. I am no renowned knight whose name has been on every man's tongue. If I had more often joined in the fray or assisted at tournaments doubtless you would have heard the name of the Knight of the Lion mentioned."

"Again I ask you to come with me to my castle."

"No, noble lady ; I will not go thither until I am reconciled with my wife."

"Good-bye, then, and may God grant you, in all fulness, your desire for forgiveness."

"May your prayer be heard, and," added he in a whisper, "may you yourself be not more implacable than you would have the wife of the Knight of the Lion to be."

Then he remounted his horse and proceeded to the wood. Luneta, who had now regained her mistress'

favour, followed him a part of the way, partly to thank him, and partly to question him further. To her expression of thanks he merely answered:—

“Whatever may happen, I beg you not to betray my name”.

“No one shall beguile it out of me.”

“I have yet one petition to make to you. You have now regained your lady’s heart, and you can talk with her as of yore. Keep me in your thoughts, and should you seem to have an opportunity of assuaging her anger against me, and effecting our reconciliation, do not utterly forget me.”

“I have no higher wish than that,” answered Luneta, “and be assured that I shall have you always in my thoughts.”

Then they parted, and John returned to his sick lion, which now could hardly stand on its legs from loss of blood. He jumped off his horse and entered the wood to collect leaves and moss, and after a while he came back with an armful and laid them together on the shield and made a soft couch for the wounded creature. At last he hoisted the shield up on the horse’s back, and there lay the lion while John walked beside the litter. About nightfall they reached the castle which John visited the first time he went to the enchanted spring, and was there received by all the inmates of the castle with their wonted hospitality. He thankfully accepted the master’s invitation to stay until the lion’s wounds were healed, and for this he had not long to wait, as both the master and his daughter were skilled in leechcraft, and soon the lion regained his former strength. Then John took leave of his hosts, and went forth in quest of adventures, seeking thereby to blot out his transgressions.

One evening, after he had been riding the whole day long and was very tired, he came to a strong

castle that was called Torture Castle; and when those who kept watch on its towers saw John, they cried out to him:—

“Go away. You have nothing to do here, where only a madman would seek shelter. Sorrow and despair alone make this their home. Hasten away from it as fast as you can.”

“What do you mean?” answered John dumfounded. “What have I done to you that you should receive me with such discourteous words?”

“Ride away at once. Evil will befall you if you venture to force yourself in.”

At these words John grew angry, and rode right up to the gate, which he ordered the porter to open at once.

“I insist on entering,” said he, “whatever fate be mine.”

“Noble knight,” answered the porter, “insist not on that. There is no honour to be won in this abode of woe. Ride away, and seek not to enter this castle.”

As he was speaking a courteous old damsel came out and said:—

“Be not angry, noble sir, at these harsh words, and, believe me, that all they have said to you has been said in a kindly spirit. It is their wont to receive all strangers with snubs and rudeness so as to warn them against entering this castle, for they know that no one who has found shelter here has had cause to rejoice at it. Now I have said my customary say, so hearken to my counsel and pursue your journey.”

“The night is now far spent, and I prefer this shelter, however bad it be, to all other.”

“Do as you will, but should you go hence with your life, thank God and His inexhaustible mercy.”

“May He requite you for this friendly counsel, but my curiosity has now been roused, and even if it

should cost me my life, I shall still not swerve from my purpose."

He called again to the porter and ordered him to open, and this time the latter no longer refused to obey; the gate was opened, the drawbridge let down, and John, followed by his lion, rode into the courtyard, which was extensive and almost as big as a plain. In the middle of this was an enclosure made of poles and brambles, and in it he saw three hundred women engaged in spinning gold and weaving it into ribbons. Notwithstanding all the precious things that lay strewn around them, they all seemed to be in deep despair, and had scarcely a whole thread on their bodies; their clothes were torn and patched, their cheeks sunken, and their complexions sallow from hunger and neglect. When they saw John they all began to weep grievously and betray the deepest despair. When John had watched this ghastly spectacle for a while he grew heavy of heart, and rode back to the gate to get away from this abode of misery; but the porter went up to him and said:—

"I warned you beforehand, but you would not heed my advice, and now it is too late. A stranger may, I trow, gain admission herein, but no man who has once entered escapes."

"Good," answered John; "I am not thinking of slinking away, however inhospitable the place appears. But tell me, my friend, who these women are who sit here and spin, and who, methinks, are suffering such sore distress."

"You shall never get from me the key to the mystery. Find some one else to tell you what has happened."

John, fully convinced that he would learn nothing from the porter, turned his horse, and rode again into the great courtyard, and observed, in the enclosure itself, a little gate standing open. He dismounted

from his horse, and after tying it up to a pole, went in, and, on approaching the unhappy women, said :—

“God be with you both old and young, and may He turn your sorrow into joy”.

“O, may He grant your prayer,” answered an aged woman. “I believe you have come hither to learn who we are, and why we are tortured in this wise. Listen, then, to the story of our unhappy lot. Once upon a time there was a brave young king who ruled over the land whence we came. He was seldom at home, but journeyed into all countries in quest of adventures and to take part in tournaments and jousts. Once he came to this castle, and for that deed we are all paying the penalty now, and perhaps you, too, will have to suffer for his mad daring. Two fiends hold sway over this castle. Now, when our king had lain here a night, and was about to pursue his way on the morrow, these two fiends hindered him, and offered him the choice between fighting them both, or abandoning himself to their tender mercies. Our king was young—not quite twenty years old—and, brave as he was, he dared not engage the monsters in battle, so he had no choice but to yield himself captive. Then they put before him another choice, which was that they should either kill him or else, to regain his freedom, he was to send each of them a hundred and fifty damsels from the country wherein he was king; nor were they satisfied with that, but demanded that whenever one of them died he was to send another in her stead, so that the number should always be complete. This has been the state of things for many years past, and so it will continue until some one slays our tormentors and sets us free; but the man who can fight these fiends single-handed is not to be found, and so our sufferings will therefore, I believe, go on for ever. You yourself see how we are treated. We suffer hunger and thirst,

and though we labour from morning till night, we do not get enough wages to sustain our bodies or clothe our nakedness; and we suffer not only from our own ill-fate, for often knights and squires come here to free us, but they have all, for our sakes, perished in the enterprise."

"Do not despair," replied John, "for I will release you if I can."

The night was now far spent, and John quitted the enclosure to find shelter for himself. Followed by his lion, he began strolling about the wide courtyard, and came at last to a building that was lighted up, and servants, hearing the tramp of the horse, came out and invited him to enter. They took his horse and led it to a stable, and ushered him into the hall. There he was received by an old knight and his daughter, who both bade him welcome. They all tried to serve him to the utmost of their power, but John could not be certain whether this hospitality was the outcome of kindness, or whether some mockery lay hidden under all the attention they were showing him. Meantime, however, he did not trouble to inquire about this, but betook himself, tired out as he was, to the bed-chamber that was assigned him, and soon fell asleep there. In the morning the old knight went up to him, and conducted him to a chapel where a priest said Mass for them. When this was over John wished to take leave of the old knight, but he laid hold of him saying:—

"Dear friend, you may not go so soon, for there is a certain custom in this house—to wit, that every stranger who finds shelter for the night must, ere he depart, fight with two devils, unless he submits to yielding himself their prisoner."

"That was a curious custom for you to introduce into your house, and one that reflects scant honour on your hospitality."

"*My house*," exclaimed the old knight; "you are mistaken, young man. I have no longer any voice in this house wherein I too am a prisoner, although I am treated less harshly than the rest. Do not believe that it was I who introduced this savage custom, which is as scandalous to me as it is to you. I have no dearer wish than that you may overcome the two monsters and free all the prisoners in this castle. If you succeed in performing this achievement I will gladly give you my only daughter for your wife."

"I thank you for your kindly promise, but your daughter is too good for a poor knight-errant whose sole possessions are his sword and steed. Reserve her rather for some powerful emperor. I have no desire for so rare a reward."

Whilst he was speaking the two devils came rushing into the courtyard; each of them having in his hand a mighty club studded with spikes and formed of the entire stem of a tree. Their heads and feet were bare, but the rest of their bodies was protected by a strong coat of mail, and, for further defence, each of them had a shield. When the lion saw these horrid creatures it began to tremble like an aspen leaf, arched its back, and lashed the ground with its tail: the poor beast was both angry and frightened at the same time. When the two devils saw the lion they said to John:—

"Drive your lion away, for we will have nothing to do with it".

"You seem frightened at the lion. I should be amused to see a fight between the lion and you two."

"Are you afraid to fight us by yourself that you must needs make use of that sort of help?"

"Do not imagine that. I am quite ready to shut the lion up if you will show me some place."

Then they showed him a place, and in it John shut up his lion, locked the door, and threw the key in the

devils' faces to show them he was not afraid of them, and, immediately afterwards, vaulted into the saddle and rode against the two.

Before the fiends could put themselves into position to meet the knight's attack, John struck one of them with his spear and hurled him to the ground, so that he howled with agony; but the next minute the fiend was on his legs again, and now a hot fight began. Both their clubs whizzed all the time about John's ears, and blow succeeded blow with such rapidity that he could not ward them off himself, but was beaten about just as one beats a piece of meat. His shield broke into bits, and his helmet was dented just as if it had been made of leather. He cut about him with both hands, but that was of little use, and he felt that he had never been in a worse plight, feeling his strength getting exhausted, and his blows more and more beside the mark. For a second he thought it best to give up such a hopeless fight and acknowledge himself worsted, but just then he received help that he little expected.

The lion had witnessed this combat from its cage, and grew more and more restless as John was more furiously beset. It looked everywhere for some means of getting out, but the cage was shut, and the bars resisted the lion's efforts; but suddenly it caught sight of a little hole in the flooring, and this the faithful beast began to widen, and after that scratched up a passage through the ground, by means of which it was able to crawl out. It had hardly got into the open air before it threw itself, with a wild rush, on one of John's adversaries, dashed him to the ground, and laid its terrible paws on his breast. Now John took fresh courage, and when his remaining adversary was torn from his clutches by the lion's unexpected assault, John took advantage of this to give him a terrible slash, so that his head

was cleft smartly from his trunk. The other of the two devils then began to howl to John for mercy, promising him at the same time lands and gold, on condition that he released him from the ravening beast that had dug its claws into his breast ; but John answered that as this devil had, to his knowledge, never shown mercy to others, he, therefore, was undeserving of human compassion, and so left him for the lion to work its will on. It was not many minutes before it had torn him to pieces.

All who dwelt in the castle now came running out to congratulate John on the victory he had gained, and the porters craved his forgiveness for having treated him on the previous evening in such a discourteous manner. The old knight, too, came and congratulated him, adding that John had now honestly won his daughter and all the treasures that were to be found in the castle.

“Your daughter, old man, can never be my bride, for I already love another, of whose affection I am trying to make myself worthy, and, as to the treasures in the castle, I will not touch them, for I do not fight for gold. Keep them, then, and give them as a dowry to your daughter. But I desire you to set free all unhappy women that are held captive here, and send them back to their own country.”

Although the old man could not conceal his disappointment at not getting the brave Knight of the Lion for his son-in-law, he, nevertheless, lost no time in carrying out his behest, and the poor women now approached with tears to thank their saviour. After he had given them seemly clothing they went merrily past him out of the castle in which they had spent so many melancholy years. After seeing them depart he vaulted into the saddle, waved farewell with his hand to the people of the castle, and rode away.

He then returned to King Arthur's court, where he was received with uncommon joy, inasmuch as they had given up all hope of seeing him again in the flesh ; but his good friend Gavian, who had just succeeded in conducting back to the court King Arthur's stolen queen, rejoiced above the rest. To his astonishment he found that the mysterious Knight of the Lion, who had so nobly helped his sister, was none other than John, his good friend and brother-in-arms. Side by side they did many a doughty deed, but still John could not win back his joyousness of old days, for the thought of Laudine's cold indifference incessantly grieved him sorely.

At last he could bear the agony no longer, but resolved to go to her and crave her forgiveness. If she refused it he felt that he no longer had the strength to live. So early one morning, ere the sun was up, he started on his journey, without telling any one, and with no other company than that of his trusty lion. On reaching the enchanted spring he seized the cup once more, and poured the water in it over the post, and, as happened before, a raging hurricane broke forth, lightning flashes darted round him, and peals of thunder rattled.

When the people in the castle heard the roaring of the thunder and saw how the gusts of wind shook the battlements and towers, all trembled and bewailed aloud that the castle had been built on such a dangerous spot. It seemed to them a sorry fate to have to suffer insult because they could no longer protect the spring, or, failing that, be exposed to the violence of thunder, lightning and storm ; for now that Red Vadoin was dead and John had gone away, there was no longer any one powerful enough to overcome all the knights errant who had a mind to mock them.

Then Luneta said to her mistress :—

“ Again some fellow has ventured to insult us, and

it looks as if we must forfeit the honour we held for so many years of being guardians of the enchanted spring. It seems to me absolutely necessary for us to try to find some knight with the will and the courage to protect our land against such miscreants. It cuts me to the heart to think that this fellow may go his way unmolested because there is no one in our castle to punish his arrogance."

"Well, Luneta, as you are always rich in resources, you must hit on some expedient to help us out of our troubles, for I myself am at my wits' end to think of anything."

"You know I would do all in my power for you, but what can a poor girl like me do? You have such a number of clever counsellors. Ask them what their advice is; and, to tell the truth, I dare not venture to suggest any expedient, for, supposing it did not turn out according to your wishes, you would hold me responsible for it, and perhaps I should again forfeit your favour."

"Alas!" replied Laudine, "my counsellors are of no more avail than my knights, and they certainly cannot help me. My sole hope is centred in you."

"Very well, then, I have one piece of counsel to offer you. You remember the Knight of the Lion, who overcame single-handed the chancellor and both brothers. Before that he had slain the terrible giant Harpin, and a braver knight is not to be found. If we could but gain him for our champion, then our troubles would be over; but, as you remember, he refused to enter this castle until he had made his peace with his wife. Our fate, therefore, depends on this reconciliation being effected."

"My dear Luneta, make haste at once to find where this knight is and bring him hither. If he comes I promise to do all in my power to reconcile him and his wife."

“Before I go I want you to promise me solemnly that you will not be angry with me for what I am about to do on your behalf, be the issue what it may.”

When Laudine said she would readily take the oath that Luneta demanded, the damsel produced a reliquary and a Mass-book, and bade her mistress swear on them, first, that she would never hold Luneta responsible if things went contrary to her wishes; secondly, that she should reconcile the Knight of the Lion and his wife, and make the latter forgive the knight all his marital transgressions. When Luneta had exacted the oath, she could not repress a furtive smile, and, in order that her mistress should not perceive it, she commanded her horse to be brought round immediately, vaulted into the saddle, and rode to the spring, and there met the Knight of the Lion, who greeted her blithely. It did not take her long to tell him what had occurred at the castle, and let him into the secret of the new ruse she had employed to overcome the châtelaine's pride. When John wished to thank her for the trusty help she had given him, she interrupted his thanks by saying:—

“Let us not delay this reconciliation, but mount your steed and make for the castle”.

“Does not my wife know who I really am?”

“Not a soul suspects that John and the Knight of the Lion are one and the same person.”

When they reached the castle John went up to his wife and greeted her courteously. His visor was lowered over his face so that she could not recognise him, whereupon she welcomed him heartily; but Luneta said:—

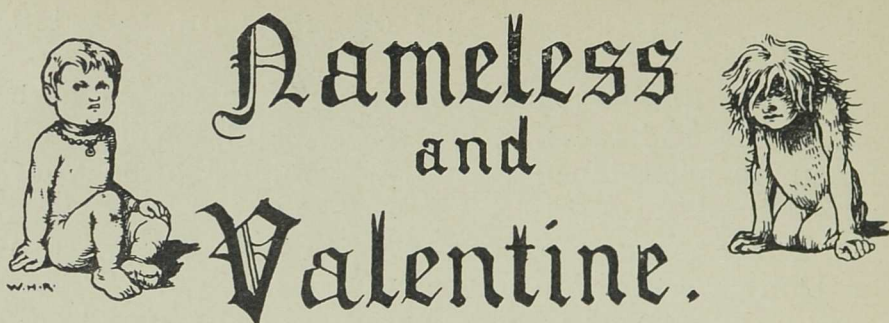
“Now, my lady, the time has come for you to show what you can do. You promised to procure him his wife's pardon, and you alone can do that.”

"Noble knight," said Laudine, "be seated here beside me and tell me your story, and I will do all I can, in accordance with my oath, to soften your wife's hard heart."

"There is no good whatever in hiding the truth any longer from you," interrupted Luneta. "That hard-hearted creature is yourself, and the Knight of the Lion is your lawful husband John, the son of John, who has now suffered quite enough for his forgetfulness. All you have to do now is to keep your promise, and render him back the love you promised, and the pardon which you alone can grant."

When the haughty dame heard this she first fell into a violent rage with the artful Luneta for having fooled her in this manner, but, ere long, she felt grateful to her trusty friend for having constrained her to pronounce the words of pardon which had hung upon her lips, but had hitherto been kept back by pride. She thereupon offered John her hand, drew him to her bosom, saying that she would now grant him full pardon by reason of her oath, and with this pardon ends the story of John, the Knight of the Lion, who went forth no more in quest of adventures, but stayed in his castle, content with his spouse's love, without any desire to gain any other honour whatsoever.





Homeless and Valentine.

IN bygone days, many hundreds of years ago, there reigned in France a mighty king called Pippin, who had a sister named Fila. When she was twenty years old the king of Hungary heard reports of her beauty and goodness of heart, and the descriptions he received so inflamed his love that he resolved to demand the young princess for his wife. With this intention he sent his ambassadors to King Pippin's court to negotiate the marriage for him. Pippin received the proposal graciously, and said he was desirous of possessing the friendship of so renowned a prince as King Crissosmos of Hungary, and was therefore willing to give him his sister to wife; but he desired King Crissosmos himself to come to France for the wedding. With this answer the ambassadors returned home.

The Hungarian king and all his subjects rejoiced over the answer they brought, though there were two that were not well pleased, namely, the king's old and ambitious mother, who did not wish to have any rival at court, and her obedient servant, the crafty Bishop Frankart. When King Crissosmos ordered his knights to don their armour and ride with him to France, Frankart made objection.

"My lord," said he, "it ill becomes you to go forth from your kingdom and country to beg for yourself a bride. You are so mighty a prince that it would have been much more fitting that the princess came to you, escorted by her brother."

But the king, who knew that it was only envy and ill-will that prompted the bishop's words, replied angrily :—

“He who does not choose to follow me may do as he pleases. I shall not put any pressure on him, but I do not dream of abandoning my journey on his account.”

The bishop, alarmed at this harsh answer, found that he had betrayed himself, and replied :—

“Attach no importance to my chatter ; I meant nothing by it. Your mother, of course, accompanies you with pleasure, in order to meet her future daughter-in-law, and to me also it will be joy to behold your young bride.”

So King Crissosmos got ready for his marriage-journey, and, a few days afterwards, left his kingdom, accompanied by a retinue of two thousand knights and Church dignitaries. When he arrived King Pippin received him with great respect, and had the wedding celebrated with splendour and magnificence.

Crissosmos and his bride spent a year in France with King Pippin. At that time there was an astrologer at the king's court, and this man predicted that the queen would give birth to twin sons who were destined to perform the greatest deeds, and whose names would be renowned far and wide.

When the old queen and Bishop Frankart heard this prophecy their hatred was even further aroused, and they both cudgelled their brains day and night as to how they could injure Fila and her sons. At last Bishop Frankart said :—

“Now, my queen, I have found a way for you to wreak vengeance on your son's wife. As soon as the children are born you are to turn all the people of the court out of the queen's room, and remain there yourself, with no other attendant than one girl

whom you can fully trust. Then let the girl take the children and drown them in the river which flows by the castle. By this we shall gain two objects: first, Queen Fila will be deprived of the sons for whom she has longed so ardently, and for whom such a glorious future has been predicted; and, secondly, we can afterwards accuse the queen of having killed her own children by her own hand. It seems to me that she will find it a hard matter to clear herself of this charge."

The wicked old woman naturally agreed to this shameful proposal with zest, and, when the young princes were born, she sent away all the queen's ladies-in-waiting, and kept only one girl, whose name was Philomena, in the room. She threatened this girl with the direst punishments if she refused to take the children and drown them in the river.

Philomena, who, nevertheless, had a kind heart, dared not disobey, though she felt the deepest shame for the foul deed she had to do. She therefore took both the children and carried them down to the shore. One she laid in a little chest and launched it on the river, but she had carefully made the chest of such a size that the boy would not get smothered, but would have ample room to breathe. This thoughtfulness saved the little creature's life. King Pippin had a daughter named Clarina, who was about Fila's age, and one morning, as she was taking a walk by the river shore, she saw a little chest come floating by. Now she wondered what this could be, and ordered the little page that accompanied her to take up the chest. When this was done and the lock forced, they saw in the chest the sweetest little boy, who was about one or two days old. He had, between his shoulders, a birthmark in the shape of a red cross, and the princess fancied she saw in this a token that the little foundling was of noble birth.

When she had gazed on the boy for a while, she felt such great compassion for the poor abandoned child that she made up her mind to bring it up as her own. She, therefore, had the boy carried secretly to the castle, without saying a word about her discovery to a soul, and nourished him on goats' milk at first, on which he thrived well, grew up and waxed strong. At his baptism Clarina gave him the name of Valentine.

The other little prince was also saved in a marvellous way. Philomena had not the heart to cast him into the river, but carried him to a wood, and hid him in a thicket. A she-wolf had her lair not very far from the spot, and, on seeing the little thing, she carefully took him in her mouth, carried him to her den, laid him among her own cubs, and allowed him to be suckled with them.

Meanwhile Philomena returned sadly to the castle. As soon as she saw her the queen-dowager exclaimed:—

“Well, have you performed my behests?”

“Yes, alas; the little princes no longer live; the terrible deed is done, and you are avenged.”

The wicked queen now hastened to her son and cried out to him:—

“A terrible misfortune has happened. Your sons have disappeared, and, what is worse, I have a strong suspicion that your wife has killed her own children. Directly they were born she sent every one away who would otherwise have been about her. When, after a time, I came into her room the children were gone, but the queen could not say whither they had betaken themselves.”

Crissosmos at once rushed into Fila's room and inquired for the children, but the poor mother only wept and lamented over the loss she had sustained. Crissosmos, who interpreted those tears as an acknow-

ledgment of her guilt, was now convinced that his mother had told the truth, and started off in a rage to King Pippin, to whom he accused the queen of having murdered her own children. When that king heard this cruel charge he was deeply depressed, but after a while said in answer :—

“If my sister has committed the crime of which you accuse her, she shall not escape the punishment of a murderess. I shall have a trial held, and it shall be none the less thorough by reason of the accused being my sister.”

Bishop Frankart, who was standing beside him, added :—

“I ween it was not without a purpose that, directly after the children’s birth, she sought to be alone with them. Who other than she could have committed this crime, for no one else was present? For me that is proof positive.”

Meanwhile Fila was brought before the tribunal, and King Pippin, who had gradually been convinced of her guilt by all the slanderous tongues in the palace, addressed her sternly and said :—

“How could you, my sister, sink so deeply into sin as to lay hands on your own offspring? For a child-murderess our laws have but one punishment, and that is burning alive. Even you must expiate your crime by this agonising death, for I can pronounce no other sentence.”

“God will, I think, help me out of my sore strait,” answered Fila, “so sure am I that I know not who has done this, or in what way my sons were stolen from me.”

Bishop Frankart then tried to frighten her into an acknowledgment, and ordered that the pyre should be made even larger; but seeing that she observed all these preparations with a resigned and, at the same time, dauntless gaze, he went up to her and said :—

“For the sake of your own salvation I advise you to make confession and acknowledge your crime, for you yourself must see that you have not much longer to live”.

But she answered :—

“Do you mean that my soul is lost? The just Judge above knows my innocence, and, to escape punishment on earth, I will not take on myself a crime that I have not committed.”

Then the false bishop cried out in a loud voice so that all the people who stood round about him heard it :—

“She has now confessed her guilt to me. Let her therefore suffer as her deeds deserve.”

When she heard this foul lie, Fila got up on the pyre on which she had sunk down, and called out to him :—

“Villain ! of a certainty you know more of this murder than she whom you accuse of it. Once more, in my last moments, I declare I am innocent of this matter.”

There was a knight in Pippin's retinue named Blandamer, a son of the aged Earl Baldwin. On seeing the indignation that betrayed itself in the queen's eyes, he at once realised that she was unjustly accused, and so he rode up swiftly to help her without delay, and, when Bishop Frankart was about to answer the queen's angry words, Blandamer interrupted him by saying :—

“Frankart, were you not a priest I would, for the sake of this noble princess, force you to eat your lying words ; but your sacred office protects you now. But doubt not that I see through your wickedness, and feel assured that you know much more of this murder than the poor queen does.”

Then he turned to the others, flung his glove down on the ground before them, and said :—

“I, Blandamer, who now stand here, am ready to fight against any one who dares assert that this charge against the queen is true.”

When his father, the aged Duke Baldwin, heard these brave words, he exclaimed: “My son, beware of challenging the powerful, and meddle not in this matter, by which you will only injure yourself without benefiting others.”

“Father,” answered Blandamer, “when I was dubbed a knight I swore an oath that I would never cease to succour the weak and persecuted, but would, without hesitation, sacrifice my life in the protection of the innocent, and from this oath now, less than ever, will I depart, seeing that it is a question of the innocence of my own queen.”

This spirited behaviour of Blandamer helped the queen. The judgment of God, to which Blandamer appealed, could not be denied to the queen; and neither the old queen nor Bishop Frankart could induce any knight to take up Blandamer’s glove in order to fight, sword in hand, for the truth of the impeachment.

As no champion appeared, the judges met again for the purpose of deliberating, and after some consideration they commuted her punishment, and the queen was condemned instead to perpetual banishment. On hearing this doom, Blandamer bowed to the tribunal and said that as her faithful servant he would follow the unfortunate queen into her banishment, even if it should last to the rest of their lives, and he donned his armour and mounted his horse forthwith. For the queen a splendid palfrey, such as befitted her rank, was brought, and so both left their country, and rode away to an unknown fate.

On the following day, as they were going through a great forest, they saw a knight in black armour leading a captive damsel. She was weeping bitterly and

uttering loud cries, for the black knight was whipping her with a scourge till she bled from her nose and mouth. Blandamer, on seeing this sight, waxed mightily wroth and shouted: "How can you who are clad like a knight so deeply degrade yourself as to strike a defenceless woman? Whatever she may have done, stay your hand at once."

"Mind your own business, and meddle not with mine; but, as you are such a braggart, she shall have a few more blows, for I mean to show both you and her that I pay no heed to other people's commands."

"Well," replied Blandamer, "let the sword decide the dispute between us. By God's help I will free her from your clutches."

"Are you weary of life that you should seek to release her? Had you three brace of comrades with you I might, perhaps, pay some heed to you. Draw your sword, then, and I will chastise you and show you I mean to keep the damsel, notwithstanding your behests."

They now began to fight with such fury that their shields were hacked to pieces and blood streamed from their armour; but, at last, the just cause of Blandamer won the day, and he was lucky enough to give the black knight a stroke that felled him to the ground. Blandamer then hastened to liberate the captive, who did not know how to thank her preserver sufficiently.

"My father," said she, "is king over Arabia, and lives not very far off. This false knight treacherously stole me away from him, and would have carried me to his castle if you had not so courageously set me free. God will assuredly reward you for the chivalrous help you have rendered me; but my father too will try to prove his gratitude to you, wherefore I invite you and this noble lady, who, I surmise, is your wife, to accompany me to my father's castle, so that he may thank you."

"Noble damsel," replied Blandamer, "the lady you see here is not my wife, but Fila, the hapless queen, whose servant I am ; but we are very grateful to you for your invitation, for we have no longer a home, and therefore would be glad to follow you."

When they had ridden a while they saw a man sitting by the road in the garb of a pilgrim. Despite his habit, he was no holy man, but a cunning traitor prowling about for plunder. When they saw he had meat and drink with him they rode up and asked him to sell them some. The traitor arose and answered with affected humility : "Blithely will I share with you the best I have, so come down under this tree and I will serve you a meal to the best of my power".

Whilst they were sitting at meat the traitor asked them if they had not met a black knight on their way. "I am," said he, "almost afraid of him, for he is a dangerous man."

"He will hurt no one more," answered Blandamer, "for I have just felled him by my own hand."

When the traitor heard this he became both mad and amazed, for the black knight was his lord and master, as well as of a crowd of other scoundrels. He hid his rage, though he determined within himself to be revenged, and, without their noticing it, he took a little flask containing a sleeping potion, and poured it into their goblets. They had hardly put it to their lips before all three lost consciousness, and fell into so heavy a sleep that no one could wake them. Then the traitor got up and looked at them with an exultant countenance, and, seizing Blandamer by the waist, laid him on his own horse, and took him to the castle belonging to the black knight. When he reached it he shouted to the other traitors :—

"Here I have him who has slain our master. He had with him two women apparently of noble birth,

and, when we have killed this rascal, I propose that we fetch the women here and make them our slaves."

That seemed to all to be a good idea, but before they rode to the forest, they took the sleeping Blandamer and dragged him into a prison tower and threw him in.

When, after a while, Blandamer woke up, he looked around in amazement.

"Do I dream or am I awake?" he said to himself. "Where have my arms gone, and what do these fetters round my legs mean? How did I come here? I cannot be wounded, for I do not feel any hurt. It must all be a dream."

An aged knight, who lay captive in the same tower, hearing his wild talk, answered him: "No, my poor friend, you are not dreaming; what you see is, alas, reality, and not a dream. Like the rest of us here in this tower, you too have been captured by the treachery of the scoundrels who own this castle, and here, in all probability, we must remain together as long as we live."

When Blandamer heard this he became exceedingly alarmed, not for himself, but for Queen Fila, and he said with a sigh:—

"Oh that I were free long enough to put her in safety. For myself afterwards things may go as they may."

But his lamentations helped him nothing. The prison doors turned on their hinges only to admit fresh prisoners, and he himself pined away in the den without hope of being released.

Queen Fila and her companion were luckier than Blandamer, for, when they had slept a while, a wild cat came and began to lick their faces with its rough tongue; but, when they woke up, the animal got frightened and fled. At the first glance they cast around them they noticed that Blandamer had

disappeared, and Fila at once understood what had happened.

"Ah," said she, "the traitor who gave us the sleeping potion which sent us all into a heavy sleep has assuredly carried off the faithful Blandamer, and has already, perhaps, put him to death. And we, poor women, can do nothing to help him. Let us, therefore, haste away to avoid his seizing us also."

They hurried off, and that only in the nick of time, for directly afterwards the traitor and his friends came up to entrap them; but Fila and the Arabian princess were already out of sight, and the scoundrels had therefore to return to the castle without having carried out their purpose. For a long time the two women wandered about the wilderness, but towards evening they beheld a castle with lofty battlements towering before them.

"I easily recognise that castle," said the princess; "it lies on my father's land, and its lord is a vassal of my father. Let us go thither, for we are sure of a hearty welcome; but, noble princess, when I have reached my own home and my sufferings are over, you must not abandon me, but must take up your abode with me for ever. You have lost the noble Blandamer, but I shall always be a loving sister to you."

With these words she led Fila to the castle, and they were both at once admitted. The king, who happened to be there, for he had been out to search for his daughter, was naturally beside himself with joy at getting her back again; and there was no end to his questions and inquiries as to how it had all happened—her being carried off by the black knight, and her release by Blandamer, who had himself fallen a victim to the unknown traitor. Fila too was received by the king with the greatest cordiality, and

she accepted thankfully, in her forlorn state, his invitation to stay at his court as a companion for his daughter.

Thus many years passed away without any event happening to disturb her friendship with the princess. A knight of the name of Gavin came on a visit to the court, and he gradually fell violently in love with Fila; but she still loved her husband faithfully, notwithstanding all his offences against her, and rejected all Gavin's overtures of courtship, and would never consent to return his love. When Gavin, however, found himself rejected, his love turned to a frenzied hatred, and he made up his mind to be revenged on the haughty dame who had slighted him.

One night, as Fila and the princess were sleeping in the same bed, Gavin stole into their bedroom without any one discovering him, drew his knife and plunged it into the princess's breast. Then he placed the gory knife in Fila's hand so gently that the slumberer did not awake from her sleep, and, having done this shameful deed, he went early in the morning to the king's room and said to him:—

“My lord and king, last night I had a ghastly dream. I thought I saw your daughter in deadly peril, and now I only hope that my dream has proved false.”

The king was naturally horrified at such talk, and, throwing on his clothes hurriedly, he hastened to his daughter's chamber. There a ghastly sight met his eyes: his daughter lay murdered in her bed, while Fila, resting on her friend's arm, was asleep with a bloody dagger in her hand. When they saw this Gavin cried out:—

“Did I not foresee this? The jealousy which Fila has so long felt towards the princess has at last made her a murderess. See, she has still the gory knife in her hand.”

Then he rushed towards the bed, laid hold of Fila, and shook her till she awoke from her sleep.

"Wake up, you abominable murderess," roared Gavin. "How could you have the heart to do such a horrible deed on the noble damsel who has always treated you with the tenderness of a sister? I now see through your weakness, and understand the cause of your banishment from France, where you had one murder on your conscience, though we believed in your innocence, being beguiled by your pious airs."

Poor Fila looked about her in terror, and, when she saw her friend murdered and covered with blood, she realised what she was accused of, but refrained from defending herself, only uttering with a sigh:—

"Almighty God, be Thou my protector, for I am innocent of the deed whereof I stand accused".

"Be silent," shouted Gavin, "and attempt no subterfuges, for we have all seen the very knife in your hand with which you accomplished your infamous deed."

Gavin then had her immediately bound hand and foot, and thrown into the prison tower. He charged her formally with the murder, and the evidence against her was so strong that the court, without hesitation, condemned her to be burnt on a pyre.

The story now goes back to young Valentine, who was adopted by Princess Clarina as her foster-son, and was brought up by her without King Pippin or the other inmates of the palace having an inkling of it. The boy grew up, waxed stronger and bigger than other children, and, when he was merely a youth, had the strength of a man. Clarina loved him constantly with a mother's tenderness, and even required all her people to show him the same respect as they showed her. This irritated the squire, who had been with the princess when Valentine was

found in the river, and on one occasion, being no longer able to conceal his wrath, he exclaimed:—

“It is a sin and a shame for you, princess, to treat this miserable foundling as if he were the son of some high-born king”.

When Valentine heard these insulting words his wrath flamed up and he rushed upon him. The squire fled affrighted from the young giant, and Valentine started in pursuit of him. The squire reached the hall where the king and all his courtiers were sitting at meat, thinking that he would be safe from his pursuer; but Valentine, who did not know the king, and, if he had, would not have troubled himself about his presence, raised his arm and gave the squire such a blow with his fist that he fell down dead on the floor.

“If you had held your tongue,” he exclaimed, “you would be alive now.”

When the king witnessed this unexpected homicide, which took place before his eyes and without any respect for his presence, he became exceedingly angry, and started up from his seat.

“You knights and loyal subjects,” roared he, “seize this scoundrel at once for daring to raise his hand against my daughter’s servant here in my own castle. This murder shall cost him his life, and let no one presume to beg mercy for the criminal.”

“Let no man come too near me,” answered Valentine, “for it shall cost him dear. I am not of a mind to yield up my life without a struggle.”

Valentine then and there threw himself into an attitude of defence, and though he had no other weapons than his fists, four of his assailants were forced to bite the dust before he was overpowered. He was at once thrown into the prison tower, and all declared that he richly deserved death. When Princess Clarina heard what had happened, she was

deeply grieved over the brutality that Valentine had shown and the cruel fate that awaited him; but she resolved, nevertheless, to save the youth at any price, and approached her father in order to implore mercy for the culprit.

"Dear father," said she, "curb your righteous wrath against the poor boy, however great his offence may be. I will reveal to you a secret which renders it necessary to forego punishing him. The fact is that he is the son of the king of Portugal, who sent him to me in order that the youth might learn discipline and gentle breeding, and you cannot, without outraging your honour as a king, put to death the son of a foreign king just as if he was a common malefactor."

"Good," replied the king; "for your sake, on account of his high birth, and by reason of his youth, I will spare his life; but he will have to stay in prison for some time. That will not do him any harm. It will but serve to cool his hot blood and give him an opportunity of repenting the rash act of which he has been guilty."

Thus Valentine was saved, but he had to remain in the prison tower. While he was lying there an embassy came from the king of Spain to France to request King Pippin's aid against the infidel Saracens, who were burning and harrying Spain, and were then busy besieging the strong city of Seville, where the king of Spain was hemmed in with all his army. When Pippin heard them speak of the tyranny under which the Christians were groaning, he ordered his knights to prepare for battle at once, and then levied the largest army he could, and marched rapidly to Seville, where he was lucky enough to join the Spanish king without encountering any opposition.

They determined, the day after they met, to attack the enemy. Pippin commanded one wing of the

army and the king of Spain the other, and the fighting lasted with fury the whole day. Many a brave knight fell never to rise again, and many a sword broke on the helmets of the Infidels. For a long time the issue was undecided, but towards evening the heathen got the upper hand, and the Christians were forced to withdraw within the walls of Seville, for the loss among them had been very great. Pippin, therefore, said to the Spanish king :—

“We have lost so many men that henceforth we must not think of attacking, for, as far as I can see, we have hardly enough troops here to defend Seville against the enemy, and, unless we are to yield, we must obtain reinforcements”.

To get these Pippin sent a knight to his daughter Clarina, with the request that she was to send him as many men as she could, for upon this the deliverance of the French army depended. The knight made his way through the enemy's camp, and had the good fortune to reach the princess, who lost no time in sending a proclamation throughout the length and breadth of France summoning all men capable of bearing arms who had not already proceeded to Spain with King Pippin. When all the knights had assembled, Clarina had Valentine fetched from his prison-tower, and then ushered him into the armoury where all had foregathered. When the youth heard what the nature of the business was he entreated the princess in these words :—

“Noble damsel, let me accompany the rest and try if I possess any manly courage. You shall not have to blush for me, for the thought of you will steel my arm, and the heathen will find, I hope, that I am not afraid of them. Give me armour, a shield, and a helmet, so that I may ride like a knight against the foe.”

“You shall have what you desire,” answered Clarina.

Then she had a rug fetched and spread on the ground, and, when Valentine had taken his place upon it, she clad him in a suit of armour so strong that no one could shatter a single ring thereof, and over this she flung a tunic woven of gold and silk of such radiant hues that its sheen gleamed from afar. Next she buckled about his waist a costly sword, and then she fixed on him his long spurs. Last of all, she bade him kneel down, which done, she took a sword and smote him thrice on his shoulders.

"You shall perform the functions of a loyal knight," said she. "I now bestow on you the shield and sword so that you may be the protector of maidens and widows and such as be fatherless, wheresoever you see them in distress. You are to give yourself no rest until you have righted their wrongs, and you are to succour, to the utmost of your power, whosoever turns to you entreating your assistance. If you be brave and dauntless, then you will be a perfect knight."

"Noble damsel," humbly replied Valentine, "with God's help I will try to obey your commands, but let me now fare hence, for we have no time to tarry longer here."

Then Clarina turned to the others and said:—

"This young knight Valentine is to be your captain in this expedition until you reach the king, my father, so show him obedience in the king's name".

All promised her this, and then prepared for their departure. Then a splendid courser was led to Valentine with bridle, saddle-girths, and stirrups made of gold, and certain high-born damsels held the reins while he should mount; but Valentine, refusing all assistance, merely laid his hand on the saddle-bow, and vaulted on to the saddle without making use of either reins or stirrup. Then Clarina, as she bade

him farewell, handed him a steel helmet, the crest of which was adorned with a golden crown, and under this was a figure representing a maiden; and the maiden wore on her finger a ring, the precious stones of which gleamed far and wide.

They now rode on their journey, but when they had come within a few miles of the Infidels without being observed, they halted, and Valentine put this question to the chief knights:—

“Now give me fair counsel. Do not you think with me that it would be best for us to attack the enemy very early in the morning, before they get any suspicion that we are here? As they are unprepared and fortune is on our side, we might fight a decisive battle without the help of the besieged.”

As they all agreed to this proposal, Valentine went on to say:—

“Well, then, let us start at once without delay: we have no time to lose if we would escape their spies. I shall take my stand beneath the chief standard and endeavour to fight in such a way that, despite my youth, you shall have no need to blush for your leader.”

All answered with one voice that they would not fail him, but would either conquer or die. Just at daybreak, when the sun was rising, they reached the Saracens' camp, and Valentine dug his spurs into his horse, raised his battle-cry, and cut his way into the ranks of the foe. His men followed bravely on his track, and the heathen, who had not yet formed into fighting order, fell in heaps beneath his sword. In his eagerness for fighting, Valentine suffered himself to be lured too far from his own followers, and suddenly found himself alone amidst the enemy's army. On whichever side he glanced he saw none but Saracens, and these surrounded him like a thick wall in such a way that no Christian could come to

his aid ; nevertheless he defended himself like a lion. Every Infidel that came within reach of his sword was made to bite the dust, and blood flowed round him in streams.

King Pippin and his comrade, the Spanish king, watched the ill-matched fight from the top of the wall, and the French king said :—

“ Never before have I beheld any one defend himself so well as this young knight. He must be a man of noble birth, for his armour gleams like gold.”

At the very moment he uttered these words, he saw Valentine rush up to the heathen king, seize him by the waist, pitch him on the horse in front of him, and gallop through the ranks of the astonished Saracens, who gave way out of terror at the heroic deed, as well as for fear of wounding their own king. Valentine rode with his prisoner up to the gate of the city, all his men following him, and, in a few moments, he stood in the presence of the two kings, leapt nimbly out of the saddle, and delivered the heathen king to them.

“ Do with him,” said he, “ what you will, but remember that he is a king, and the flower of all the Saracens.”

You can picture to yourself what rejoicings there were in the Christian camp. Every one hastened to thank Valentine, whose bravery no one could praise enough.

King Pippin folded him in his arms, and said :—

“ Young man, you shall have gold and silver or anything else which lies within my power to give. Only say the word and it shall be yours.”

“ My lord,” replied Valentine, “ may God reward you for your generous offer. I do not ask your gold, but there is another boon I would ask, which I hope you will not refuse.”

“ Whatever you ask shall be granted.”

“Then I beg you to release me from my imprisonment, and bestow on me your favour, for I am that same Valentine whom you ordered to be thrown into the tower before you went from home.”

“You are free and your own master, and not only so, but I entreat you to accompany me back to France and abide with me for the remainder of my days. You shall never lack my favour and protection.”

Directly afterwards they all assembled to take counsel as to what was to be done with the captive king, but the latter said :—

“If you will restore me my freedom I will maintain unbroken an honourable and loyal peace with you. I and my own people will fare home to our own country once more, and will never again disturb you with war. All the injury I have done you I am ready to repair, and this I promise you on my oath and honour.”

This proposal seemed satisfactory to all parties. They were wearied of war and longed for peace. The end of the deliberation, therefore, was that the Saracen king's offer was accepted and he himself was set free. On the following day a treaty of peace was formally ratified, and the heathen went their way. As King Pippin had nothing further to do in Spain, he took leave of the Spanish king and departed to France, where a report of the great victory had preceded him; and the Princess Clarina was greatly rejoiced on learning that Valentine, her own knight, had gained it. When the army arrived, therefore, she hastened out to welcome her father, but soon turned from him to Valentine, whom she took by the hand and led into her own apartment. There she strained him to her bosom and kissed him, saying that he had, by his chivalrous bravery, proved that he deserved her love.

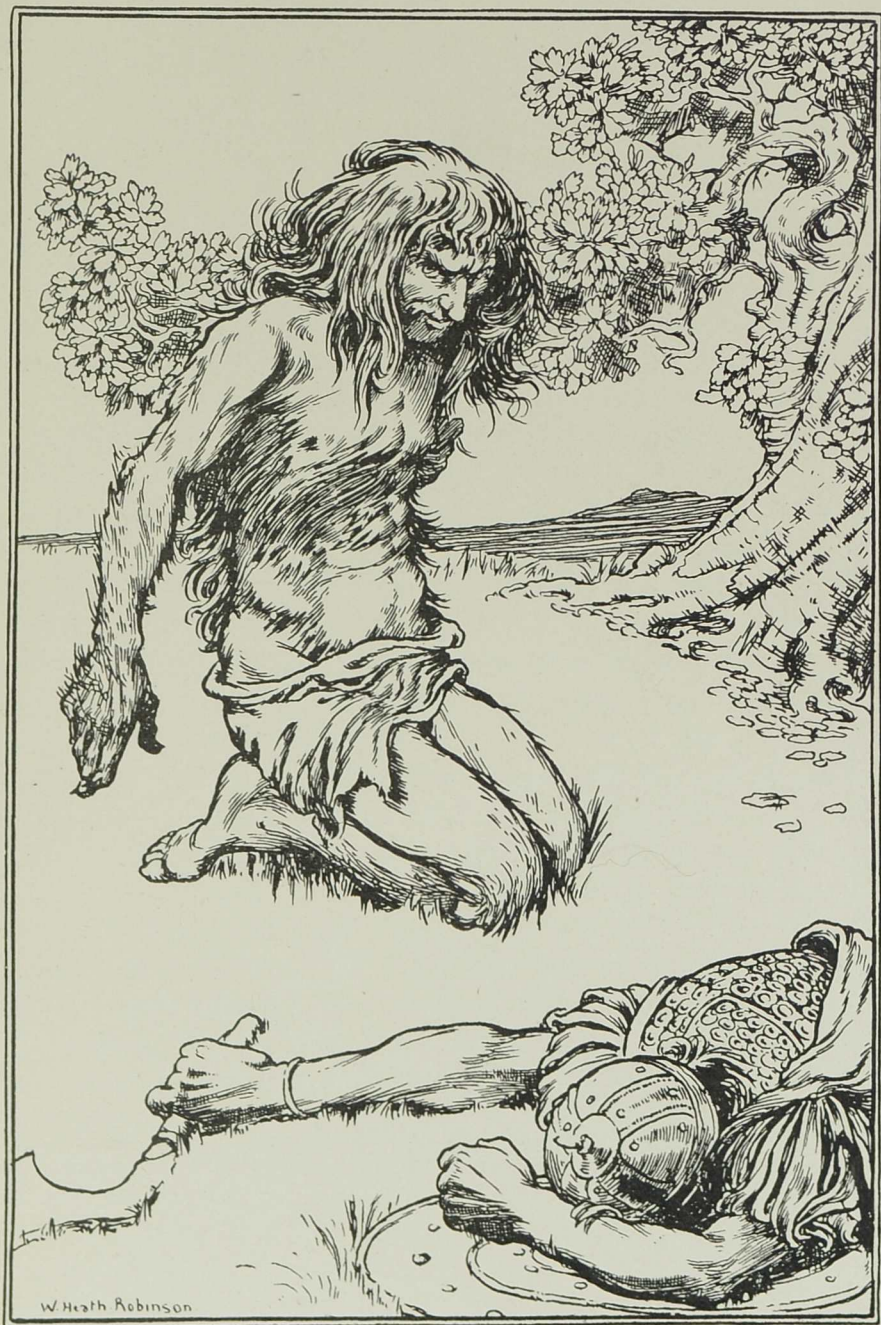
On the following day King Pippin went out hunting with several knights. After they had ridden for some time in the forest one of the knights exclaimed :—

“Look at that curious animal running among the trees there”.

He and another knight started in pursuit of the beast, but the creature that they took for a beast was no beast at all, but Valentine's twin brother, who had been brought up by the wolf in her lair without ever having come in contact with human beings. His understanding as yet lay dormant, for it had never been cultivated, and, even in his outward appearance, he resembled an animal. His body was thickly covered with hair, and he did not walk erect like a man, but ran on all fours like a wolf. He had not learnt to speak, and was only able to roar like a beast.

When the two knights rode up to him he stood and looked at them savagely, but one of them drove at him with a spear, and, as soon as the astonished beast felt the point of the spear in his body, he became infuriated and fell upon his assailant, tore him off his horse, and crushed him to death with his hands.

When Valentine heard the story of this curious adventure in the hunting-field, he at once donned his armour and mounted his horse to see the animal that had displayed such strength and violence, and he had not gone far before he encountered it, still in the same rage as when it was pursuing the knight. As soon as it caught sight of him it rushed at him, dragged him off his horse, and would also have crushed him to death, if he had not been wearing the splendid armour that Clarina had given him when she dubbed him a knight. The animal could not break the steel rings, but it hugged Valentine so



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“ITS FURY DISAPPEARED.”

hard that he lost consciousness and swooned away. When the beast saw him lying motionless and seemingly dead its fury disappeared, and it proceeded quite quietly on its way without attempting to do him any further hurt. After a little while Valentine regained consciousness and noticed that the beast was gone, whereupon he thought to himself:—

“That beast cannot be of an evil nature when it can show such generosity as not to do me any hurt when I am defenceless”.

He got on his feet and grasped his spear, but, as soon as the beast saw he was himself again, it was seized anew with rage and rushed at him. Then Valentine drew his sword and smote the beast a lusty blow that caught it between the shoulders, so that it howled with agony. Then he laid hold of a stake and lashed the beast on its wounded spot until it lay down on the ground as if it meant to say “I surrender”. Having now overcome its resistance, Valentine took his belt and fastened it round the neck of the strange creature, and led it to the castle.

The king had just collected his knights to hasten to Valentine’s assistance when he saw him coming with the beast following him like a prisoner. All rejoiced exceedingly, and praised God for having granted him such a victory over the fierce animal; but when Clarina heard how the animal had ill-used her knight she was alarmed, and hurried off at once for a wonderful restorative drink of hers that healed all wounds.

This she gave Valentine to drink, and he was forthwith healed of the hurts he had lately received, whereupon she took him into her arms and kissed him. But when the animal saw this it again grew furious and sprang on Clarina, tore her dress to pieces, and would have mangled her to death if Valentine had not rushed forward and released her.

It now got a sound beating with the stake, and crept away in a shamefaced manner, never venturing afterwards to do Clarina the slightest injury. All marvelled at the great influence Valentine exercised over the strange animal, which, after this punishment, lay down to rest at his feet like a dog. But Valentine said:—

“Since you belong to me, and I have become your master, I am about to bestow on you a name. Henceforward you shall be called Nameless.”

Then he turned to Clarina and said:—

“Noble damsel, do not fear my poor Nameless any more. He has the face and limbs of a human being, and perhaps he may yet become as one of us. He seems to be faithful to me, and I have a foreboding that he will prove of great help to me; but, as you observe, since our last bout, he is dangerously wounded, so I beg you therefore to let him also taste of the marvellous restorative drink which has already made me whole.”

The good princess, who bore Nameless no grudge for his attack on her, gave him the drink, and he had hardly drunk it before his wounds were healed. He crept to her feet and bowed his head, as if to say “I thank you, lady, for having restored me to health”. Then Valentine ordered him a hot bath, and sent for a barber to shave off the covering of hair that hid all the creature’s body; but Nameless fell into a mad fury as soon as he felt the knife on his body, seized the barber, and crushed him to death before Valentine could prevent it. Then Valentine took the razor himself in one hand and the rod in the other and approached the infuriated creature, but when he saw that Valentine only meant to shave him he calmed down at once and grew quiet and made no resistance, although the knife scraped him roughly.

When Valentine had freed him from the hairy coating which gave him the appearance of a beast, he saw that Nameless was in reality a fully-grown young man. He noticed between his shoulder blades a red cross like that which he himself bore. "That looks," said he, "as if you came of a good race." So he gave him proper clothes, and Nameless, when he got them on, looked quite majestic. Nor was it long before he learned to walk erect like other human beings, while he soon began to understand what was said, although he had not yet learnt to speak. In short, his naturally good talents were rapidly developed, and, in respect to fidelity and affection, he stood far in advance of those who had been educated in these virtues from childhood.

After this Nameless accompanied Valentine wherever he went, and Valentine, on perceiving this fidelity, had a club of steel made for him that weighed three hundredweight, and put it into his hands, saying:—

"Here, Nameless, is a weapon for you with which you are to protect us both. Use it valiantly, but never commit any violent or wicked deed with it."

Nameless was beside himself with joy at getting the club, and threw the heavy weapon high up in the air, just like a ball, and tried by signs to show that he would use it against every one who might venture to attack his master. When Valentine saw his incredible strength and affection, he thought to himself:—

"I have now a comrade on whom I can fully rely, so I will stay no longer here at court, but will go forth into the wide world to try and find my father and mother. I need no longer fear dangers, for I have my own good sword and my trusty Nameless."

Clarina, when he had told her his determination,

sought for a long time with tears to turn him from his perilous journey ; but he extricated himself from her embraces, and declared that it was his duty to discover from what race he came. He bade her harbour no misgivings about him, for both he and Nameless were strong and brave, and would know well enough how to come safely out of all perils.

When she saw that all entreaties were in vain she became exceedingly sorrowful, and, taking Nameless aside, gave him a little flask containing the restorative potion, the effect of which he had already experienced in his own person. She told him to preserve it carefully, so as to help Valentine in time of need, for she herself dared not give it to him, for, in his youthful rashness, he would be sure to reject this gift. Nameless took the flask and jumped for joy at the thought that at last he might be of some service to his master. Then they quitted the princess, who with tears watched them take their departure. Valentine rode, while Nameless ran on in front, swinging his club.

After a journey of several days they met a shepherd who was watching his flock. On Valentine asking him what sort of country it was in which they now found themselves, he answered :—

“ These parts are very dangerous to all wayfarers. When you have ridden some six miles you will see a strong castle facing you. Be on your guard against it, for it is in the possession of a lot of scoundrels who lure all travellers with the object of depriving them of their lives or liberty. Not far from the castle there lies a valley, and there four and twenty knaves from the same castle wait to beguile such as ride past. With friendly words they offer them a sleeping draught, and, as soon as they have tasted thereof, the unfortunate wights fall into a torpor and are dragged off as prisoners to the castle. I warn you

to take good care then not to taste any, for otherwise you will pay dearly for it."

Valentine thanked him for his good counsel, and rode on, firmly resolved not to let himself be duped, and Nameless ran on in front of him, wild with joy at the prospect of coming to close quarters with the ruffians who had deceived so many before them.

When the four and twenty knaves that lay in ambush in the valley below saw them, they were much delighted at the booty which was once more coming within their reach, and four of them rode up to Valentine and his fellow-traveller and greeted them courteously, at the same time bidding them welcome. Then they offered Valentine a goblet of wine mixed with the insidious sleeping draught; but Valentine took the goblet and threw it at the scoundrel's head with such force that it broke into a thousand pieces. Next he drew his sword and shouted:—

"Miserable traitor, the hour of retribution has come for you".

But before he could bring his sword down on them Nameless had with his club put an end to the lives of four. When the others saw that further dissimulation was of no avail, they rushed out of their hiding-place and attacked the two comrades, who were not, however, frightened. Valentine made havoc with his sword, dealing wounds right and left, while Nameless's club cracked their skulls as if they were of glass. Within a short time all the villains lay dead on the ground without either of the companions-in-arms having received a single wound. Encouraged by this success, they now resolved to proceed to the traitors' castle so as to seize the ruffians in their own nest. When the watchmen caught sight of them they exclaimed:—

"Here come two men against us, one on horseback, the other on foot. How did they manage to

elude our ambush in the valley below without any one being aware of them?"

"That will not help them much," said the leader. "Four men must instantly don their armour and ride out and bring them back prisoners."

But it fared with these four just as it had fared with the rest. Confident of victory, they rode up to Valentine, who unhorsed them one after the other with a few thrusts of his lance, and Nameless put an end to them with his club. The rascals up in the castle were frightened when they saw this, and took counsel together.

"These two," said one of the villains, "are cleverer and stronger than any who have hitherto come in our way, and we are powerless to protect ourselves against them; and, unless we can hit upon some stratagem, it is all over with us."

"I know a good device," said another. "We have in our prison a knight of the name of Blandamer, who was a doughty knight: few so strong as he. Now if we were to promise him his liberty on condition that he overcomes those two men and takes them prisoner, he will assuredly accept our offer, and, moreover, he is just the man to perform such a feat of strength."

Every one thought this an excellent idea, and a message was sent immediately to Blandamer with an offer of freedom provided that he captured the two knights who were bent on attacking the castle. Poor Blandamer, who had lain for many years in the tower, and had lost all hope of regaining his freedom, was, of course, overjoyed at this message, and readily agreed to the terms. They took off his fetters, and though Blandamer could hardly stand on his legs, which had become stiff through long imprisonment, yet he was nevertheless prepared to fight for his freedom at once on the conditions imposed.

"Give me back my old armour, my sword and spear," he cried, "and let me have a horse that can carry me, for I am now scarce able to walk. I will either take your foes captive or put them to death, or else I myself will remain on the spot."

Then he donned his armour, mounted his steed, and rode out of the castle; but his joy at being free again was not unmixed.

"Now what have these two done to me," thought he, "and what cause have I, in honest truth, to fight them? These scoundrels I am going to fight for have done me nought but evil, and these knights are acting justly in wishing to destroy their nest. But I cannot break my word, and so I must fulfil my promise, even if it goes against my will."

As he was saying these words to himself he caught sight of Valentine, and they both rushed against one another with such violence that their lances were splintered and their shields pierced. Then they both drew their swords, and Valentine shouted:—

"You miserable traitor, you shall not escape me. You and your chosen friends shall bite the dust through this sword".

"Noble knight," replied Blandamer, "you are unjust to insult me. I am no traitor, but have been for many a long year a prisoner in that castle, and now they have promised me freedom on condition that I capture or kill you and your comrade."

Then he related to Valentine his history and that of Fila, and the former displayed deep sympathy for that ill-starred lady. When he had concluded Valentine said:—

"I will not fight against so noble a knight as yourself, nor entice you, on the other hand, to break your word to those scoundrels; but I will make you this proposal: I will give you my sword, and my comrade shall give you his club. When you have carried us

captive to the castle you will have fulfilled your promise to the wretches who have so long tortured you; but directly we have reached the castle as your prisoners, you are absolved from your oath, and can act as it seems fit to you then. If you give us back our weapons we may together slay the traitors and free the land from this ruffraff. They are many, I admit, but still I think we three ought to bring them to terms."

This plan also commended itself to Blandamer, and he took their weapons and rode back to the castle with them as his prisoners. The scoundrels, however, on seeing he had overcome their enemies, waxed exceedingly merry, and laughed and said:—

"We shall now have some real sport with these three dunderheads. We must shut all the three of them up so that they never more shall see God's daylight, and this simple Blandamer shall fare no whit better than before. Thereupon they opened the gates wide and let them ride into the courtyard, but, as soon as Blandamer and his two prisoners got within the castle, Nameless took back his club and Valentine his sword, and both attacked the ruffians straightway. The latter at first made some attempts at self-defence, but were, immediately they attempted it, felled with the club; nor did it fare better with those who sought to escape, for the unwearied Nameless was after them everywhere, dragging them from their hiding-places to crack their skulls. He showed them no mercy, but whirled his club about as if the whole thing was nothing but child's play to him. The worthy Blandamer straightway hurried to the prison tower, and released all the knights and squires who had there lain captive with him. The castle itself, which had been the scene of so many infamous deeds and miseries, he would not suffer to exist any longer, but set fire to it in four places, so

that, within a short time, it was in a blaze, and they did not leave it until it was razed to the ground.

Blandamer's first thought, after his work was accomplished, was of the unfortunate Queen Fila. He did not know exactly where she was, but he surmised that she had betaken herself to Arabia together with the princess he had rescued from the clutches of the black knight, so he resolved to go thither on the chance of finding her again. Nameless and Valentine promised to bear him company, for, although they were not aware that Fila was their mother, still her fate had likewise filled them with deep compassion.

So they set out together for Arabia, and, after some time, reached its chief city. As they were riding across the market they noticed a great crowd of people shrieking and shouting at a poor woman who, half naked and weeping, was standing on a pyre that was just about to be kindled. Blandamer recognised at the first glance that the woman on the pyre was Fila, his unfortunate queen. He and his companions galloped up to the place of execution, and asked why they had condemned the poor woman to such a cruel death. Gavin, however, who had falsely accused her, shouted to them :—

“Be off with you. This matter is no concern of yours ; but if you insist on knowing it, I will tell you that she is to burn on account of the shameful deeds she has done, and she has, last of all, murdered the king's own daughter.”

Valentine flew into a passion and replied :—

“Let her not be burned until you have got better proof of her guilt. Possibly you yourself are more to blame than she for the offence you charge her with ; meanwhile, with sword in hand, I am prepared to maintain against every one that the woman is falsely and unrighteously accused.”

“What have you, a foreigner,” shouted the king, “to do with our administration of justice? Up, my men, and lay hold of these impudent vagabonds.”

All now rushed at Valentine, but he and his comrades put themselves in close order and defended themselves so heroically that in a very short time there was great havoc in the king's army. The king, in order to prevent further bloodshed, then gave orders for a cessation of fighting, and negotiations were again entered into. After many discussions it was agreed at last that the matter should be settled by a single combat between Gavin and Valentine, but the former was by no means satisfied with this arrangement, and complained bitterly to his friends.

“From what I have already seen,” said he, “I know only too well that I cannot fight against him, so give me good counsel how to get out of this strait.”

“Be calm,” answered one of his friends, “and say that you accept the combat. If you refuse you acknowledge yourself guilty, and you will be beheaded for a certainty. It is better to expose yourself to the chances of a combat, for it may be that you will win, and, in any case, you can take certain precautions. In the first place, we must endeavour to get his comrades out of the way so that they cannot help him. We will also choose some out-of-the-way place for the combat to prevent any one interfering with us, and, in the event of its going against you, we, your friends, might rush forward to your succour, and slay your enemy.”

Although Gavin would have much preferred there being no fight at all, yet he too saw no other alternative than to agree to this plan, and he therefore declared himself ready to accept Valentine's challenge. Then one of his friends rode up to Valentine and said :—

“As it is arranged that the combat is only to be between you two, Gavin demands that your comrades shall withdraw, and, in order to make sure of their not interfering in the fight, it seems to me to be best that they should meanwhile be shut up in the castle prison”.

“Be it so,” answered Valentine, and, turning to his two friends, he said: “In order that our enemies may be the more assured of my not craving your help, I entreat you to accompany them and remain in prison as long as the fight lasts.”

Although they were reluctant to accede to Valentine's wish, still they allowed themselves to be locked up in the tower. Then Valentine betook himself to the lists, and the fray began; but it did not last long, for Valentine, at the very first charge, unhorsed Gavin, and he lay as if he were dead. His friends, on seeing this, rushed at Valentine, and now a furious fight took place. It was true that many lay dead and wounded about him, but he himself was thrown from his horse and compelled to defend himself on foot against great odds.

Meanwhile Nameless grew more and more uneasy in his tower. He had a feeling that peril was near, and, in his rage at being forced to be shut up while Valentine was fighting for his life, he ended by setting his broad shoulders with such force against the prison doors, that the locks burst and they flew open.

Blandamer and he then rushed out and hastened to the place of the combat; and it was high time, for Valentine was in sore straits, and blood was already streaming from his wounds. But now another took part in the game. Nameless seized hold of the knight who had vaulted on to Valentine's horse, and flung him to the ground. He then whirled his club with such rapidity about their ears that

such of them as escaped with their lives fell on their knees and begged for mercy. The three friends who bore them no ill-will suffered them to go, but they seized the murderer Gavin and led him to the king, to whom the villain was made to confess his crime, and acknowledge how shamefully he had defamed the innocent Queen Fila. He did not escape punishment, for the infuriated king ordered him to be first dragged through the streets of the town by wild horses, and afterwards to be thrown on the pyre he had destined for Queen Fila. The king turned to her with tears in his eyes and craved her pardon for the injustice he had nearly committed against her.

"It grieves me more than I can say," he exclaimed, "that you have been exposed to such great trials. If you will but remain here in my kingdom I shall love and honour you the more seeing that I no longer possess a daughter of my own."

"Thanks, noble lord, for your kindness," Fila replied. "I am not angry with you for what you have done, but I have suffered so much in this country that I have not strength enough to stay in it any longer. It would be my death. Receive my gratitude for the kindness you have shown me, and suffer me to go my way."

The king also endeavoured to persuade the others to stay, but Valentine said he had fared abroad to discover his parents, and that he could not find any rest until he had gained his end; while Blandamer refused to abandon the unfortunate queen, but was resolved to accompany her in her banishment. Then they separated one from another. The queen, who did not know that Valentine was her own son, thanked him humbly for the help he had given her, and then she and Blandamer rode in one direction, and Valentine and Nameless in another.

When the two brothers had journeyed for some

days they reached a wide heath whereon a mighty tree stood, and noticed a lovely damsel sitting on the grass beneath its branches. Valentine rode up and questioned her.

"Noble damsel," said he, "why do you sit under this tree? The heath is desolate, and you seem to be alone and abandoned."

"This is an enchanted tree," she answered, "and while I am sitting under its branches I am protected against a fierce giant who wishes to carry me off and make me his wife. Here I have been sitting for a long while, and I ween I must sit here even longer, for it has been prophesied to me that I can only be freed by one man, and he must be a king's son, and dumb, and must never have tasted woman's milk. No other can help me, so ride on quickly ere the giant comes hither, for he has already slain many a knight who has come here to rescue me. I shudder at the fate which menaces you if you fail to hasten from this unlucky spot."

"Do not be frightened for our sakes, noble damsel. My comrade and I have fought many a hard fight ere now, and I think we may succeed in what we are about to undertake. We shall therefore wait here until he comes, for we will die here on this spot ere you shall become the giant's wife."

Valentine had hardly uttered these words before the giant came rushing upon them, demanding what they wanted, and the nature of their business with the damsel whom he had chosen for his wife. He hardly troubled himself to wait for their answer, but aimed his lance at Valentine, who would have been pierced by it unless Nameless had, in the very nick of time, stopped the spear and shattered it with his club. The giant then stepped back, drew his sword, and rushed again upon Valentine. On this occasion Nameless did not succeed in helping

him, and Valentine tottered to the ground mortally wounded. But when Nameless saw his beloved master fall he waxed furious with distress and threw himself madly on the giant. A terrible combat ensued, ending finally by Nameless crushing his antagonist's head by a doughty blow with his club. Without giving himself time to cast a single glance at the monster he had killed, Nameless threw away his club and ran to Valentine to see if he was still alive. His heart was still beating, but it was evident that he had not many moments of life left him. Then Nameless luckily remembered the flask he had received from Clarina at parting, and hastened to produce it. Valentine had scarcely tasted a few drops of this reviving potion before he arose as strong and hearty as if nothing had happened. The rescued damsel now came up to thank them, and took a valuable gold ring from her finger, and gave it to Nameless, for his club had felled her persecutor. Then they sat under the tree, and she began to talk to Nameless, though he could only answer her by signs. It was clear to her from this conversation that Nameless must be the deliverer whom the prophecy foretold, and she therefore ended by plighting her troth to him. She now informed him that her name was Rosamund, and her father was king of a kingdom which lay quite close to the wide heath.

As soon as the comrades heard this, they started immediately to conduct the princess to her father's palace, and you can fancy what endless rejoicing there was when she came back again. The old king had a splendid wedding celebrated for his daughter and her brave rescuer. The marriage rejoicings lasted for three whole weeks, and never a man in that country had enjoyed a more jovial feast. The only one who felt low-spirited during all this mirth was Valentine.

"Nameless," said he to himself, "who has been such a trusty companion to me, has now got a home of his own and a wife, and it is hardly likely that he will follow me any more. I must therefore fare forth abroad in quest of some trace of my parents. Here I lag superfluous, and have nought to do."

Nameless, who noticed this despondency and understood the meaning of it at once, grasped Valentine's hand, and made him understand by signs that wheresoever Valentine went there also he would go, and that nothing in the world should separate them, so it was therefore agreed that they should go forth abroad, and it was useless for poor Rosamund to beg her husband with tears to remain at home.

"Noble damsel," said Valentine, "fear nothing, for, with God's help, I will bring Nameless back to you as safe and sound as he went."

"Whither will you go, then?" she asked.

"Out into the wide world," replied Valentine, "but how long my journey will take I know not, for I have not as yet found any clue, and that, methinks, chance alone can give me."

"Then I have one counsel to give you," said she. "Try and find the good fairy Rosalia, for she can assuredly give you the information you would have. But this fairy is not like other fairies. Once she received the power of seeing into what is hidden from her godmother, an old and powerful fairy, who died some time ago; but as Rosalia was not a member of this fairy's family, her godmother was not able to bestow this gift on her in perpetuity, but only for as long as she remained unwed. Directly she falls in love with a mortal man she will at once lose this gift of prophecy, and become as an ordinary woman; but, up to the present time, she has not fallen in love, and, consequently, nothing is hidden from her."

Valentine thanked the princess for her good counsel, and, on taking leave of her, the two comrades-in-arms set out in quest of the fairy Rosalia. After a long and toilsome journey they at last reached the castle where the fairy dwelt, and were hospitably received there. The good fairy then told them that they were twin brothers, and their father was King Crissosmos of Hungary, their mother the hapless Queen Fila, and described minutely the treachery committed by the wicked old queen and Bishop Frankart against their mother. She finished by telling them the fate that had befallen Queen Fila after the latter's separation from them. She and Blandamer had fallen in with a fierce giant named Margros, who was keeping them in captivity, forcing them to perform most severe labours. Valentine and Nameless, on learning, to their unspeakable joy, that they were brothers, did not know how to thank the good fairy enough for the tidings she had given them, and Valentine, after expressing his gratitude, said :—

“Noble damsel, as you have already revealed so much to me, you will assuredly tell me one thing more. As you see, my poor brother is dumb ; now is there any means of restoring to him the gift of speech ?”

“There is a means, and the means is very easy. There is a vein under his tongue, and if this be cut he will immediately recover the faculty of speech.”

Then she took a knife and made a slight cut under Nameless's tongue, and the latter began that very instant to speak, and he thanked Rosalia for the great benefit she had conferred on him. Valentine next asked her how he could contrive to rescue his mother, and announced his intention to lose no time in succouring her.

“Do not act impulsively,” answered Rosalia, “but follow my advice, and I will help you. Queen Fila is

not far from here, but the giant, in whose clutches she is, is all but invincible, for not only is he stronger than most men, but he is also protected by a gold ring which he wears on his finger. If he be wounded to death he has but to cast a single glance at this ring to be restored at once to health and strength. When you meet him you must do your utmost to deprive him, in some way or other, of his ring, and then you may possibly succeed in overcoming him. You will find your mother in company with other dames and damsels in a river, where they are ill-treated by the fierce giant Margros. But stay in my castle till to-morrow, and then you can with better strength set about performing your difficult task. Thus they stayed with her the whole day, and their conversation seemed as if it would never end. While it lasted Valentine felt more and more how hard it would be for him to leave the lovely Rosalia, and he finished by asking her for her hand, and as she had likewise fallen in love with him, she did not hesitate to listen to his suit, and so they each plighted their troth.

“For your sake,” said Rosalia, “I have now lost my gift of prophecy, but I do not regret it, for I know you will assuredly compensate me for it. If you be not foolhardy and forget not my counsel, fortune will attend you.”

Early on the following morning they rode forth from the castle, but they had not ridden far before they came to a great torrent, and in it they saw a vast crowd of dames and damsels standing. The hapless women had a hard task to perform and looked very downcast, yet, when they perceived Queen Fila, they could not restrain their emotion, but cried out:—

“Mother, we two are your sons whom you regarded as lost, and for whom you have suffered so

much ; but your days of affliction are now over, and we have come here to release you. Come forth from the water and draw near to us."

Fila, who did not know what to think, answered:—

"I dare not come to you, for a terrible giant lords it over us, and he would slay us if we disobeyed the least of his commands".

"Fear nothing, dear mother, for with God's help we will overcome him."

Fila then went to them, and they showed her every mark of filial reverence and love, and told her all that Rosalia had disclosed to them concerning their birth and Bishop Frankart's treachery, as well as the manner in which they had been brought up. They had scarcely finished when they saw the giant running towards them.

"Who asked you to come here," he roared, "and who gave you leave to release my people from the work I ordered them to do? But this attempt shall cost you your life."

"Very well, then," replied Valentine; "let us test our strength and see if you are as dangerous as you pretend to be."

The giant, on hearing this courageous answer, waxed furious and made a rush at Valentine, but at that very instant Nameless struck off with his club the hand which wore the magic ring, whereby the monster lost his strength, and both brothers slew him without any difficulty. Then they released all the giant's captives from imprisonment, and it was a particular pleasure to them to rescue the noble knight Blandamer, who had suffered so much for his fidelity to their mother.

After the giant's death, Queen Fila, both her sons, and Blandamer returned to the castle of the good damsel Rosalia, and her marriage with Valentine was celebrated with mirth and magnificence; but the

guests had hardly gone on their way before the newly-wedded pair proceeded to Hungary to King Crissosmos. There Valentine told the king how everything had happened—the trick played on him and Queen Fila, and its discovery. The king, as one can easily understand, was beside himself with joy at this news, embraced his two sons, and at once fell on his knees before his spouse, entreating her to forgive him all the injustice to which he had, in his ignorance, subjected her. The good Queen Fila easily forgot all the sufferings she had undergone, and readily pardoned the poor repentant king. No obstacle now stood in the way of their happiness, for the wicked old queen, Fila's mother-in-law, was now dead, and that most certainly was the best thing that could have happened to her, for otherwise I hardly think she would have escaped the punishment she so richly deserved. Her accomplice, the infamous Bishop Frankart, however, had to pay the penalty of his crimes; he was tied to wild horses and dragged along until he was a corpse.

Meanwhile King Pippin was not left in ignorance of the strange events that had taken place. Knight Blandamer, whose services Queen Fila no longer required, therefore returned to France; and both the brothers and Valentine's wife Rosalia rode along with him. When King Pippin heard how everything had come about he was exceedingly glad, and praised God for His goodness, and specially thanked the noble Blandamer, who had served his sister with such devoted fidelity, and gave him in reward the hand of his daughter Clarina. He was now tired of ruling, and renounced the throne in favour of Valentine, who was crowned with great solemnity king of France.

While all these important events were being enacted poor Rosamund remained in her castle awaiting

the return of her husband Nameless. Months passed away but no one came, so she resolved to seek for her beloved one herself. In order not to be recognised on her travels, she assumed the habit of a minstrel, and, accompanied by a girl, went forth into a strange land. The girl passed as the minstrel's wife, and as the two played and sang in a masterly manner, no one suspected their disguise. They went from court to court, and at last reached France, where they heard that Nameless was. They went, as was the custom with minstrels, at once to the castle, and there they met Nameless, who began to jest with the wife of the pretended minstrel. Rosamund, however, said :—

“Sir, leave my wife in peace. Although I am only a poor man, nevertheless I insist on her being treated with as much respect as a nobleman's bride.”

“I intend her no harm,” replied Nameless, “but if I did, you do not look quite the man to protect her, for you seem scarcely stronger than a woman. Be not afraid, but tell me what you can do.”

“We can chant and sing, we have wandered through many lands, and have much to tell in song and story.”

“Do you happen to know a noble princess named Rosamund?”

“We know her well, and if you listen we can chant you a lay about her.”

Nameless desired to hear it, and ushered them into the banqueting-hall, where the other minstrels and gleemen sat, to amuse the noble company with their arts. After they had eaten and drunk, the newcomers came forward and Rosamund began her lay. She chanted how she first saw Nameless as she was sitting under the enchanted tree, his combat with the giant, their marriage and his departure, and at last she disclosed that she herself was the Rosamund of her song. When Nameless heard this he ran and

folded her in his arms, kissing her, and thanking God that the day had at length come for them to meet one another once more. Rosamund now became queen, and, on the death of King Crissosmos, Nameless became king over Hungary.

Thus ends the story of Nameless and Valentine.





Karl and Alegast.

ONCE upon a time there reigned in France a great and mighty king named Pippin, who, by successful wars against the Moors and other unbelievers, had brought a great part of Christendom under his sway. He and his queen, who was called Bertha of the Big Feet, had a son called Karl, who was destined to be renowned far and wide as the bravest and mightiest emperor who had ever lived.

When Karl was thirty years old, his father, King Pippin, died, and Karl was to inherit the kingdom after him. One night, shortly after his father's death, as he was lying asleep, he had a dream, and in this dream he saw an angel standing beside his bed, and the angel said to him :—

“Karl, arise and go out and steal”.

The young king simply wondered and thought that the vision was nothing but a trick of his imagination, but, after he had fallen asleep for the second time, the angel again appeared to him and said :—

“Karl, arise and go out and steal”.

The king, who woke up at this, no longer knew what to think about this persistently recurring dream ; but, as he had never heard of a king, who is in duty bound to protect his subjects' property, having

degraded himself so far as to become a common thief, he imagined that he was the victim of some strange delusion, and went to sleep again after a while. But again, for the third time, he saw the angel standing in front of his bed, and heard him utter for the third time the same command, this time adding :—

“Doubt no more, and seek not to comprehend what God in His mercy has decreed for you ; but only obey His commands, however strange they may seem to **your** understanding, and be assured that everything will turn out to your own advantage. There is a master-thief here whose name is Alegast, and him you are to seek out, and, in his company, you are to go out this night and steal. You will soon find out that the Lord has bidden you do this out of care for yourself and your kingdom.”

Karl no longer doubted, but arose and called his courtiers and asked them who was the most cunning master-thief in all his kingdom. When they had all answered with one voice “Alegast,” the king made them show him the way to the thief’s dwelling, and there he found Alegast at home, having not as yet set out on his nocturnal adventures. Alegast was rather frightened when he saw a stranger, for people in that walk of life do not care much for visits ; but Karl reassured him at once by saying :—

“Be not afraid, for I have come to you only for the purpose of learning from you your craft, and I therefore ask you if you will suffer me to become your companion, and will go out and steal in my company”.

“A great lord and I cannot be fellows, but blithely will I be your servant and teach you the little I know.”

“As you list,” answered Karl ; “the name itself matters little.”

Alegast promised to be a trusty servant to him, and then they mounted their steeds and went forth in quest of adventures. Day was already beginning to dawn when they rode off, but, ere it had grown light, they had gained the great forest of Arden, and rode through it side by side the livelong day without discovering a human habitation. Towards evening they perceived a miserable hovel, and in this they agreed to take refuge for the night. They learnt, however, from the poor wretch who dwelt in the woodland cottage, that hard by there lay a splendid castle that belonged to Count Reinfred.

"There is something for us!" exclaimed Alegast, "and if you, my lord, think as I do, we will pay a visit to the rich count this very night: that will prove profitable for a certainty."

"Good," answered Karl; "I will do what you wish and follow you whither you list, but there is one thing I would tell you. I don't quite care about being discovered as a burglar, and, should I be discovered, I do not wish any one to suspect who I am. Call me not Karl, then, for that name might possibly put them on my track, but give me another name instead."

"As you please. I will call you Magnus instead, if you like that better."

They mounted their horses again, and at nightfall reached the outskirts of the forest, in front of which the castle lay. Alegast leaped from his horse, leaving Karl to hold the reins, and asked him to watch the two horses, while he himself, as the more experienced, went to find out what could be done. He disappeared in the darkness, and cautiously approached the castle. By this time everybody in it was asleep, and Alegast managed to creep into the count's bedchamber without being discovered. There stood in the bedchamber a chest full of precious things, and Alegast opened it



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"DAY WAS ALREADY BEGINNING TO DAWN."

without arousing the sleepers, crammed as much gold and silver about him as he was able to carry, and then hurried back with his booty to Karl.

"Our journey has succeeded beyond our expectations," he shouted. "Now to horse quickly, and let us be off, so that no one may seize us."

"Not so fast," replied Karl. "I have come out to steal, but, up to now, I have not stolen anything whatever. I have only stood and looked after your horse, and that does not satisfy me. I too must venture into the castle to try if I can steal something."

"So be it; but I am afraid you have not yet got the right knack of it. It will, therefore, be best that I should bear you company, and show you how to go to work, for at first all are children. Meanwhile we must drive the horses away to prevent their betraying us by their neighing and stamping. If I know the count's stable we can easily make it safe for ourselves in case we cannot catch our own horses afterwards in the hurry and confusion."

Then they drove their steeds into the forest and tethered them in a copse and stole back to the castle together, where all was still quiet, without the slightest mishap. Alegast led Karl through various passages into the count's bedroom, showed him the chest with the treasure in it, and told him to help himself. For his own part, he determined to go down to the stable to pick out some good horses for them both, in the event of their being required. But things did not turn out as he had reckoned, for no sooner had he put the halter on the count's favourite horse, than the faithful animal, which was unused to his new groom, began to kick and neigh, and Count Reinfred was roused by the din.

Luckily Karl had been put on his guard by the noise, and managed to crawl under the count's bed,

so that the latter, on waking up, did not perceive any one in the room. He got up, however, went down to his stable, and aroused the groom, but he could not discover anything amiss, for the crafty Alegast had ere this sought safety in a haystack.

As the count found nothing he went back to his bedroom, after groping about for a while, threw himself on his bed, and tried to go to sleep again; but this he could not manage. He tossed restlessly from side to side and still failed to find repose. His wife, who was lying beside him, said at last:—

“You must have something weighing on your mind as you cannot get to sleep. Tell me what it is.”

“Will you promise me not to reveal to any Christian soul the secret I am about to confide to you?”

“You can rely on me as surely as on yourself.”

“Good; then know that King Pippin is dead, and his son is to inherit the kingdom after him; but I trow if he once gets the crown on his head, we shall have no rest in this land by reason of his ambition and lust for dominion. This is why we twelve of the most powerful counts have taken oath together to slay him, and when once he has been put out of the way, then it will be I who shall be king of this country.”

Karl, who was all this time lying hidden under the bed, and had heard all this conversation, now understood why the angel had bidden him go out and steal, and he began to thank God for having revealed to him in this wise the conspiracy that had been hatched against his life. The countess, however, who was a loyal and noble lady, then said:—

“Alas, my dear lord, in this you have done amiss. You and your forefathers have always been faithful servants of his race, and by this murder you will set on your knightly honour a stain which can never be wiped away. Put away from your mind thoughts

such as these, and prove instead a loyal friend to the young king, who sorely needs such a stay."

"Hold your tongue, you crazy jade, and do not try to give advice in matters which you do not understand. Do not imagine that I should think of betraying my friends."

"Who are these friends that are so dear to you, that for their sakes you are willing to war against your own king, whom you are in duty bound to worship and obey?"

"The first is my brother Elre, the second is Aurelas of Housberg, the third is Finbard of Trèves, the fourth Figbard of Salenberg, and the fifth is young Isenbard. With these five we shall conquer Germany and Lombardy. The sixth is Takkemar of Vensu, the seventh is his brother Tammer, the eighth is Gram of Rodenberg, and these three ought to subject Denmark and Friesland. The ninth is Rotser of Orleans, the tenth Folkvard of Poiteau, the eleventh Rotser of Irkom, and the twelfth Valent of Brittany, and these four ought to conquer Normandy, Brittany and England. My brother Elre is to be duke, but I myself am to be king and emperor of Rome."

"But how are you going to carry out your plot?"

"The king is to be crowned on Whitsunday, but when the coronation is over and he has withdrawn to his bedchamber, we are to steal upon him at night and make away with him. We have sworn not to betray one another, but that every one is to take part in slaying him, for which purpose we have had twelve knives made exactly alike, and all these knives are to be laved in his blood."

"This is an infamous plot. King Pippin has made you all rich and mighty men, bestowed on you lands and castles, and you have sworn fidelity to him, and, instead of keeping your promise, you are

now bent, like cowardly murderers, on striking at his son."

Hereupon the good lady began to weep bitterly, but the count became enraged and smote her so that her mouth and nose ran with blood. The poor woman, in order not to make the sheets bloody, held her head over the edge of the bed so that the blood might run to the ground; but Karl, who was listening to everything, held out his glove in the darkness and caught in it all the blood that came pouring down.

After a while the count and countess slumbered again. Then Karl stole forth from his hiding-place and took the count's sword, which was hanging beside the bed, so as to have a token of that memorable night. He then groped his way out of doors, and made immediately for the stable, with the object of finding Alegast. It was time indeed for them to be off, but Alegast tried again to master the count's horse, but as soon as the thief approached the faithful animal again took to rearing, neighing and kicking. It was impossible for Alegast to put the halter on it until Karl stepped forward, and then the creature willingly stretched out its neck, and suffered itself to be led away. After a time they recovered their own horses, and Alegast took Karl's, his own being loaded with the booty he had taken from the count, and Karl himself mounted the count's horse. Then they hastened away from the dangerous neighbourhood of the castle, and presently reached the hut in the forest, where they rested themselves after all their exertions.

On the morrow, when they proceeded on their journey, they left behind them in the hut all the gold and silver they had stolen from the perfidious count, and thus rewarded its poor proprietor for the hospitality they had enjoyed. They halted about

mid-day at the castle where Karl's mother held sway. The young king jumped off his horse, handed the reins to Alegast, and walked into the hall alone to his mother, who was extremely surprised to see him come unattended, for at that period kings and great lords were wont to travel with a large retinue. When she saw him with only one attendant she asked him who that person was, and Karl said in reply :—

“That is Alegast, my best friend and companion”.

On hearing this the queen at once ordered the servants to take the horses from him and usher him into the hall ; but when Alegast came in he turned and said to Karl :—

“Is it your wish, Magnus, that we stay here for the night ?”

“Why do you call him Magnus ?” said the queen. “Do you not know that his name is Karl ?”

“He bore the name of Magnus when he was in his enemy's castle, and he has not yet ordered me to give him another.”

“Yes,” said the king, “I really was called Magnus when I was last out stealing in company with my good and honest friend Alegast, the master-thief, and that name I have no thought of discarding. If I am some day crowned king I shall call myself Karl Magnus in memory of God's mercy towards me.”

The queen, who did not understand a single word of all this, thought at first that her son had lost his wits, but the king went on to tell her all about what had taken place, and how he had learnt the treason they were devising against him. The queen was now sorely alarmed, as you can well understand, and ordered him to assemble all his men at once and imprison the traitors, but Karl answered :—

“God has helped me hitherto, and He will, I

think, help me in the future, and I will not act over hastily. When their crime has been revealed to each and all I will punish them as they deserve. Let us now think only of the coronation. If, before that time, they repent of their wicked purpose I will straightway forget what I heard that night."

Then Karl sent messengers over all his kingdom with invitations to the coronation, and even the Pope himself came to set the crown on his head. Count Reinfred and his friends, suspecting nothing, likewise came, and were received with the utmost magnificence. The king had had twelve spacious halls built for his guests, but he himself took up his quarters in the thirteenth. On Whitsun Eve he gathered around him all his most loyal subjects, thanked them for their visit, and told them that he now needed their help more than ever, as Count Reinfred and his friends had thought of murdering him directly the coronation was over. The chief of these loyal knights then turned to the king and answered on behalf of the others:—

"Fear not, my lord and king, for these traitors shall not touch a hair of your head. We who have remained faithful to you are much more numerous than those traitors, and we shall watch them so warily that, when the moment arrives, we shall be able to seize them, and give them what they richly deserve."

It was arranged that two knights should keep watch on each of the conspirators, and even their servants were to be kept under surveillance, but so secretly that not a soul among all the traitors should suspect anything.

When Whitsunday dawned Karl proclaimed a universal peace, and enacted a law by which every one who broke it, be he poor or rich, was to pay with his life the penalty of his crime. Directly after they had all assembled in the church, the Pope approached

the high altar, anointed Karl's brow with the holy oil, and set the crown on his head, whereupon the foremost of King Pippin's vassals, an aged knight named Dreia of Petersberg, arose, drew his sword, and dubbed Karl a knight. Then he clad him in a gleaming steel coat-of-mail, set a helmet on his head, a shield upon his arm, begirt him with the sword, and fastened the golden spurs on his heels. When this was done Karl mounted a fiery steed and showed himself to all his people. Every one was astounded that King Pippin, who had been a man small of stature, could have begotten a son with the build of so doughty a warrior. Then Dreia said to him:—

“You are now a knight, therefore remember always that it is a knight's duty to protect maidens, widows and orphans. Never hesitate to unsheath your sword for God and Holy Church, and may you be a terror to all unbelievers. May you trample under foot all your foes, and may you yourself, victorious in everything, remain at all times unscathed.”

Karl, who had now become a knight, thereupon drew his sword and conferred knighthood on a hundred squires who had, through their bravery and fidelity, rendered themselves deserving of that honour. Then he made before the Pope a solemn oath ever to maintain law and equity and withstand injustice as a true Christian knight. When the oath was administered the Pope himself sang Mass and afterwards mounted the pulpit, while forty of his most renowned clergy assembled below.

“I bid you all,” said he to the crowd assembled, “in the name of God, the Holy Ghost, and Blessed Mary, be obedient and submissive to Karl Magnus, inasmuch as he hath been chosen by God to be your rightful king, as well as emperor over all Christendom.” Whereupon he blessed them all, and granted to them an indulgence.

When the Coronation Mass was over the Pope took the new emperor by the hand and conducted him to the throne which had been erected in the banqueting-hall. Here the Archbishop of Cologne removed the crown from his head, and all the magnates and prelates of the realm took their seats at the table and ate and drank ; but, as evening drew near, they all arose and followed the Pope to his lodging. At last even the emperor withdrew to his sleeping chamber, wherein all the most loyal of his supporters had assembled, armed to the teeth, to meet the attack of the traitors.

When all was quiet and every one had gone to rest Count Reinfred and his friends met together, quickly broke open the bedroom door, and rushed in to kill the emperor with drawn knives ; but they had hardly got in before the emperor's adherents threw themselves upon them, wrenched the weapons out of their hands, and imprisoned them, almost before they had recovered from their surprise.

Then the traitors were brought before the emperor, and old Dreia of Petersberg pointed to their knives, and observed that these were clear proof that they had meant to break the peace that had been solemnly sworn and murder the emperor.

Reinfred, however, who had by this time got his wits about him again, said that all this was untrue, and that no one could prove that they had intended to commit the deed wherewith they were charged. Karl then produced his glove, showed it to Reinfred, and said :—

“ Do you recognise the blood which I have collected here ? ”

“ How should I be able to recognise it ? ”

“ It is your wife's blood, Reinfred.”

“ Very likely ; but what has that to do with this matter ? ”

“That you shall soon learn. Do you remember the night when some one broke into your house and stole your favourite horse and your treasure? That very night you revealed to your wife the treason that you sought just now to commit. You mentioned all your accomplices by their names, which are the same as those taken along with you, and you said that you yourself thought of being emperor instead of me, and your brother Elre duke; but your wife, who is more honest than yourself, bade you withdraw from the foul plot. Instead of listening to her words you added a fresh shame to your treachery, and struck a defenceless woman till she bled. It is her blood which you see in this glove.”

“So it is my wife who has betrayed us, and by that means sought revenge on me.”

“You are mistaken if you judge others according to yourself. Your wife said nothing, but I myself heard all your conversation, for the thieves who broke into your castle were my friend Alegast and myself. Alegast took away your treasure, and I took your sword, your favourite horse, and the blood in this glove. Do not you believe me now?”

The sword was then laid before him and the horse was led forth, and when Reinfred saw that all hope was past, both he and his companions threw themselves at the emperor's feet to implore his mercy, but the latter answered:—

“The time for mercy is past. You have had a long time for reflection and repentance. You have heard the Pope's exhortations, and sworn allegiance to me; you promised to keep the king's peace, and yet, nevertheless, you have persisted in your wickedness. My people must therefore judge you.”

They were then cast into the tower, and on the morrow, when the Pope had sung Mass, all the knights assembled to pronounce sentence upon them.

"The laws," said Dreia of Petersberg, "prescribe hanging for those who break the king's peace, and these men have not deserved a better fate. They must, therefore, be led to the gallows without mercy."

All present agreed in this verdict, and just as the wretches were about to be carried off King Karl arose and said :—

"I cannot exempt them from death, but, for the sake of Reinfred's good wife, I will rescue them from a degrading punishment. Although they have violated their oaths as knights, yet they were dubbed knights by my father. I will, therefore, spare them the gallows, and permit them to die by the sword."

They were then taken away and suffered their punishment. Karl next turned to Alegast and said :—

"Come forth, Alegast. God has chosen you to be a help to me in life, and during a time of sore trial you stood faithfully by my side. That may counter-balance your former transgressions. I will, therefore, not reckon to your prejudice the calling that you have hitherto pursued; but you must now become another man, and through doughty deeds show yourself worthy of my favour. All the castles and lands that Count Reinfred forfeited I now bestow on you, and for them you shall do me service. Show yourself loyal and brave and honest, and should any one dare to upbraid you for having been a thief in former times, answer him that you stole in company with the Emperor Karl Magnus, and that that theft saved his life and crown."

The Journey to Constantinople.



W.H.R.

ONCE upon a time the emperor Karl the Great was sitting under an olive tree. The queen sat by his side, and round about him stood his twelve paladins. These were the bravest and wisest men to be found in the length and breadth of the land, and they always accompanied the emperor on all his journeys and campaigns. These paladins were Archbishop Turpin, the old Duke Nemes, the emperor's nephew Roland, who was looked upon as the finest knight in France, the valiant Ogier the Dane, about whom our folk-songs still have so much to tell, his companion-in-arms the courtly Oliver, and, besides these, Bernard, Villifer, Bering, Ernald, Eimer, Bertram, and Gerin.

The emperor was blithe of heart, and said jestingly to his spouse :—

“Do you know any king in the wide world who wears his crown as well as I, or one whom armour equally becomes?”

Without further thought on the matter she answered heedlessly :—

“No man should so vaunt himself ; for I know a king who wears a higher crown than you, and who cuts a more stalwart figure in his armour”.

She had hardly uttered these words before the emperor's good humour vanished, and wrath mounted to his brow.

"Have a care," said he, "what you are saying, or it may cost you your life."

"There is no cause for you to be angry. The king I mean is certainly mightier than you, and richer in lands and gold, but he is not so good a knight, nor yet so brave, as you."

But seeing that the emperor's wrath was not yet appeased, despite her excuse, she fell upon her knees before him and besought him thus:—

"Forgive me, for God's pity's sake, for you know indeed that I am your wife, and would do everything to gratify you".

"Only tell me the name of him you meant."

"Ah, my emperor and lord, there is no such king in the whole world. It was but my foolish tongue that wagged and ran away from my wits."

"Do not attempt evasion. Tell me his name at once, or you will repent it."

"Well, then, as you refuse to give me peace on any other condition, the king I mean is King Hugo of Constantinople, and no one is so rich and strong and majestic as he, save you alone."

"Good," answered the king. "That we must put to the test, and if you have uttered an untruth it will cost you dear."

Then he turned to his paladins and addressed them thus:—

"You know I have long desired to fare to Jerusalem to behold the places where our Saviour lived and taught. This journey we must now undertake, and, on our way back, we shall visit King Hugo of Constantinople to see if the queen has spoken the truth. Prepare yourselves, therefore, for the journey, which I trow will be long indeed, and, as we are to appear before so illustrious a king, it behoves us to be well equipped, that we may not appear before him like beggars. Let us, therefore, take with us seven

hundred camels loaded with gold and silver, but until we have left Jerusalem we must be clad as becomes humble pilgrims, bearing staves and wearing weeds."

They repaired to the church dedicated to St. Dionysius, the patron saint of all the land of France, and, in front of the high altar, solemnly assumed the Cross, whereupon Archbishop Turpin said Mass for them. When all the preparations for the journey were accomplished they mounted their steeds, and rode forth accompanied by their attendants. They took ship at Marseilles, and at length reached Jerusalem, where they found quarters.

On the morrow after their arrival they all went to the church that is called Pater Noster, wherein the Saviour Himself and His apostles had celebrated the holy rites. The church, however, was reckoned so holy that none had a right to enter it without special permission from the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Now the latter, when he heard that some had dared to disregard his orders, hastened at once to the church. The emperor, on seeing him, arose and greeted him reverently. Then the patriarch asked him who he was, adding:—

"You are the first who has dared to enter this holy room without my leave".

"I am Karl the Great, emperor of that land which is called France, and these are my paladins. We have come hither to visit the Holy Sepulchre; we knew nothing about your prohibition, and it was not our intention to show you any discourtesy."

"Nor do I believe it either, now that I know who you are. I have long heard talk about the mighty emperor Karl the Great, for the fame of his valour and that of his paladins is spread throughout the whole world. Welcome to Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre, which has no nobler protector than yourself, before whose sword the Infidels have so long trembled."

The patriarch then brought out the most precious relics that were to be found, and presented them as a gift to the emperor, who accepted them with thanks and had them preserved in a magnificent gold shrine which he handed over to the care of Archbishop Turpin, and, directly they had performed their devotions once more in the church of Pater Noster, they started for Constantinople, accompanied by the patriarch's good wishes.

When they got within three miles of the town their path led through a splendid garden full of all sorts of wonderful trees and flowers, the like of which they had never beheld before. They saw in the garden thousands of knights clad in purple and ermine, and also as many damsels, each fairer than the other, disporting together, some playing chess and draughts, others amusing themselves with round dances, holding one another all the time by the hand. Now when Karl saw all this magnificence and all that crowd of courtiers, surpassing everything to which he had been accustomed, he had at once a feeling that his queen had not perhaps been altogether wrong when she described this court as the finest in the world ; but if he could not rival the mighty King Hugo in riches, still he thought he might, nevertheless, do so in other respects. He, therefore, turned to a knight and asked him where the latter's king was to be found.

"Our king," answered he, "you will find down there where they are carrying the purple canopy that you see."

Karl the Great immediately went there, and saw beneath the costly canopy a man sitting in a golden chariot, holding in his hand a rod likewise of gold, wherewith he goaded the oxen that drew his chariot, and to this chariot was attached a golden plough wherewith he ploughed. The emperor saluted him

courteously, but at first he only got a careless nod in return. When the king, however, saw that the stranger was a man of birth he stopped and asked him who he was.

"I am Karl the Great, king of France and emperor of Rome. I have just been to Jerusalem and visited the Holy Sepulchre, and I have now come hither to meet you."

"Welcome. For many years past I have heard talk of you and praise of your valour; so it is, therefore, a great honour to me that you desired to pay me a visit, and I hope you will be in no haste to leave me. I will unyoke my oxen, and, that done, follow you to the castle, where I trust you will take up your quarters and treat it as if it were your own."

"But is not some one going to take charge of that costly plough?" asked Karl. "I am afraid it will be stolen if you leave it behind in that way."

"It appears," said King Hugo, with a smile, "that customs are different in our country. Thank God, justice is so well administered in my land that were I to leave this golden plough lying on the highway for seven years not a soul would dream of venturing to steal it; and even if that did happen, I should, fortunately, be able to bear the loss."

Karl, whose pride had, for the second time, received a certain humiliation, accompanied King Hugo to the castle, which the latter pointed out to him as his abode in Constantinople. Immediately on their arrival twelve hundred knights approached, took their horses, and followed the guests into the huge banqueting-hall, which occupied the middle of the building. This hall, which was the most spacious Karl had ever seen, was perfectly round; and a lofty dome, adorned with paintings of exceeding splendour, was thrown across it. This dome was supported by a massive pillar, which shot up from the centre

of the hall, and around it rose a forest of smaller pillars, which did not serve the purpose of props, but merely supported magnificent statues of gold, silver, bronze and marble. These statues, which represented children at play, stretching out their hands to one another, were so well executed that they looked like living creatures, and all of them had horns at their mouths, whereon they were blowing. The emperor marvelled exceedingly at all this, and began to realise more vividly that the queen was right in what she had said. Soon he had further reason to be still more astounded.

The pillars were hollow, and the wind from outside played into them and came out of the horns borne by the statues, and these gave forth musical notes which sounded like the loveliest minstrelsy. The wind, however, rose and increased to a storm, and then it began to make such a din in the hall that the noise was as the noise of a mill, and with the increasing violence of the wind, the floor likewise began to whirl round like the wheel of a mill, and the gusts grew so violent at last that the Franks had some difficulty in keeping on their feet. They thought that their last hour had come, and tried in vain to open the door in order to rush out of this perilous abode; but at that moment King Hugo entered and smilingly requested them not to be alarmed at such a thing, which was really a matter of no importance to men so brave as they.

"The storm," said he, "will most likely subside towards evening," and he had hardly uttered these words before it grew calm and still once more. The Franks were therefore ashamed of their terror, and no longer looked as if they wished to leave the quarters the king had assigned them.

On a signal from the king a table was now brought in groaning beneath the weight of the most toothsome

dishes—venison, wild boars, geese, peacocks, and all sorts of game; and between the baked meats there stood drinking-horns filled with mead, bastard, red wine, and other good drinks. Minstrels entered and played at the same time, and bassoons, fiddles, harps, and other stringed instruments made music while the guests took their seats at table. King Hugo sat in the seat of honour, on his right hand the emperor Karl the Great, and on his left his queen and her daughter, the fairest damsel you could see, with a complexion of roses and lilies.

Many were the glances which the knights in the emperor's retinue cast across the table at the young princess; but she seemed used to such homage on the part of men, and paid no heed to the admiration she excited.

At last the emperor Karl the Great turned to the king and exclaimed:—

“How comes it that your daughter, who has already reached the age for marriage, has not chosen herself a husband? With us young maids tarry not so long, and your daughter's beauty makes me believe that she has not lacked suitors.”

“I have never sought to constrain her, but have left her free choice. I have perhaps done wrong, for she has now made up her mind only to accept the prince whose wisdom is on a par with his valour. To every suitor who has come to woo, she has, with this purpose, proposed three riddles which he must resolve if he would win her hand. Besides this, as he must set his head for wager, you can understand that not many have had the courage to make the attempt, and those who were brave enough to do so have paid with their lives the penalty of their rashness. I am sorry, for her sake and for theirs, that it should be so, but as I have given my word, the thing cannot be altered.”

“ If such be the state of affairs, then I do not think my paladins can cherish any hopes, for Archbishop Turpin, as a priest, may not marry, Duke Nemes is too old to think of love, and the rest of them have during their lives devoted themselves rather to wielding their swords than to guessing riddles. They would assuredly be worsted at the outset in a task like that, and so we must not indulge in the hope of ever seeing the princess in our fair France. The night, however, is far spent, and we have abused your hospitality too long.”

On a sign from the king the tables were removed, and then he took the emperor by the hand, and led him and his paladins into another hall that was to serve as their bedchamber. This hall was also vaulted, and on the top of the dome there gleamed a carbuncle which blazed as brightly by night as by day. Twelve costly beds of bronze stood in the hall, but the thirteenth, which was in the middle, was wrought of gold. When King Hugo had bidden them take their rest after the fatigues of their journey, he wished them good-night and then withdrew.

Now, in the centre of this hall there was a cunning pillar of stone that supported the dome. This pillar was likewise hollow, and in it King Hugo had concealed a spy who was afterwards to relate to him the conversation of the strangers when they were by themselves. The emperor and his friends, however, went to bed, but as the mirth engendered of the banquet had not yet departed, they found it hard to go to sleep at once, but began instead to talk to each other. They talked about all the marvellous things they had seen, and how far these had surpassed what they had dreamt of in France. When they had got more and more awake through talking, the emperor proposed that they should begin a game which was a great favourite with Frankish knights—to wit, every

one was to mention by way of jest some remarkable feat he meant to perform, the object being to hit upon the most improbable and astonishing deed there could be. The emperor himself began.

"Let King Hugo," said he, "pit against me the doughtiest knight he has, and clothe him with two coats of steel. Let him, moreover, place four helmets on his head, and give him his strongest horse, which may, if he choose, have a triple covering of mail; yet I will give this knight such a blow that both he and his horse shall be cloven into two equal parts, and my sword shall penetrate a spear's length into the ground."

Then Roland said :—

"Let the king give me his horn Oliphant, and I will go some way off from the castle, and blow so deep a blast on the horn that all the doors of the castle shall fly off their hinges, and if the king himself shall venture to look out, I will blow his hair and beard and clothes off him".

Then it came to Villifer's turn.

"You have seen," said he, "a ball lying out in the courtyard, which is wrought of gold and silver. It is so heavy and big that thirty men are not strong enough to move it from its place. To-morrow I shall take this ball, lift it with one hand, and hurl it against the castle so that 500 feet of wall at the very least shall crack and tumble down."

"Well," said Ogier the Dane, "I shall do far more injury to King Hugo's castle. You remember the great pillar that stood in the middle of the banqueting-hall. Early to-morrow I shall seize it with my arms and shake it till the whole house comes rattling down."

"That is mere child's play to what I think of doing," said the old Duke Nemes. "Let King Hugo give me four coats of ring-armour, the heaviest to be

found in his kingdom. I will put these on and then jump 500 feet higher than the highest towers of the castle, and, when I come down to the ground again, I shall shake myself and all the rings in the armour shall jump out one after the other, and fall to the ground like burnt straw."

"That should be a very pleasant sight to see," rejoined Bering, "but the feat I intend performing is harder still. I shall ask King Hugo to collect all the swords there are here, and stick them in the courtyard with their points upwards and their hilts buried in the ground. When the whole courtyard has been covered in this manner with sword points, I shall walk up to the highest tower and throw myself down, so that the sword-points shall be broken and the blades snap asunder, yet I myself shall be unscathed."

After this came the turn of Archbishop Turpin, who spoke thus :—

"To-morrow I shall go to the river that flows some way out of the town, divert it from its course, and make it pour all over Constantinople till every house is filled with water. The king himself shall be so frightened that he will flee to his highest tower, and will not venture to come down until I let him."

"Now, listen," said Ernald, "to what I mean to do. I think of asking King Hugo for four loads of lead. When this has been boiled till it melts I shall pour it into a cauldron, and I myself shall go down and sit in it till the lead gets hard again. I shall next shake myself till the lead falls off me and not a single drop remains on my body. Now, beat this who can."

"I consider myself capable of a more difficult feat even than that," said Eimer. "I have a hat, and when I put it on my head I am invisible to every one. I shall put that on to-morrow when King Hugo has sat down to table. I shall go up to him, eat up his

meat and drink up his wine without his perceiving who it is that is playing him that trick. Finally, I shall go behind him and give him a push that will send him falling head foremost on the table. As he will not see who has given him the blow, I shall act in such a manner that he and his knights shall come to blows with one another, and tear and rend each other's beards."

"As for me," said Bertram, "I shall go into the forest to-morrow, and shriek so loud that it shall be heard a hundred miles off. Yes, I shall roar in such a way that the beasts in the forest shall be terrified and flee away, and the fishes in the river jump out of the water in their fright."

"Now," said Gerin, "it is my turn to tell what I intend to do. If the king will give me a spear that weighs a man's weight and the point of which is an ell long, and will then place a couple of small coins, one on the top of the other, on the summit of the tower, I will go three miles hence, hurl the spear and hit one of the coins so that it falls pierced to the ground without the other being displaced in the least. And I shall run back so fast that I shall catch the spear before it has come through the air to the ground."

"That is something like fleetness," said Bernard, "but I fancy I am as quick and nimble as yourself. To-morrow, if the king will take three of the fastest horses he owns and will drive them in the wildest way, I will run up to them, jump over the first two, and stand on the third; and, in quicker time than it takes to make a single step, I shall take up four apples from the ground, and if I miss a single one of them may the king take my head."

Now Oliver was the only one who had said nothing as yet of the marvellous things he meant to accomplish, and, when at length he was asked how he thought of rivalling the rest, he answered:—

“ You have all promised to perform marvels of bodily strength and agility, but we have trained ourselves to such exercises and are to some extent accustomed to them. I shall, on the other hand, attempt something new, and therefore mean to try to-morrow to solve the princess’s three riddles. She will either be mine or King Hugo may take my head.”

After he had said this, they began to talk and dispute as to which of them had composed the most extraordinary story; but sleep at last claimed its rights, and they went to sleep. As soon as the hall was hushed to silence, the terrified spy crept back to King Hugo and told him what appalling promises the strangers had made.

“ I have never heard the like in impudence,” said he, “ and they have spent the whole night in scoffing and mocking at you.”

King Hugo was exceedingly wroth when he had heard the spy’s account of their conversation, and said to him :—

“ I acted like a madman when I received the emperor with so many marks of respect, and sneers and ridicule have been my sole reward; but I shall punish these braggarts as they deserve, and if they cannot perform all the labours they have said they would do it shall cost them their lives ”.

Then the king had ten thousand knights summoned in haste, and these presented themselves at the castle on the following day to succour their lord in case of need. Meanwhile the emperor Karl the Great and his paladins awoke, got out of their beds, and went to Mass without any presentiment of evil, or further thought of the jesting of the previous night. As they came out of church King Hugo met them, and addressed them in severe language.

“ I am aware,” said he, “ that you have spent your

night in mocking me, and have repaid with insults the hospitality I showed you ; but now it is my turn to speak and tell you of the wonderful things I intend doing. If there is one of you who cannot perform what he asserted he could last night, I mean to have his head, and however intrepid you may say you are, you will hardly, I fancy, be strong enough to withstand the ten thousand knights I have gathered around me."

When the emperor heard these words he became utterly shamefaced, and for a long time did not know what reply to make. At last he exclaimed :—

"When we went to bed last night we were joyous and mirthful, thanks to the wine you gave us in such abundance, and, perhaps in consequence of that, we chattered nonsense ; but we did not think of insulting you. You must know that it is customary with us Frankish knights, before going to sleep after a banquet, to vie with one another in such extravagances ; and we never thought of engaging in such impossible undertakings as those we were talking about, or of intending by such talk to offend you. But you did not act aright in spying on us when we were alone. I do not say this as a reproach : the one rebuke may outweigh the other, and, on these grounds, I beseech you to let these trifles be forgotten."

"You cannot smooth over your sneers at me so easily," replied King Hugo, "and it shall be as I have said—either you perform the exploits you promised or else I shall cut off your heads. In the course of an hour we shall meet again, and then you are to begin your experiments."

With these words he left Karl and his paladins. For a long time they stood silent without daring to raise their eyes from the ground, so ashamed were they of their boasting. As brave men I do not suppose they feared death, but they blushed at being

compelled to forfeit their lives for such a paltry reason. At last the emperor said :—

“ We have been foolish, and we must now pay the penalty of our foolishness. I have vaunted myself over others and did not deem that any one could be my peer, and it is, therefore, no more than just that the Lord should now humiliate me and punish my pride. Let us, then, bear our fate without cowardly shrinking, and show that we can at least die like men, even if we have lived like fools. An hour yet remains to us before our heads must fall by the sword. Let us use this time to pray in church for forgiveness of our sins.”

With these words he went back to the church he had just left, and his paladins followed him solemnly and silently. After Archbishop Turpin had celebrated Mass, and each of them had confessed his sins and prayed for forgiveness of them, they arose from their knees, fully resolved on meeting their approaching fate with courage. But at that very instant an angel appeared to them and said :—

“ The Lord has heard your prayer and will succour you. You have been mad and rash in having trusted to your own strength, and forgotten that you have merely been instruments of the Lord’s will. Let the humiliation which has now befallen you serve as a lesson, and do not vaunt yourselves hereafter over your peers. If you will do this, then the Lord will be satisfied, and will not exact the uttermost penalty. So meet King Hugo without apprehension, and I will stand at your side and perform for you all the exploits you have promised to do. Go, therefore, and henceforward sin no more.”

When they heard these comforting words their sorrow vanished straightway. With joyous mien they walked up to King Hugo again and said :—

“ Once more we beseech you to be assured that

we were only jesting and did not in the least degree intend to flout you, for whose hospitality we are deeply indebted; but, since you insist on claiming the fulfilment of the promises we made in jest, we are now prepared, with God's help, to perform the exploits we spoke of; but you yourself must name the person who is to begin."

"Good," replied the king; "we shall begin with the least dangerous, so let Oliver come forward and resolve the riddles my daughter shall propose to him."

Oliver drew near the throne on which the princess had taken her seat. All the court was assembled around the throne, and the princess began:—

"Tell me what the name of that tree is under which race after race sprouts up and withers away. It dies perpetually, but perpetually grows anew. One side turns itself towards the light, but the other is as black as night, and is not touched by the sun's rays. As it grows it plants new rings, and by these rings one can mark the flight of time."

"The riddle, noble princess," replied Oliver, "is easy to guess. The tree is *the year*."

"Correctly guessed," said the princess, slightly changing colour. "My next riddle will therefore be harder. Tell me, now, what kind of picture it is which continually grows and gives fresh images. Its frame is the smallest, yet this picture embraces more than any other. It is more precious than any stone of price; it gives light of itself, yet does not burn. All the great and beautiful world is depicted in it, but the image is often more lovely than the reality."

"I can solve even that riddle. The picture you mean is *the human eye*, and when I gaze into your eyes methinks the image of the object therein reflected is fairer than the thing itself."

"Well, solve me the last riddle, then. Name me

the implement that is most often despised, but which, nevertheless, becomes even an emperor. It is made to wound, and though it inflicts wounds by thousands, blood does not flow from them. It impoverishes no one, but enriches many a man; it has laid the foundation of the highest sovereignty on earth, and yet has never been employed in war."

"That implement I should certainly have found difficulty in naming if it had not been the first thing I beheld when I came hither to your father's kingdom, and I saw him with my own eyes ploughing with a golden plough; the implement you mean is *the plough*, is it not so, princess?"

"It is so, and you have saved your head. But do not rejoice prematurely, for there remain twelve other feats for you to accomplish, and those ought to be harder than this."

"We have once expressed our willingness to do what we promised," said the emperor. "Oliver has kept his promise, and not only saved his own life, but even won the hand of the princess. We will not, however, base any claim on that reward for him, so name only one of us whose strength you wish to test:"

"Well, then," replied King Hugo, "let Villifer take the golden ball which lies in this courtyard, and if he is not able to lift it and throw it as he boasted last night, his life and the lives of his companions will be forfeited."

But Villifer only smiled, being certain that the angel would help him as it had already helped his friend Oliver, whereupon he went up to the huge globe and lifted it with one hand as if it had been a glove, and hurled it against the castle wall, so that the whole edifice tottered, and a rent ten times larger than that which he had promised appeared.

When King Hugo saw this exhibition of strength

he was not, as you can well understand, happy in his mind. His beautiful castle was ruined, and he began to fear that these strangers could do more than he had imagined they could. He would not, however, yield yet, but summoned Archbishop Turpin, and called on him to carry out what he had promised.

"As you please," answered the archbishop. "With God's help I think the river will rise."

Then he went down to the shore, fell upon his knees, and besought help from heaven; then he arose, stretched forth his hand, and blessed the water. Then a great miracle took place, for the river began to bubble, and gradually rose out of its channel, making its way over fields and meadows, and rushed at a mighty speed towards the chief city, and there it soon filled all the streets and houses, to the intense alarm of all the inhabitants. King Hugo himself quite lost his presence of mind, and fled for safety to the loftiest tower in his castle. On looking down he saw Karl and his paladins standing under an olive tree which the water had not yet reached, and he called on them piteously to help him.

"Is it your intention," he cried to Karl the Great, "to drown me utterly in this flood? If you will save me I promise henceforward to be your vassal and pay you tribute, and you may demand what treasures you will if you will but remove this plague from me."

"Yes," answered the emperor, "I like to show mercy to all who ask it, and I will willingly do what I can for you."

At the prayer of Karl and Turpin the water withdrew from the town and subsided, after a time, into its old channel. When the ground became dry King Hugo came down from his tower and went up to the tree under which Karl the Great was standing, and said:—

"I have now discovered that you are dear to God, and that He is with you in all things. I do not blush, therefore, to do you homage, as my emperor and overlord, in the presence of your knights and mine. I am your vassal, and my kingdom is yours."

"But," said Karl with a smile, "there still remain no less than ten feats for us to accomplish."

"For God's sake," exclaimed King Hugo, "say no more about them. I have had quite enough, and have no wish to make further proof of your strength. If you were to keep on in the same way as you have begun, before night-time I should have lost both my crown and my life."

"Just so," answered Karl; "neither should I like our promises that were made in jest to have grave consequences. Let all be forgotten, and suffer us to go to church instead, to thank God, who has taken compassion on our foolishness, and directed all for the best. In one respect only do I wish to take advantage of the victory we have won, and that is on behalf of my poor Oliver. He has honourably obtained your daughter's hand, and it seems to me that it would not be fair to withhold it any longer. You will have no cause to regret this choice, for a braver and more honourable knight does not live."

"Let it be done according to your wish."

Then they all assembled and went to church in a solemn procession, at the head of which walked Karl the Great, and after him, among his other vassals, followed King Hugo. Karl was quite a head taller than King Hugo, and, moreover, wore his crown more majestically. The Franks in the church whispered among themselves:—

"Our queen was wrong when she thought there was any king in the whole world to be compared with our emperor, and we never shall come to a country where we shall see his like".

When they reached church Archbishop Turpin said Mass, thanked God for His goodness, and ended by placing the hand of the princess in Oliver's, after which he pronounced a blessing over them both, and made them man and wife.

A lordly marriage feast awaited them as they came out of church. The cakes offered were of the very rarest, and wine flowed in torrents. During the banquet King Hugo arose and said:—

“Let every Frank take of my treasures what he wishes, and carry it to his own land”.

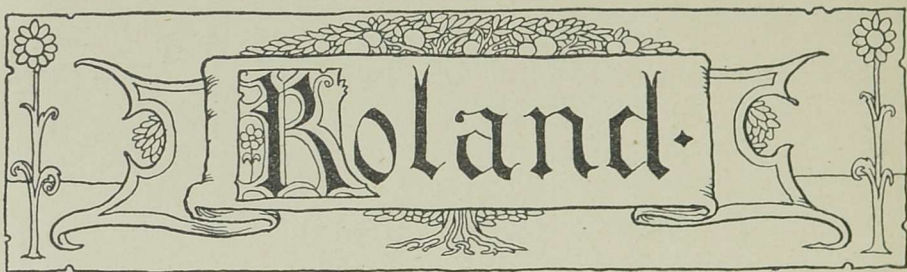
But Karl replied:—

“Not a farthing will we take of you, who have shown us right royal hospitality, which we are loth to abuse. We thank you for all the kindness you have shown us, and will withdraw to our own land once more.”

On saying this, Karl and his paladins arose from table, took their leave, and prepared for their journey. And when Karl was about to mount his horse, the king of Constantinople bowed, and held the stirrups for the Frankish emperor.

Whereupon they made their way back to France.





THE Emperor Karl was now nearly a hundred years old. A long white beard fell in waves over his breast, and yet the mighty champion's strength was unbroken. He still wielded the sword with all his former vigour against rebels and infidels. In Spain, where the Moors still held sway, he had waged war for seven years, and had finally subdued the whole of that country. Only Saragossa remained unconquered, and thither the heathen king Marsilius had retreated with the Moors who still survived the carnage; but the infidels were dispirited, and Marsilius, in his distress, summoned the chiefs of the Saracens to ask them for counsel.

"You know," said he, "how victorious have been the arms of the Emperor Karl; all my country is now his, and only this town remains to me. I have no men brave and strong enough to wage battle against his knights. What is there left for me to do?"

"Noble lord," answered Blancandrin, the sagest of all the heathen, "do not grieve, but let me advise you. Send the emperor an embassy with rich gifts, camels and mules loaded with splendid garments and rare treasures, and tell him that you are weary of strife, and that you are willing to come to him in Aix-la-Chapelle, there to receive baptism and acknowledge him as your emperor and overlord. It may be that he will put no trust in your assurances, but will demand hostages. Do not hesitate to send them.

Give him ten, nay twenty, of the flower of our youths. I, for my own part, will not scruple to send my own son, for it is better that these should perish than that our whole realm should be laid waste. When Karl has got the hostages he will assuredly believe your promise, and withdraw to France, leaving Spain to us. Now when the appointed day comes, and you fail to be at Aix-la-Chapelle, he is like to have the men we left as hostages killed. Let it be so, for it is better for these to die than that our power in Spain should be lost."

This treacherous counsel met with general approval, and Blancandrin withdrew to Cordova with costly presents to meet the emperor. He found him in a lovely garden surrounded by his paladins Roland, Oliver, Turpin, Nemes, and the rest. The emperor was sitting in a golden chair beneath a rose tree, sunk in deep thought. When Blancandrin stated his message the emperor replied:—

"The news you bring me is good, but Marsilius has often broken his word, and, therefore, I cannot trust his assurances".

"My lord," said the messenger, "is ready to give you surety for his good faith, and will send you as hostages the sons of the noblest in the land, among whom my own son, yea, even youths of still more illustrious birth, if you so desire."

"Well," answered Karl, "I will treat with him. God forbid that I should from mistrust prevent an infidel from being converted and receiving holy baptism."

Karl had the mules loaded with valuables sent to the stables, and set apart certain tents for the embassy, so that they might repose after their journey. Then he summoned his chief knights to a council, and disclosed to them the message of Marsilius. Roland, the bravest among all the Franks, was the first to speak:—

"We have been in Spain for seven years, and now all the land is ours, except Saragossa, the walls of which must soon fall, provided that we continue to hold out. All this we should give up, and why? On account of an infidel's promise. Do you not remember how Marsilius sent fifteen men to us some time ago, who, like these, bore olive branches in their hands quite peacefully, and said they had come to parley? But when we sent them two ambassadors, did he not treacherously have them beheaded? Do you mean to trust him now?"

When Roland had finished, the emperor stroked his beard thoughtfully, and made no reply. No one else was inclined to oppose Roland. Only the latter's stepfather, Ganelon, was of a different view.

"Roland," said he, "is young, and still lacks the wisdom of an experienced counsellor. He loves war, and would willingly continue fighting to all eternity merely for the pleasure of battling; but quite enough men have already fallen, and it is about time to conclude peace. Since Marsilius promises to become your vassal without a struggle and accept our religion, you have gained all you wish. It seems to me, then, profitless to continue this war, which has already lasted far too long."

"Well spoken," answered the emperor. "I will follow your advice, and send an ambassador to Marsilius."

"Let me go, then," exclaimed Roland. "The infidels will hear the truth from me."

"Better choose me," shouted Oliver. "Roland is far too hasty, and will only cause quarrels."

"Neither of you is fit for such business, which demands a man of riper experience."

"Then take my stepfather Ganelon. He has given you this counsel, and is therefore the proper man to be your spokesman."

When the cowardly Ganelon heard this proposal he turned pale, and sought with many words to excuse himself; they were of no avail, for Karl bade him obey and make ready for the journey.

"Well and good," said he at last. "I will go, but Roland shall smart for having thrown me into this peril, and if I escape with my life I think I shall know how to be revenged. He laughs at my threat, but a day will come when he will find out that no one ridicules me with impunity."

The emperor paid no heed to this outburst of anger, but said:—

"My will is that you accept this mission. Tell Marsilius that if he submits of his own accord, and accepts our Christian faith, I shall give him half Spain in fee, and Roland shall hold the other half; but, if he refuses to accept these conditions, I shall besiege Saragossa, and then his time of grace is gone."

With these instructions Ganelon had to pretend to be satisfied, and with Blancandrin he then pursued his journey. The wily Saracen tried to sound his fellow-traveller as they wended their way, and quickly marked his hatred towards Roland.

"It surprises me that the Franks suffer so much at the hands of Roland. He treats them all with haughtiness, and he would make himself lord of every land. How is this possible?"

"With Roland everything is possible," answered Ganelon bitterly. "He is the idol of the Frankish race, and all he does is right. With lavish hand he deals out, right and left, the treasures he has carried off from you Saracens, and with every gift he makes for himself a friend. Soon his good pleasure will be law to all, and even the emperor yields to his whims."

"Count Ganelon, none of you seem to love him ;

I have therefore a proposal to make you. Lure him into our power, and I swear to you by Mahomet that King Marsilius will richly reward you for this service."

Ganelon made no answer to this, and fell into a train of silent thoughts; but Blancandrin observed that he had guessed Ganelon's secret wishes, and that it would not take much to make him turn traitor against Roland and the Franks. On their arrival Blancandrin gave King Marsilius a hint as to his suspicions, whereupon the king treated the Frankish ambassador with the highest consideration. When Ganelon had dispatched his business the king said to him :—

"I am astonished at the Emperor Karl, who is now an aged man and on the brink of the grave, being still so fond of war and battles. Is he never weary of being at war?"

"Not while Roland, Oliver, and the other paladins are alive. They are continually inflaming the emperor's lust for war, and success has never ceased to follow their swords. As long as Karl can get help from them he cannot be conquered."

"I too have brave warriors. Think you that they cannot fight Roland and Oliver?"

"Do not attempt impossibilities, and spare your warriors' lives for more hopeful tasks. There is only one way of overcoming Karl, and that way I will show you. Listen to my advice, which is to agree to all the conditions Karl imposes, promise to become a Christian, and send him hostages and rich gifts. Then he will assuredly return to France, and only leave a weak rear-guard behind. As the command of this will be extremely dangerous, it will assuredly be chosen by Roland and Oliver, who will never leave one another. Now when this has been separated from the main body of the army, your plan will be to

call out all the men you can, and with a couple of hundred thousand Moors attack Roland and his handful of followers. If you have the good luck to slay him, then you have by so doing cut off the emperor's right hand, and never again will he be in a position to levy forces to attack Spain, for with Roland's death both victory and love of battle will depart from the old man."

"You have spoken shrewdly. Will you swear to me, then, to betray Roland, and so manage matters that he will find himself in the rear-guard?"

"I swear it," said Ganelon, "for I have promised to have revenge for all the scorn and insolence I have had to suffer at his hands."

Then he pronounced the oath, and forswore himself a villain. When this was done King Marsilius gave him costly gifts, and the queen took from her arm two precious armlets of amethyst and gold, and presented them to the traitor, after which Marsilius said to him:—

"Herewith I give you ten mules laden with gold from Arabia. Take them to Emperor Karl as a gift from me, and tell him I shall send him as many every year. Give him also the keys of the city of Saragossa as a token that I, from this moment, regard myself as his vassal, and deliver these twenty knights you now behold as hostages for my loyalty; but when he has gone his way, trusting to my promise, do not forget so to arrange matters that Roland's place shall be with the rear-guard, for everything depends on that. If you accomplish this I shall not be niggardly in rewarding you."

He and Ganelon parted, and the traitor made his way back to the emperor. When Ganelon had fulfilled his mission and handed over the keys of Saragossa, the gifts and hostages, everything turned out as he expected, and Karl ordered the encamp-

ment to be broken up. The horn which announced this to the army rang out joyously over the camp; the tents were struck, horses and mules were loaded with booty, and the Franks made active preparations for returning home. On reaching the narrow mountain pass that separates France from Spain, Karl commanded a halt, and called together his chieftains to take counsel as to the disposition of the troops. Ganelon was the first to speak :—

“In my opinion,” said he, “Ogier the brave Dane is the most fitted to command the advance-guard, and assuredly the command of the rear-guard cannot be entrusted to a worthier captain than Roland, the doughtiest warrior the army can boast.”

“I thank you, my stepfather, for proposing this, and I venture to assure you and the rest that the emperor will not be the loser if your suggestion is accepted. He shall not lose a horse or even a mule that has not been dearly bought with Moorish blood.”

“So be it,” said the emperor; “take the command, and have as large a rear-guard as you think fit. I suppose you know I will willingly let you have half my army if you wish it.”

“May God deal hardly with me if I show myself such a craven. Give me only twenty thousand men, and march with easy mind through the pass. While Roland lives none shall dare molest you.”

“As you will, so choose the knights you would have in your train.”

Roland donned his armour, put on his coat of mail, fastened his helmet to his chin, hung his shield over his shoulder, buckled on his good sword Durendal, and bestrode his favourite charger. Then he turned to the army and said :—

“Who will follow me and remain in the rear-guard with me to protect the emperor’s army through the pass?”

But so beloved was Roland that he was greeted with a general shout of "We will all follow you to a man".

Roland then rode round the army and chose out such as he prized most, and, among others, he took Oliver and the other paladins. After he had drawn them up in a troop, the rear-guard separated itself from the emperor and the main body, which wended their way through gloomy valleys, over lofty crags and darksome rocks, till the plain of Gascony at length extended itself to their gaze. Many a stern eye was filled with tears at the sight of their long-desired country, and even the old emperor was seized with a profound melancholy.

The emperor and his army had hardly plunged into the mountain passes before King Marsilius ordered his drums to beat and all the troops of his kingdom to be called to arms. He soon collected a host of four hundred thousand men, and rapidly marched with them to the pass of Roncevaux, where he soon perceived the banner of the Frankish rear-guard. Oliver had just climbed a mountain, and was reconnoitring the plain. When he discovered, at a distance, the gleaming armour of the Moors, and beheld the sun glittering on their bright steel helmets, he shouted to Roland:—

"The Saracens are upon us, and it is that traitor Ganelon who has betrayed us by advising the emperor to assign this post to us".

"Not a word against him, for he is my stepfather; if it should come to blows with the heathen so much the better. I pray we may hold our ground for the emperor's sake, for a noble should endure everything for his lord, suffer heat and cold, forfeit life and limb, and if we die let us at least fall like Christians and men."

"I see," cried Oliver, "so many infidels that the

whole plain swarms with them. I see the gleam of countless helmets wrought of gold, and spears and banners in thousands. There will be a battle the like of which no man has seen, and may God give us strength."

Then he hastened down the mountain to his comrades, and they, with one acclaim, cried out to Roland:—

"We will not fail you even in death. May shame befall the man that flees."

"Brother," said Oliver, "the battle will prove unequal, for the heathen are as many as the sands of the sea, and we are few. Blow a blast on your horn, for the emperor will still hear it, and when he hears it he will return, and we shall be delivered."

"God forbid. Never will I call for help. I will sooner steep my blade in blood up to the hilt than that any one shall say that I blew my horn for succour against these heathen. The Franks shall strike in a way befitting Christian knights, and the Saracens shall give way before them."

"Rashness is not courage, and you will repent. But I shall not ask you further. I have never yet feared death, neither do I fear it now. Let us fight, then. Alas, to-day our men will fight for the last time."

Then they held out their hands to each other, vaulted into their saddles, and rode up to their troops, and disposed them to meet the onslaught of the enemy. Archbishop Turpin also put spurs into his horse, rode up beside them, and turning to the Frankish army, said:—

"Noble warriors, King Karl has set us here at our post, and it is our duty not to abandon it, but to die for our emperor, and in defence of Holy Church. The Paynim host are upon us, but, ere the battle begins, let us beseech God for the forgiveness of our sins."

At these words the Franks dismounted from their horses, fell on their knees, and made their confession, whereupon Turpin stretched out his hands and blessed them in the Lord's name, and bade them, for their penance, fight manfully against the infidels. Then they all arose, full of martial ardour and courage, and vaulted on their horses, but Roland cried to them :—

“A splendid booty awaits us to-day, for the heathen have come hither only to find death. Let us, therefore, march against them at a slow pace.”

The Franks now raised their battle-cry of “*Mon-joie!*” the trumpets sounded, and both the armies met in battle. At the head of the Moors there rode a knight who was the nephew of Marsilius. As soon as he perceived Roland, he called out to him jeeringly :—

“Seek not to escape your fate! The man on whom you most relied has betrayed you, and your master was a madman to follow Ganelon's advice; but now Roland shall die, and Spain shall be ours.”

“You see, brother, I was right,” said Oliver to Roland. “For the sake of filthy lucre, Ganelon has sold us to the Saracens; but if King Marsilius has bought us we must pay him with our swords.”

Roland made no reply, but dug his spurs into his horse, and galloped, with lance at rest, against the Saracen. The latter's shield was shivered to atoms, his helmet pierced, and the Moor himself was hurled a couple of spear-lengths from his horse, and fell to the ground a corpse. Then the battle between the Christians and the heathen became general. The finest heathen warriors rushed forward to measure themselves against the paladins, but they were overcome, notwithstanding all their might and valour. Roland was seen right in the midst of the carnage, brandishing Durendal and cutting a path of blood through heaps of corpses. At his side rode Oliver,

whose lance was already broken, but he thrust right and left with the stump so lustily that infidel after infidel fell to the ground. The strife was fierce around them, sword-cuts were exchanged, lances were shattered, banners torn to shreds, and full many a Frank sank bleeding to the ground, never more to rise. At last the Moorish ranks began to waver, and the more timid betook themselves to flight. The Franks raised afresh their battle-cry of "Monjoie!" and rushed with might and main upon the fugitives, mowing them down right and left. The Moors threw their shields and swords away the easier to escape; but it was of no avail, for of the hundred thousand that attacked Roland hardly two thousand got away.

When the fight was over, the Franks began to seek out their dead that lay strewn in heaps over the battlefield, and many an eye was filled with tears at the sight of fallen friends and relatives. But suddenly the cry was heard, "The enemy are upon us again!" It was King Marsilius drawing nigh with all his army, and now they discovered that the troops with whom they had just been fighting were only the Saracens' advance-guard. The field was again covered with bands of foes, and the Franks heard the trumpets pealing in every direction the order for an attack on them. They marshalled, for a second time, their thinned ranks, and made ready to offer a stubborn resistance. The old archbishop turned to them again and said:—

"Our fate is sealed. We are now about to end our lives, and none of us will survive this day. Away with cowardly thoughts and thoughts of flight. For the man who dies like a brave Christian knight the gates of Paradise are open wide. Away with all timidity, and let us raise once more our old battle-cry of 'Monjoie!'"

From a thousand throats this cry rang out afresh,

and, ere long, both armies rushed on each other with renewed fury. Men and horses were mixed up in the *mêlée*, coats-of-mail were ripped open, lances broken, and knights unhorsed. Dead bodies lay in heaps on the ground, and here and there was seen a riderless charger galloping wildly about the field with loosely hanging reins.

As before, Roland and Oliver forced their way through the densest ranks of the foe; but the outwearied Franks fought no longer with their former success. One after another the paladins of the Emperor Karl sank to the earth either wounded or dying, and soon only sixty knights survived, among whom were Roland, Oliver, and the valiant Archbishop Turpin, who fought with sword and lance as well as the best knight, and laid many a Saracen chieftain low. When Roland looked behind and saw how all his troops had dwindled away, he could not refrain from a cry of anguish:—

“Ah,” sighed he, “never more shall we behold again our lovely France”.

“Brother,” replied Oliver, “sorrow not for that, for, however the day ends, we who have so long fought side by side must die together, and over that fate I shall not weep.”

“If we could but send a message to the emperor he would at once hasten to us with his army.”

“Do not think of it, for it only remains for us to die.”

“I will blow my horn, and when Karl hears the well-known signal he will hasten through the pass to our help, and our defeat shall be changed into victory.”

“It is too late now. Not long ago I asked you to do so, but you would not listen to my counsel, and your wilfulness has brought about our destruction. Seek not to escape the inevitable.”

“Do not wrangle, noble lords,” said Turpin. “A blast on your horn could not save us now. The emperor is far off, and, ere evening falls, we shall have ended our days; but if the emperor cannot save us, yet he may avenge our death. Blow, then, on your horn with all your might, and the emperor will come and find our bodies, and send them to France to be buried in consecrated soil, and they will not fall a prey to wolves and dogs.”

“Blow your horn,” said Oliver, “so that the emperor may come and avenge our fall. To call him now is not a prayer for succour, but a call for revenge.”

Then Roland put his horn Oliphant to his mouth, and blew till the hills rang again with it. He blew so hard that blood streamed from his mouth, and the horn was heard for many and many a mile away. The emperor, who had at that time come to the end of the mountain pass, heard this powerful blast, and turned to those nearest him, saying:—

“That horn has good lungs! I recognise it as Roland’s. Let us turn at once and hasten to his assistance, for assuredly he is in sore distress. He would not have blown his horn if there had been no battle.”

“You are mistaken,” said Ganelon. “You know as well as I that Roland’s recklessness is such that he would never call on us for help. And who would dare attack the foremost knight of all the Franks, before whose sword the Saracens have ever fled? It is certainly nothing but a hunting-party, and Roland is abroad and making merry with his friends.”

“No,” said the old Duke Nemes; “no one blows such a blast when he is merely hunting. It is a life and death struggle. The man who denies that is only intent on betraying Roland. Let us, therefore,

turn without delay, for he is in distress and needs our help."

The trumpets blared and called the Frankish hosts together, and off they started at full speed through the passes back towards Spain.

But the battle still raged in Roncevaux. Roland and Oliver grasped their arms again, raised the war-cry of "Monjoie!" dug their spurs into their horses, and rushed against the foe. Roland's sword Durendal cut a broad path through them to King Marsilius, who, on seeing him, cried out:—

"Ere I die I will teach you to know my sword, and punish you, foul traitor".

Then he attacked him, killed the son who had hurried up to help his father, and cut off the king's hand. Marsilius, beside himself with terror, spurred on his horse, threw his weapons away, and galloped from the battlefield as fast as he could. The Saracens, as soon as they saw their king flee, took to flight themselves, but at that very instant the third division, commanded by King Marsilius's uncle, the Caliph of Carthage, came up. His army consisted of only black men, with thick noses and broad ears, and these, when they saw what a few Franks they had to fight, threw themselves in a body on them. Oliver, surrounded on all sides by the enemy, was struck by a blow from a lance which penetrated his breastplate, and inflicted on him a deadly wound. With all his remaining strength he grasped his sword and cut off the Caliph's head, crying:—

"Help, help, Count Roland!"

Roland forced his way up to him, but found him already dying. His countenance had the hue of lead, and blood was gushing forth from his body. Oliver knew, however, that his last hour had come. He got off his horse, knelt down on the blood-stained battlefield, and prayed his last prayer. Then his

head sank upon his breast, his heart stopped beating, and he was dead. When Roland saw his friend lying stretched upon the battlefield, he bent over him and said :—

“Farewell, my friend and brother. Never in your life have you caused me sorrow before, but now that you are dead, I have no will to live longer.”

After closing his friend's eyes he arose and looked round the battlefield, but could not descry any Frank but Archbishop Turpin, and a count named Walter, who came riding up to him. On seeing him, Roland cried :—

“Count Walter, I gave you command over a thousand valiant warriors. Tell me where they are now, for they are sorely needed.”

“My lord,” replied the count, “they are all sleeping their last sleep on the battlefield. Not one of them now lives, and I am the last of all my band; but no one lives to boast of having conquered us, for our foes sleep round about us. I myself am so sorely wounded that with utter weariness I have scarcely strength to stand on my legs; my coat of mail is cleft to pieces, and I can hardly defend myself further.”

“Come hither, then, and we will defend ourselves together.”

Then Roland, Turpin, and Walter stood shoulder to shoulder to receive the attack of the black men, but the latter had already experienced so many proofs of their valour that they durst no longer attack them with the sword, but discharged at them instead a shower of bolts from their cross-bows. At the first shower Count Walter fell to the ground, and the archbishop's horse was likewise struck, so that it staggered and fell.

The brave archbishop fell also, but he was on his feet in an instant, and, though bleeding from many

wounds, he drew his sword and heroically attacked the black men, cutting down all who came in his way. Roland, though faint with loss of blood and fatigue, followed closely on his track, and, before the swords of the two men, the heathen once more fell back. When they again stood alone on the battlefield, in the midst of a circle of fallen foes, Roland blew once more a blast on his horn to summon help from Karl; but his lungs no longer possessed their former strength, and the blast sounded only weak and languid. Nevertheless Karl heard it, and called to his followers:—

“Do you hear how weak the sound is? I am afraid that Roland is even in a worse plight, for that blast betokens the uttermost need. So there is not an instant to be lost. Forward at once, and let all the horns in our army blare back in response.”

Sixty thousand horns immediately replied, thundering over valleys and hills, and the Saracens, who heard the horn, understood at once that the Emperor Karl had turned and was marching against them.

“The emperor is coming!” they cried; “and if he find Roland alive it is all over with us, the war will begin again, and Spain will be lost to us for ever. Let us, therefore, exert all our strength to make an end of him.”

For the last time the black men attacked Roland and Turpin; but the two Franks met them half-way. Roland spurred his tired horse to the assault, and the brave archbishop, who had lost his courser, followed him on foot, with his falchion uplifted to strike. The conflict did not last long, and after a brief battle the last of the heathen took to flight, discharging, as they left, a shower of arrows, and even Roland’s charger fell before it to the ground.

Roland and Turpin stood conquerors on the abandoned battlefield, which, as far as eye could see, was

now filled with the mangled bodies of men and horses. Friends and foes lay mingled with one another in a confused heap, and Roland hardly gave himself time to bind up his wounds before he began to search for his fallen comrades. He found them gradually, one after another, and carried their bodies to the archbishop, who stretched forth his hands and blessed them. Last of all he found Oliver; but when he looked on him who in life had been his dearest friend, he was seized with such poignant grief that he swooned away, and fell like a corpse beside the body. When Turpin saw that, he got up, seized a horn, and went with it to a spring that flowed near by, in order to fetch in it a cooling draught for the unconscious man; but Roland's wounds were so many, and his strength so exhausted by the lengthy combat, that he had not tottered forward many paces ere he fell to the ground as if dead.

By the place where Roland fell there lay a Saracen who was not yet dead, and when he woke up and saw Roland lying outstretched on the ground beside him, he thought that the Frank had already departed hence. He therefore seized his sword so as to be able to show it as a token of victory to the infidels, and also, out of scorn, plucked Roland by the beard. Roland, however, awoke from his swoon, and cried out:—

“Knave, how dare you do that?”

Then he grasped his horn and struck the Saracen on the head with it so violently that both horn and head were shivered to atoms.

Roland now realised that the little strength he had left was exhausted, and that he had not many moments to live. Archbishop Turpin then laid his hands crosswise over Roland's breast, and commended his soul to heaven. Then Roland seized his sword Durendal that had served him loyally in many a fray, and exclaimed:—



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“FRIENDS AND FOES LAY MINGLED WITH ONE ANOTHER.”

“My good sword Durendal, we must now part. You and I have vanquished many a foe, and gained many a kingdom for my lord the emperor. May you never fall into any unworthy hand that will use you for base and unknighly purposes; but be not uneasy, for I will take care that no ruffian’s craven hand shall ever grasp your hilt.”

Then he took the sword and struck it against a ledge of rock with such force that the sparks flew around him, but the well-tempered blade held, and did not break to pieces.

“Well and good,” said Roland; “you shall be my companion in death as you have been in life. We will never part.”

Then he summoned all his strength and walked to a pine tree, and under its branches he laid himself down with his face turned to his enemies’ country, and with Durendal beneath his head, folding his hands across his breast in prayer, and with thoughts of the emperor and the fair land of France, which he was never more to see again, he breathed forth his last sigh.

He did not die unavenged. The traitor Ganelon, who had caused his death, as well as that of many another valiant warrior, was seized by the emperor immediately he reached the battlefield, and was thrown into irons. Afterwards he was fastened to four wild horses, which tore him to pieces. Thus the traitor ended his days.



MANY and many a year ago there reigned in Rome a mighty emperor named Pontian, who was wedded to a lovely and pious princess who was greatly beloved by all her people for her wisdom and gentle ways. They had only one child, a son called Diocletian, and he inherited his mother's understanding and love of virtue. When he was seven years old the empress fell dangerously sick, and she herself felt that her sickness was unto death. Then she sent a message to the emperor, and said to him :—

“My dear lord, I know I have not much longer to live, so grant me, I beseech you, my last prayer”.

“Never have I refused you anything in the past, still less would I do so now. Your wishes and mine have, as you know, always been the same.”

“My wish will not be hard to fulfil. When I am dead you may perhaps take another wife. Do not imagine that I think of asking you to abstain from doing so. I am well aware that I have been fondly loved by you, and I know that the country may require an empress. All I ask you is not to let our son be brought up at court, but that you will send him to strangers to be taught wisdom and the fear of God.”

“Even in this, I am of like mind with yourself, and I know that a young prince ought not to be brought up at his father's court. Do not be uneasy; I will take good care that our son shall receive an education that will satisfy your wishes.”

When the empress had received this promise she departed hence, to the great grief of the whole country; but she had scarcely been buried before the emperor bethought himself of fulfilling the promise he had given her. So he summoned all his counsellors, and asked them how, in their opinion, he could best bring up the young prince.

"Here," they answered, "are seven wise masters, the like of whom are not to be found in the whole world. Let us call them to you, and leave the prince in their charge; thus he will certainly have the best teachers he could wish for."

This advice commended itself to the emperor, and he sent a message to the seven wise men, and, a little while afterwards, they set out for the castle. The emperor told them, on their arrival, that he had a mind to send his son to school with them, and that was why he asked them what they could teach the boy.

Then the eldest of the seven masters, who was called Balaam, said:—

"My gracious lord, if you will leave the boy to me I will teach him in seven years as much as I know myself, and after that time he will be as wise as we seven all together".

The second master, whose name was Lentulus, promised to impart the same learning in six years; the third, who was called Cato, would do it in five; the fourth, who was named Malquidrag, in four; the fifth, whose name was Joseph, in three; the sixth, called Cleophas, in two; and the seventh, whose name was Joachim, in only one year.

When the emperor heard this he said:—

"I am loth to separate such good friends as you appear to be. Take my son, then, and bring him up as well as you can under your united charge, so that some day you may be able to answer for him to me."

The young prince was then entrusted to the seven wise masters, and they rode away with their charge in the direction of Rome. When they drew near the city Cato said :—

“ If it seems good to you, as it does to me, not to take the boy to the great city where he can be easily enticed from serious occupations, and where all sorts of perils lie in wait for him on every side, then let us go to Maclus’s garden, which lies twelve miles or more from Rome, and there build us a house in which we may live with our pupil and devote ourselves undisturbed to his education ”.

This plan seemed judicious to all, and they, therefore, proceeded to the garden, and there they had a roomy and comfortably furnished house constructed for them. In the room set apart for the young prince’s bedchamber they had some pictures painted to represent the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, in which he was to be exercised, so that he might have them continually before his eyes. Then they began to instruct him daily, employing all the skill they possessed, and Diocletian soon became an exceedingly wise and learned man, without losing through these accomplishments his former modesty. After they had read with him for seven years, Cato said to the other wise men :—

“ The time is now nearly expired during which he was to be our pupil, and now, it seems, the time has come to prove whether our instruction has made any impression on him or not. Let us, therefore, proceed to try and find out how wise he is.”

“ Your purpose is a good one,” said Balaam, “ but how are we to test him ? ”

“ I propose,” replied Cato, “ that we lay a thin oak leaf under each bed post while he is asleep. If he notices it when he wakes, then we shall see that his attention has been excited, and that he always has

his eyes about him, in which case we shall not have laboured in vain."

Cato's proposal was carried out, and the masters assembled round the bed in order to see what the young prince would do when he woke up, but most of them were convinced that he would not notice anything at all. On opening his eyes Diocletian sat up in bed, and looked round him in amazement.

"It is curious," said he, "either the roof must have sunk since yesterday or the floor must have been raised, for, methinks, I am lying higher than when I went to bed. Do you know anything of this?"

But his masters held their peace, and merely looked at one another in astonishment.

"He will be a remarkable man," said they among themselves, "if he lives. He will be our master."

About the very time that this happened the Emperor Pontian's counsellors came up to their master and said:—

"It is now seven years since your spouse died, and the country needs a new empress. You have only one son, and if anything were to happen to him, there would be no heir to the throne. We therefore beseech you to get yourself another wife, so that the succession to the crown may not be disturbed, and all wars may be avoided."

"You know," answered the emperor, "I will willingly do everything for the good estate of the country, but the dead empress was far too dear to me for me to wish to choose another to take her place. This care I therefore confide to you, and I declare beforehand that I shall be satisfied with the person you shall choose for me. Let your only thought be to provide the country with a good empress."

They had to be content with this answer, and as

they were conscientious men they journeyed to many kingdoms to see all the princesses there were. At last they decided upon a young princess who was surpassingly lovely, and paid court to her on the emperor's behalf. The young princess, who was quite willing to become empress of Rome, was not long in giving her consent, and, within a short time, the marriage was celebrated with pomp and splendour. At first Pontian still thought of nothing but his dead empress; but grief is seldom lasting, and gradually his memory of her grew faint, and instead he daily became more and more enamoured of his young and lovely wife, so that at last she had him completely in her power. There was only one cloud on the empress's happiness. She had no children, and she was aware that, on the death of the old emperor, she would be obliged to abdicate all her power in favour of the son of the late empress. Although she had not seen the lad, yet she grew to hate him, and only thought of how she might contrive his death, so as to make herself next in succession to Pontian.

"My lord," she said, "if you love me, grant me the boon I am about to crave."

"You know that there is nothing on earth I love so well as you, and it will be a joy for me to fulfil your request."

"You know that God has not thought it good to bestow on me any children of my own, but you possess a son who is being brought up by seven wise masters far away from us. Let him come here, and he shall be as dear to me as if he had been born my very own son. Your son, you know, ought to be mine also, and we should both try to find joy and gratification in him."

"I would fain conform to your wish, for I myself had thought of recalling him. My son has been spending full seven years with the wise masters, and

his time for study is already over. I presume he knows all they can teach him, and I shall, without delay, send a message to him with orders to proceed to our court here."

On the morrow, directly the emperor awoke, he wrote a letter to the seven wise masters, and in it gave them orders to send the young prince back to court without delay, as they valued their lives. When the wise men received this letter, they proceeded together to take counsel of the stars as to what they ought to do. They found it clearly written that, if they obeyed the emperor's orders, the prince would be killed at the first word he uttered, and they also discovered that they themselves would lose their lives in the event of their disobeying.

"Of the two evils," said Cleophas, "one should always choose the least. We are old, and stand at the brink of the grave. It makes little difference whether we die some few years sooner or later; but the prince is young, and has an honourable future before him, and it is, therefore, more important that his life be spared. I propose, then, that we set the emperor's orders at nought, and keep the prince with us, whatever the upshot be, so far as we ourselves are concerned."

This speech was approved by all, but, whilst they were consulting together, the young prince himself came up and asked them the cause of their distress. When they told him of the emperor's orders and what they had read in the stars, he asked them to wait a few minutes until he had himself interpreted the language of the stars. When he had gazed at the sky for a little while, he said:—

"What you say is true, but there is also a little star in the sky which you did not perceive, and that alters matters a little. That star signifies that if I can abstain from speaking for seven days, there is

a possibility of both my life and your lives being saved."

The seven wise men now searched for themselves, and found that their pupil had spoken the truth, but, when they began to praise his discernment, he interrupted them by saying:—

"You are seven masters renowned for your wisdom. It is now time to make proof of it. I shall, I think, be able to abstain from uttering a single word even with death before my eyes. All I ask is that each of you shall contrive to delay the execution by a single day. On the eighth day I myself may speak, and I believe I shall contrive to save both my life and yours."

"My lord," said Balaam, "I will pledge my life that I can make the emperor delay the death penalty by one day."

Each of the others made the same promise, and, in the hope of escaping the danger together, they made ready for their journey. On their way the masters said to Diocletian:—

"It seems better for us to ride on before you, that we may consult how we are to save your life".

"Well, do so, and remember that my life depends on your coming."

With these words they separated, and Diocletian rode on, followed by a considerable number of knights. On meeting the emperor, who rode up to meet him with a large retinue, they both dismounted from their horses, and Pontian embraced his son, kissed him, and wept for joy at having got him again.

"My son," said he, "you are heartily welcome. Many a long year has passed away since I saw you last. Tell me how it has fared with you all this time, and if you are satisfied with the teachers I gave you."

But Diocletian only bowed his head, looked down on the ground, and held his peace.

The emperor did not know what to make of this strange silence, but was loth to question him further in the presence of so many. Directly they reached the palace he repeated his question to the prince; but the latter only hung his head, gazed at the ground, and kept silence. At that very moment the empress came in, accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting.

"Is this," said she, turning to the emperor, "your son, for whom I have so much longed?"

"Yes," replied the emperor, "but I know not what has come to him. I get no answer to all my questions, and it almost looks as if he had lost the faculty of speech."

"I do not think it is quite so serious as that. Only leave him to me, and I fancy I shall know how to restore him the use of his tongue."

She then took him by the hand, and endeavoured to lead him away with her, but he strove against her, and refused to follow her; but, directly his father ordered him to obey, he hung his head again, and followed the empress, without any show of reluctance, to her chamber, where they sat down beside each other. When the empress saw the handsome young prince, a new thought darted into her head. She began to think that, were she to win his love, she might, on the death of the old emperor, become his son's wife, and so continue to be empress. Besides, the young prince was much more to her taste than the decrepit old man to whom she was tied. The wicked woman, therefore, began to devise how she might put the old emperor out of the way, and, in the belief that all were as base as herself, disclosed, without more ado, her plans to Diocletian, being convinced that he would fall into her plot.

"Now that I am alone with you," she said, "I can tell you how greatly I have longed for this meeting. From the accounts I had heard of your wisdom and courteous ways, I fell in love with you, and now I have seen you with my own eyes, I find that report has rather fallen short of your worth than exaggerated it. We two are suited to each other, and I, therefore, offer you my love. We are of about the same age, and have the same tastes. Nature herself has formed us for one another, and we must not gainsay her. I am tied to your old father by a merely outward bond, and that can easily be broken. An old man's life is not worth much, and luck awaits the brave. Kill the old man, then, and my hand shall be the reward of your courage."

The young prince made no answer, but remained as mute as before, but from the flush of anger that arose on his cheeks the empress discovered that she was mistaken in him, and that he never would lend himself to the infamies she had proposed. But he was now master of her secret, and in a position to betray her schemes to the emperor whenever he thought fit. One of them must perish, so the empress resolved by a daring action to put her life beyond reach of danger. She hastily tore her dress to pieces, disarranged her hair, and scratched her face with her nails till the blood began to flow, and raised a loud cry for help, whereupon the emperor and his courtiers rushed into the room, and the treacherous empress immediately fell at the emperor's feet and said:—

"O my lord, save me from this shameful traitor. As soon as he and I were alone, and I sought with kindly words to get him to speak, he broke silence, but only to propose to me to murder you and then become his wife. When I rejected with horror this infamous scheme, he tried with cuts and blows to

force me into becoming his accomplice, and if you had not come to my help he would, in very truth, have murdered me in his rage."

When the emperor saw how badly she had been treated, the tattered condition of her raiment, and that she herself was covered with blood, he believed what she said, and was seized with such a violent rage that he almost lost his senses. As soon as he recovered he shouted to his courtiers:—

"Take this wretched creature away and conduct him to the gallows at once, so that he may pay the penalty of his crime".

The poor prince was carried off, and the empress departed in the conviction that she had avenged herself on him for his contumacy. She had hardly left the room, however, before several old counsellors went up to the emperor and said:—

"My lord, that was a hard sentence which you pronounced just now. On a simple charge you would condemn your only son to death without trial, without even giving him an opportunity to defend himself. The basest criminal is allowed this right, and you will gain nothing by such haste, so postpone the execution until to-morrow, and then, if he must die, well, let him die by a judgment in keeping with justice."

"Very well," answered the emperor, "let it be as you wish. This crime shall not escape punishment. Cast the traitor into the tower, and there let him await the death sentence which must be passed on him."

On the morrow, when the empress heard that the prince was still alive, she was seized with a sudden fright, and began to weep so loudly that the emperor hurried to her bedchamber to ask her the cause of her grief.

"Alas," said she, "I have cause enough to be in despair. Yesterday you ordered your son to be taken

to the gallows, and yet he is alive to-day. What is the reason of this, I pray? Perhaps you doubt my word, or he has succeeded in fooling you with some fresh falsehood, so as to get time to put his infamous plans into execution."

"Calm yourself," replied the emperor; "he is to be condemned to death to-day. This is best for you and me, for I am loth that any one should say that I had my son slain without a proper trial."

"If you put off his death-penalty, I am afraid you will meet with the same fate as befel the Roman who possessed the valuable tree."

"What is that story about? I have never heard it."

"Well, you shall hear it now."

THE TREE.

"Once upon a time there was a Roman citizen who had a garden, the like of which no one had ever seen before, and in this garden there was a tree, which was not only wonderfully beautiful to behold, standing, as it did, with its gleaming white stem and its rich, luxuriant foliage; but it was also one of the greatest boons, for its fruit had the virtue of healing all manner of sickness. This tree was, moreover, to the citizen as the very apple of his eye, and he had the earth round it carefully dug, so that the roots might grow freely, and he had the soil about it properly manured to prevent the tree from lacking nutriment. One day, on coming into his garden, he saw a delicate, fresh shoot sprouting up beneath the shade of the great tree's boughs, whereat he rejoiced greatly, for he was now in hopes of getting a new tree of the same kind. Meanwhile he was obliged to journey into a strange country, and there he tarried for a long while. When he returned, he found the

old tree as fresh and luxuriant as ever, but the shoot had all but withered away. He cursed the gardener for his negligence, but the latter answered:—

“‘It is the boughs of the great tree which steal the sunlight from the shoot, and while these overshadow it, it can make no progress in growth’.

“‘Well, cut away those branches so that the young tree may get air.’

“It was done as he had ordered, and when, some time afterwards, he returned to his garden, he found that the new tree had overgrown the old tree, which now stood bare, with its bark peeled away. When the citizen saw this, he said to the gardener:—

“‘I see that the young tree is growing so strong that it takes all the nourishment from the old. The old tree, therefore, is no longer worth keeping, so cut it down, in order that it may not stand in the way of the new.’

“The gardener did as his lord commanded him, and the old tree was felled; but the new tree never bore the health-giving fruit such as had grown on the old, and the sick and the maimed, therefore, cursed the folly of that Roman citizen.

“You understand,” continued the empress, “the likeness this story bears to your own life?”

“No, I do not.”

“Well, I will explain it to you. You yourself are the old tree from which all your subjects derive their joy and comfort, and the young shoot is your son, who will try to attract to himself the sunshine—that is to say, the good name and reputation you have justly enjoyed. You cannot both grow up side by side, and if the young shoot is not hewn off, the old stem must fall. Now choose which you will.”

“I thank you for your teaching, and I shall profit by it. The criminal shall have ended his life ere night-fall.”

Then the emperor summoned his judges, took his seat on the throne of judgment, and condemned the prince to death; but when the young prince was being taken to the place of execution, all who saw him wept and lamented, and a great crowd followed him on his way, and shed tears. When they reached the gallows they met the first master, whose name was Balaam, riding on to Rome. The prince, on seeing him, without uttering a word, though the tears ran down his cheeks, sank on his knees before the master, as if to remind him of his promise and implore his help. Balaam, on beholding this sad spectacle, turned to those who followed the prince and said:—

“Delay the execution for a little while. It is possible I may save his life.”

All the people then began to shout:—

“Hasten to the emperor, and may your wisdom devise some means of escape”.

Balaam then rode as fast as he could to the palace, got off his horse, fell on his knees before the emperor, and said:—

“Hail, noble lord”.

But the emperor looked at him fiercely and answered:—

“Ah, you are here once more, and I can now demand an account of you and your wicked friends for the way in which you have brought up my son. I gave you a healthy, noble boy that you might develop his good qualities, but now I have got back a dumb creature that has craftily attempted his father’s life.”

“Some mistake must have been made in this, for when the prince was with us he talked like other people, and if he is now silent, then assuredly he has some good reason for his silence; nor can I believe that he has harboured any criminal design

against you, for all the time he was with us we could never perceive any evil propensity, and he has ever cherished the tenderest love towards you. If you have him put to death now, I am afraid it will be with you as it was with the knight who slew his hound."

"Well, what happened to that knight?"

"If I were to tell you the story the prince would be dead long before I had ended, and my story would be fruitless, so, if you wish to hear it, have the prince taken back to his prison, and the execution delayed until to-morrow. Meanwhile you can think over the matter, otherwise you shall hear nothing. If you refuse to assent to this, then let them kill me at the same time as your innocent son."

"Very well, I will do what you say, for cautiousness can never do any harm. Let the prince be brought back to prison, and now begin your story."

THE FAITHFUL HOUND.

"Once upon a time," said Balaam, "there was a knight who had an only son whom he loved more than his own life. Directly the boy was born the knight gave him three nurses, so that he should be thoroughly well looked after. The knight had also a hound and a hawk, of which he was exceedingly fond, and both fully deserved his affection. Whenever the knight rode out hunting or to take part in some tournament, the hound would make three bounds for joy before the horse if all went well; but if any danger threatened he began to howl and bite the horse's tail, and thus the knight always knew if he might venture out or not. The hawk was also an excellent creature, which never flew away, and always seized its prey.

"On one occasion there was a great tournament,

and the knight, who was passionately addicted to such sports, was one of those who took part in this miniature war, and his dame with all her ladies took their place in the gallery to witness the contest. All the house was deserted, and only the three nurses were left at home to look after the child. These nurses, however, wished to be present at the festivities, and, when the rest had gone, they stole out and ran to the lists, the child being left without any one to look after it. Only the hound laid himself down on the floor to sleep in front of the cradle, and the hawk sat on a perch above it.

“In the wall that surrounded the house a large serpent had for a long time taken up its abode, although, out of fear of mankind, it had not dared to come forth. Now, when it noticed that everything was quiet and all the house empty, it wriggled out of its hole into the room where the cradle lay, for the purpose of biting the child to death. The watchful falcon, however, at once caught sight of the dreadful creature, and began to flap its wings so violently that the hound awoke and noticed the serpent. The faithful creature immediately rushed at it, and a fierce fight arose between them; the cradle was knocked over, and the child fell to the floor without, however, sustaining any injury. The serpent wound itself round the dog and bit him so savagely that blood streamed over them both; but the hound at last succeeded in overpowering its enemy, giving him a bite that put an end to its life. Wearied by the struggle, the hound crept back to its old place beside the child, laid itself down to watch over its charge and to lick its own wounds.

“Meanwhile the tournament came to an end, and the nurses hurried back to the castle; but when they entered the room and saw the cradle upset and marks of blood everywhere about the room, they got so

frightened that they ran away without telling any one what had happened. The châtelaine came after a time and found the nurses gone, pools of blood on the floor, and the cradle overturned. She was beside herself with horror, and rushed to her husband at once.

“ ‘What is the matter?’ he asked.

“ ‘Alas,’ said the lady, sobbing violently, ‘the hound you trusted so much has bitten our only son to death.’

“When the knight heard this he was beside himself with rage, grasped his sword, and rushed into the chamber where the child had been sleeping. The hound, on seeing its master, got up, and, although very faint from its wounds, still tried to fawn upon him in its usual way. The knight, who only saw the animal covered with blood, thought that his wife was right. He therefore drew his sword and cut the dog’s head off, but directly he found the child alive and unhurt, and at the same time saw the dead serpent, he understood exactly what had happened, and cried out in despair:—

“ ‘O woe is me, what have I done? In my frantic rashness I have trusted my wife’s word, and have slain my faithful hound who has saved my child’s life.’

“In his despair he broke the sword in two with which he had committed this crime, and resolved, in expiation, to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre; but the affair had so wrought on him that he could find no peace for his soul, but died on his way to Jerusalem, a prey to remorse.

“Such is the fruit of precipitancy,” added Balaam, “so think well before you slay your only son merely upon a charge brought by your wife, for it may be that you will repent as bitterly of this deed as the knight did of his credulity.”

“Be not uneasy,” replied the emperor; “he shall not die to-day.”

By this means the prince’s life was saved for the first day; but when the empress heard that evening that the son was still alive she went to the emperor, and implored him with tears not to trust the people who wished to save the traitor’s life, and in order still further to incense him against his son, she related to him the following story:—

THE WILD BOAR.

“Once upon a time,” said she, “there was an emperor who had a chase filled with all sorts of game which, for his pleasure’s sake, he used to hunt; but among the animals there was a wild boar of such fierceness that it wrought every mischief conceivable, and was, moreover, so dangerous to approach that no one dared attack it. The emperor, therefore, had a proclamation made throughout the whole of his kingdom that the man who could destroy this wild beast should have his daughter to wife, and should be his successor on the throne. Tempting as this offer was, yet no one was found who would venture to attack this furious boar, which continued its ravages undisturbed. At last a poor herdsman resolved to venture on the experiment.

“‘It is pretty certain,’ he said to himself, ‘that this cannot be done by main force, but possibly it will succeed by cunning.’

“With throbbing heart he stole quietly into the chase, and soon caught sight of the boar, which rushed towards him snorting and with eyes aflame. The shepherd naturally took to his heels, and was lucky enough, in the nick of time, to find refuge up an oak tree; but the wild boar had no intention of letting its prey escape. It walked round and round

the tree, waiting until the herdsman should get tired out and fall down. In his extreme peril the poor herdsman suddenly remembered that acorns are the food which swine love best, so he set about collecting as many as he could from the branches, and throwing them down to the boar, who tasted and ate so many that it became glutted and sleepy. In order not to let the herdsman out of its sight, it lay down at the foot of the oak to watch for him; but the herdsman, who was a deep fellow, noticed the boar's sleepiness, and slipped cautiously down the boughs of the tree till he could reach the boar with one hand. Then he began to scratch its neck gently, so that the monster gradually fell asleep. When it no longer noticed anything the herdsman let himself down to the ground as quietly as possible, drew his knife, and stuck it in the boar's heart. And he so won the emperor's daughter and kingdom at the same time.

"Have you understood the meaning of this story?" asked the empress.

"Not exactly, so I must ask you, therefore, to explain it to me."

"You yourself are the powerful boar which no one can resist so far as he makes use of honourable means, and your son is the herdsman who intends by his cunning to deprive you of your life. Take heed that he does not win the day. Do not let yourself be lulled to sleep by his friends' specious words, for, in that case, you are lost."

"Do not be uneasy," said the emperor, "I do not mean to let myself be fooled like the wild boar, and the prince shall die to-morrow."

At early dawn he gave orders that the prince was to be taken to the gallows, but, on the way thither, Lentulus—the second of the wise masters—met the guard, and told them to delay the execution for

awhile as he was about to speak to the king. As they all loved Diocletian, the soldiers made no difficulty about granting his request, and Lentulus then hastened to the palace to try to save his pupil's life.

He greeted the emperor with these words:—

“My lord, I find you are going to have your son put to death merely on a vague accusation. Beware, I pray you, not to put too great reliance on your wife, for your fate might be like that of the Roman who lost his life for that reason. Women are cunning, and it is best not to trust them overmuch.”

“What story is that you are alluding to? I know I have not heard it, so I beg you to tell it me.”

“On one condition, and that is that you will buy my story by giving me one day of your son's life.”

“One day cannot do him much good; but let it be as you propose. He shall die, however, to-morrow.”

On the emperor giving the order for the prince to be taken back to prison, Lentulus began his story.

SHUT OUT.

“There was once upon a time in Rome a man who, in his old age, married a young wife who was much addicted to pleasure, and greatly preferred going out and enjoying herself to sitting at home and keeping her old husband company. Her husband, however, was very strict, and forbade her all pleasures, and those which she determined on procuring she was therefore obliged to steal. She was, however, very cunning, and never at a loss for expedients, so it was not very difficult for her to defeat the old man's vigilance, and she usually managed to steal out at night after he had gone to sleep. At length he could not avoid noticing her rambles, and he made up his mind to punish her. There was a very strict law in

Rome by which every one, whether man or woman, who was caught by the watch abroad in the streets after curfew tolled, was first to be set in the pillory and afterwards put to death, as a warning to others. The husband thought of availing himself of this law, so one night, suspecting that his wife would slink out, he only pretended to go to sleep, and soon perceived his wife getting up and dressing herself and then going out.

“As soon as she was gone he got out of bed quickly, went down to the street door, and locked and bolted it. After that he sat down by the open window to see what his wife would do when she came back and found the house bolted and barred. After some hours he saw her approach the dwelling with cautious tread and try to open the door. For a while he amused himself by watching her vain efforts and her despair; then he called out to her at last:—

“‘Do not trouble yourself needlessly. I have fastened up the door myself and you cannot undo it. Now you can remain outside the whole night, and see what sport there is in it. I shall stay here by the window and see the watch come up and take you, for a wife whose sole thought is enjoying herself, and who steals out of her house at night, deserves no better fate.’

“‘Alas, my darling husband, I do not think you mean to be so cruel as to punish me so severely for such a trifling fault. Open the door now, and henceforward you shall never have any cause to complain of me.’

“‘No, you yourself have chosen to be out, so now take the consequences. The watch will soon be here, and then you will see what will happen.’

“She now began to beseech him more urgently, and though he did not dream of putting his threat into execution, but only to give her a thorough lesson,

he still obstinately refused to open the door. After they had wrangled for a time the wife said:—

“‘I will escape the disgrace you intend to subject me to, and as you show yourself so hard and relentless, I will no longer live. Here, behind this corner, there is a well, and I will drown myself in it, so as not to afford you the pleasure of seeing me in the pillory. Farewell, and may you some day bitterly repent of your cruelty.’

“After saying this she ran away in the direction of the well; but the crafty woman had never, for a single instant, thought of making away with herself. Instead of jumping in, she took a big stone and threw it into the well, so that the water splashed, and the noise was heard as far as the window where her husband was sitting. When he heard the splashing he was beside himself with terror, and could only believe that his wife had carried out her threat. He, therefore, rushed downstairs, opened the door, and ran to the well to rescue the drowning woman; but the wife, who had hid herself behind a column to see the effect of her trick, contrived to steal into the house while her husband was sitting by the edge of the well, in a state of despair, looking down into its depths. Then she barred and locked the door, shot the bolts, and sat by the window in the same place where her husband had been sitting previously. After a time he came back in despair, and was bent on entering his house, but found, to his astonishment, the door locked. On looking up he saw his wife sitting by the window, whereat he rejoiced greatly, and called out to her:—

“‘You cannot think how you frightened me by your trick, but let everything be forgiven for this once, and unlock the door, for it is high time you did.’

“‘No,’ replied the wife, ‘I certainly do not think

of doing that. You can now feel what it is like to be shut out.'

" 'What do you mean?'

" 'Well, I mean to sit at the window, and see the watch seize you, and to-morrow I fancy I shall enjoy myself in seeing what you look like in the pillory.'

" 'You cannot mean this seriously?'

" 'You need have no doubt about that. You want your wives to be continually sitting at home, wearied with your company, but you yourselves do not see any sin in being out all night drinking and carousing with your merry brothers. Stay there, where you are, till curfew rings.'

" 'Oh wife, you never mean to treat me so shamefully. If I have ever been strict with you it has always been for your own good; and if I have ever done you a wrong, I beseech you, for God's sake, to forgive me.'

" 'You talk as instructively as a priest, but that will not avail you. You may now suffer the same fate as that you intended for me.'

" That very moment curfew began to toll, and the watch came and seized him. The soldiers were greatly amazed on recognising him, for he was known all over the town as a quiet and respectable citizen.

" 'How comes it,' said the officer in command, 'that we find you out at such a time of night?'

" The poor citizen thought of answering and explaining how it had happened, but, ere he could get the words out of his mouth, his wife called out:—

" 'It is excellent your catching the old fox in a trap. By daytime, to be sure, he sets himself up for being pious and sedate—the sanctimonious hypocrite; but every night he is out living a loose life among fellows of his own kidney. He shamefully neglects his poor wife, and it would serve him right if he got a sound drubbing.'

“The watch, when they heard this, could not but believe that the man’s own wife spoke the truth, so they did not allow him a chance of defending himself, but dragged him off with them. On the following day he was put in the pillory for the populace to jeer at, and, some hours afterwards, his head fell beneath the axe.”

The emperor heard this story in silence, and, when Lentulus had finished, he exclaimed:—

“She was a wicked and crafty woman to betray her husband like that”.

“Your fate,” replied Lentulus, “might be even worse, were you to find out some day that you had ordered your innocent son to suffer death on a woman’s false accusation.”

“Maybe you are right, and I am grateful to you for having interfered to prevent my letting the sentence be carried out to-day.”

When the empress heard that the execution was again deferred she was beside herself with rage, tore her garments to rags, and bewailed so shrilly that the emperor heard her and went in to pacify her.

“You should not,” said he, “abandon yourself to grief so violently as this; moreover you have, as you know, no reason for doing so.”

“If I did not love you,” said she, “I should have no cause to be miserable, but now, methinks, I must weep and wail, for I well see that your fate will be like that of the father in the story.”

“Well, what happened to him?”

“Wait and you shall hear; and let this story serve you as a warning.”

With these words the empress began the following story:—

“Many years ago there lived in Rome a knight who possessed one son and two daughters. The father troubled himself little about looking after his



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"WENT IN TO PACIFY HER."

property, but allowed it to go to the dogs, and wasted all his time in taking part in tournaments and other sports. He brought up his son in the same way, and the upshot of this way of living was that one day the father found himself reduced to abject poverty.

“‘My son,’ said he, ‘my riches are now gone, and, ere long, we shall lack our daily bread. What shall we do? If we sell our jewels and arms the money will not last long, and, moreover, we shall be looked down upon by everybody. Try and devise some scheme whereby we may be saved.’

“The plan they resolved upon was, unfortunately, not one of the best. The emperor of Rome, who was called Octavian, was a very avaricious warrior, and had gradually collected a great quantity of treasures which he stored in a tower, the strong walls whereof seemed to mock all attempts at robbery. The knight and his son determined to break into it to get possession of the gold, without which they were unable to continue their former style of living. One night, when no one perceived them, they began digging a passage for themselves in the ground under the tower, and succeeded in boring a way to the treasure. After taking as much gold as they could carry away by themselves, they resumed their old life.

“But one day, shortly afterwards, the emperor’s steward came to the tower and saw that a great quantity of gold had been purloined. He at once hastened to the emperor to inform him of this; but he waxed wroth, and shouted to the steward:—

“‘I set you to watch my treasures, and woe betide you if any are missing. You must either make up to me for the loss I have incurred, or else find out who the thief is.’

“With heavy steps the steward walked back to the tower, not knowing what to make out of it. The

more he thought over the matter, the more convinced he was that the thief would not be satisfied with a first visit, but would avail himself a second time of the passage he had dug. He resolved to act upon this probability, and so had a hole dug at the end of the underground passage, and this he filled with pitch. After he had done this he went away, confident that he had not set his trap in vain.

“Everything came about as he had expected. The knight and his son soon squandered all the gold they had stolen, and, as they had managed to break into the tower so easily on the first occasion, they made up their minds to try their fortune again. The father was the first to creep into the narrow, dark passage, and the son followed him. Suddenly the father tumbled into the hole the steward had dug, and stuck in the pitch.

“‘My son,’ cried he, ‘take care that you do not come here, for I am a dead man. I am stuck fast where I am, and cannot get away.’

“The son, to be sure, tried to help him, but could not succeed, whereupon the father said:—

“‘These efforts are fruitless, and cannot succour me, so listen to what I am about to say, and thus both of us may escape dishonour, and one of us at any rate may be saved. Draw your sword and cut off my head, and then no one will know who I am, no suspicion will fall on you, and the honour of our family will be saved.’

“At first the son refused to commit this terrible deed, but, when he reflected that if he did not do it, his father would be executed as a malefactor, and he himself would assuredly share the same fate, to say nothing of his sisters’ honour being irredeemably tarnished on its becoming known that they were daughters of a thief, he found it best to obey his father’s orders. He then drew his sword, cut off the

old knight's head, and afterwards threw it into a fen where nobody could find it.

“On the morrow, when the steward came to the tower and found the headless body, he was not happy in his mind, for he now understood that the thieves were numerous, and that they would afterwards be on the watch to repeat their attempts. Who the dead man was he could not guess, and from him no clue was to be got towards discovering the survivors. In this perplexity he went to the emperor, and related to him all that had happened.

“‘I think there is a way of forcing out the truth,’ said the emperor. ‘Take the dead body and have it dragged through the streets. If you hear weeping and wailing from any house you may be convinced that you have come upon the relatives of the deceased, for they will recognise the thief, and I do not suppose they will be able to disguise their grief at seeing the body exposed to such ignominious treatment.’

“The steward performed the emperor's behest, and, when the mournful procession passed by the old knight's former dwelling, his daughters could not stifle their grief, but burst out into violent lamentations over the wretch that had killed their father. When the soldiers that followed the corpse saw this they rushed into the house to seize the mourners; but the son, who had once saved his own head by slaying his father, managed, on this occasion, to extricate himself from his peril by an heroic expedient. As soon as he heard his sisters' sobs he saw at once what would happen, so he drew his sword and cut a deep wound in his leg, from which the blood gushed forth. When the soldiers came in and asked the cause of the women weeping, the cunning squire answered them thus:—

“‘Alas, I have just wounded myself in the leg, and

that frightened my sisters so much that they suddenly burst out weeping'.

"When the soldiers saw the wound they could not help believing that he had spoken the truth, and went off, after accepting his explanation. The steward then took the dead body, hung it on a gallows, where it remained for a long time, for the son never made any attempt to give his old father honourable burial.

"Such is the gratitude of sons," the empress went on to say, "and your son will not be long before he thinks of taking your life, if, by doing so, he can push his way to the throne."

"It is as you say, I think," replied the emperor; "but I have promised to spare his life for to-day. The reprieve will not avail him much, for to-morrow he shall die."

The morrow came and passed as before. The third master, Cato, visited the emperor just before the execution, and was lucky enough, by what he said, to defer the carrying out of the sentence for that day. The story by which he changed the emperor's mind on this occasion ran as follows:—

THE MAGPIE.

"There once upon a time lived in Rome a man who had got himself a magpie that was a particularly docile creature. The man began gradually to teach the magpie to speak. At first it only repeated what it had heard, but at last it made such progress that it not only told what it had heard, but also what it had seen. Thus the magpie was the best spy one could wish for, and so its owner grew more and more attached to it every day. But if he was fond of the magpie, his wife, on the other hand, was more and more dissatisfied with the talkative creature, for the least thing she did contrary to her husband, the

magpie went up to him at once, and told him everything. It was of no use trying to bribe it with sweets, for the magpie loved its master, and hid nothing from him. Thus the lady had a spy continually over her, and she never succeeded in deceiving its vigilance. Yet, if the magpie was clever, the wife was as cunning as the rest of her sex.

“On one occasion the husband went on a journey, and as soon as he had left the priest came to the house. The lady set out all the delicacies she had to entertain so honoured a guest, and both she and the priest spent a merry evening. The only thing that disturbed her happiness was that her husband could not endure the priest, whom he had strictly forbidden her to receive, and she knew, of course, that it would not be long before the magpie would tell her husband that the priest had been there in his absence and had been richly entertained. In order to be revenged on the troublesome creature, she got her maid-servant, as soon as it was dark, to pour a whole pail of water over the cage in which the bird was sitting, and she herself threw a lot of sand and pebbles over the poor magpie until it lay as if it were dead. The lady now imagined that she was rid of her tormentor; but the magpie recovered towards morning, and then the husband returned home. He went up to the cage at once, and asked the bird what had happened while he had been gone.

“‘Ah,’ said the magpie, ‘many remarkable things have happened. Directly you left the priest came here on a visit, and then, as you may well believe, the larder was ransacked. I have never before seen so many dainties on the table in this house.’

“‘Ah,’ cried the wife, ‘how that wretched creature can lie. Not a single person has been here since you left, and I hope you will believe your wife rather than that lying magpie which is only here to slander me.’

“ ‘Wife,’ replied the husband, ‘never yet has the magpie told an untruth, and I, therefore, put more faith in its word than in yours. But tell me,’ he went on to say, turning to the magpie, ‘has anything else happened?’

“ ‘Oh yes,’ exclaimed the magpie, ‘the priest had hardly gone before it began to rain just as if the heavens were opened, and one hailstorm after another fell upon me till I thought my last hour had come.’

“ ‘Listen to that, now,’ exclaimed the wife, who at once made out that the wretched creature was lying. ‘I do not think there has ever been so beautiful and starry a night as the last; not a cloud to be seen in all the sky. The lying creature speaks of rain and showers of hail. This story, too, is about as true as that it invented just now about the priest.’

“ The husband, who had been travelling all night, was aware that his wife had told the truth, for not a drop of rain had fallen, and he could not understand the shower of water to which the faithful creature had been subjected, and he was seized with a sudden fit of rage against the poor magpie which he now thought was trying to deceive him.

“ ‘Wife,’ said he, ‘I now perceive that the magpie is but slandering you, and I was wrong to trust all its lies; but it shall never again cause dissension between us.’

“ With these words he opened the cage, and twisted the magpie’s neck.

“ Do you understand the meaning of this story?” asked Cato when he had finished.

“ Do not be uneasy,” said the emperor. “I am not going to let myself be fooled like the man you have just told me about. My son shall not die before I have inquired more closely into the matter.”

Then he gave orders that the execution was to be

postponed till another day ; but, in the evening, the empress resumed her influence over him.

“The prince is not punished yet,” said she, “and I suspect he never will be, for you allow yourself to be led unresistingly by those wily masters who are your son’s accomplices. However, I should like to tell you a story about an emperor who allowed himself to be deceived in just the same way.”

“Let me hear it.”

“Well, pay heed to my words.”

MERLIN.

“There was once upon a time a mighty emperor of the name of Herod, who, just like yourself, allowed himself to be guided by seven wise masters. He never ventured to undertake anything without first seeking their advice, and at last it came about that they ruled his kingdom, for the poor emperor was allowed to know nothing except what the seven rascals thought fit to tell him. It was a miserable time for his subjects, for Herod had been a good and righteous emperor while he followed the dictates of his own conscience ; but these new lords, who had deprived him of his power, tortured and plagued his subjects in every way, and no one could get audience with them to proffer their complaints without bribing them with at least a pound weight of gold. To prevent Herod perceiving their knaveries, they cast a sickness on him so that he lost his sight, and was compelled to allow himself to be led like a child in everything by the rogues. On one occasion, when he was lamenting to his wife, who was a clever woman, the miserable fate that had befallen him, she replied :—

“‘My lord, I have a suggestion to offer you. If these masters are really as wise as you think, and as they profess to be, then order them to heal you within

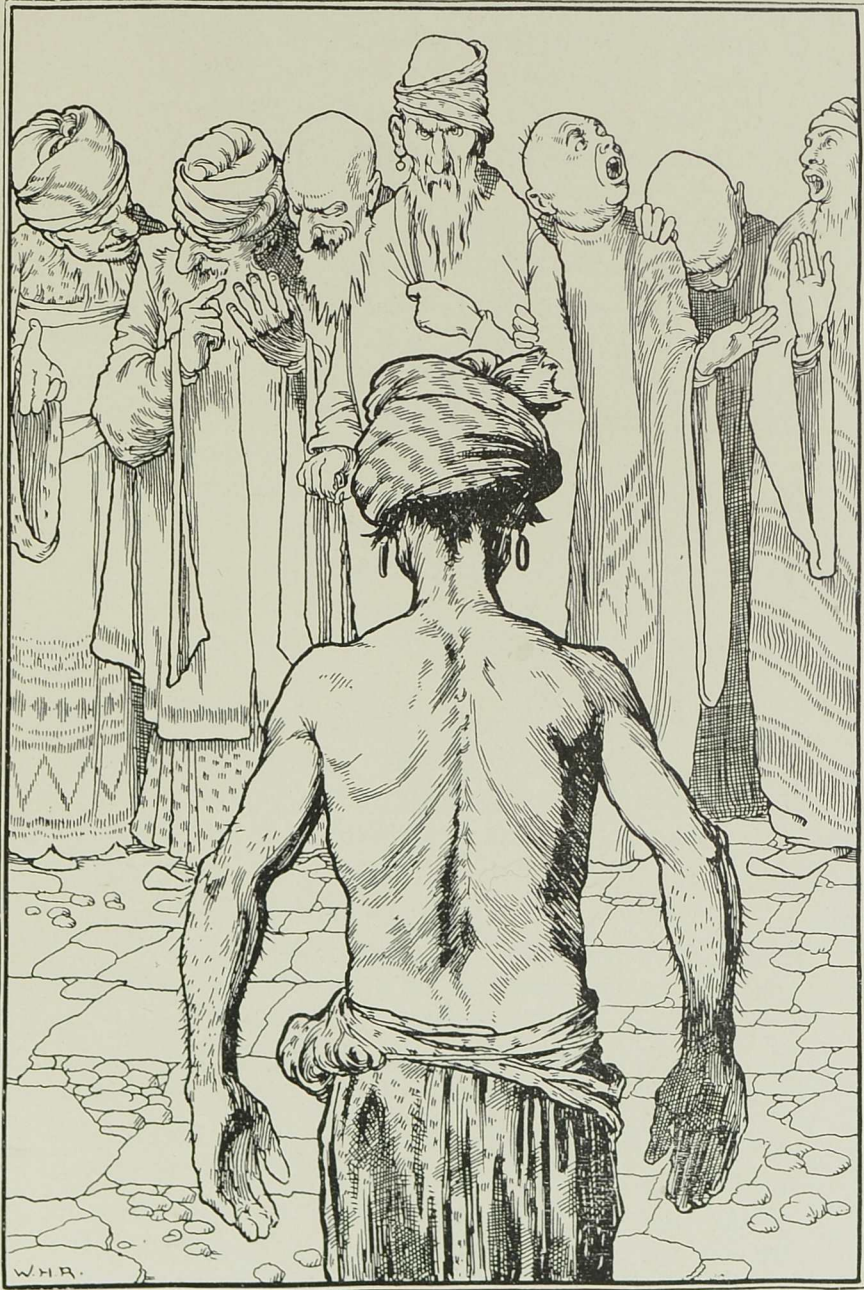
a fortnight, and tell them that it will be as much as their lives are worth to disobey. This threat is not too severe, for if they can help you and will not, they certainly deserve death. If they are willing, but have not the power, they ought to be punished with scarcely less severity for having falsely boasted of a wisdom that they do not possess. Likely enough, they may be able to restore your sight, and the fear of death will, I daresay, make them ready and willing to make use of their power.'

"This advice seemed good to the emperor, and he summoned the seven wise masters and strictly enjoined them to get his sight back within fourteen days, if they valued their lives. When the seven impostors heard these words they were exceedingly frightened, partly because they perceived that their power over the emperor was not so sure as formerly, and partly because they were able, by their magic arts, to deprive him of sight, but were not equally confident of being able to restore it to him by the same means. They met directly afterwards to deliberate, but not one of them could tell what should be done.

"The fortnight was very nearly over, but they had not yet found any remedy. One evening as they were wandering through the town very downcast and talking about the matter, a man approached and offered them the customary pound of gold, requesting them to interpret a dream he had had the previous night; but at that very moment a boy ran up and cried to the man:—

"'Save your gold. I will interpret your dream for nothing. Now tell me did you not dream that a spring gushed out in your garden, and all your friends and relations came and drank of its waters?'

"'That was exactly my dream; but what does it signify, pray?'



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"A MAN APPROACHED."

“ ‘It signifies that there is a great treasure buried in your garden in the spot where you dreamed that the spring gushed forth. Now take a spade and begin to dig, and you will see whether I have told the truth or not.’

“The man hurried off to his garden immediately, followed by the seven masters and the young interpreter of dreams, whose name was Merlin. His spade had hardly delved more than a few inches into the ground before it struck against a great, heavy, iron chest which, when it was opened, he found to be full of gold and other treasure.

“When the masters saw this they at once resolved to make use of Merlin’s powers, and asked him whether he believed himself capable of curing the emperor.

“ ‘Maybe I can,’ replied the boy, ‘but I must see him first.’

“They, therefore, conducted him to the castle, and brought him before Herod, saying:—

“ ‘We have a young lad with us who will cure you’.

“ ‘Do you promise to do this?’ asked Herod.

“ ‘Yes, my lord,’ answered the boy, ‘but, in the first place, I must speak to you privately.’

“Herod then led the boy into his bedroom, and again asked him how he was to be restored to health.

“ ‘Here, under your bed,’ answered the boy, ‘there stands a boiling kettle with seven dents in it, and as long as these are there, you will always remain blind. It was the seven wise masters that placed it there, and, by means of it, bewitched away your sight, in order to plague and oppress your poor subjects the more readily. There is only one means of getting rid of those dents, and that is by beheading the seven masters. One dent disappears with every head that falls, and, when the last of those scoundrels is dead, your sight will be restored. You must not, however,

lose much time, for if you delay many days before carrying this out you will be incurable, and your sight will be for ever lost.'

"The emperor had the floor under his bed raised, and found that Merlin had spoken truly. He had, therefore, no doubt that the boy had proposed an efficacious remedy, so he had one of the masters at once beheaded, whereupon, that very instant, one dent disappeared, and, when the last of the rogues was slain, he got his eyesight back again.

" 'Now,' said Merlin, 'you must go and show yourself to your subjects, so that they may see that you are alive.'

"The emperor rode out with Merlin at his side, and was greeted in every quarter with loud shouts of exultation, for all were glad to see they had got the old emperor back, and that the seven knaves who had deceived him and plagued them had at last got their deserts.

"Thus," said the empress, "was Herod saved from the seven wise masters who had been cozening him. He, however, listened to the advice of his clever wife, whilst you lend your ears to those who are bent on your destruction. You despise your wife's warnings, but the result will probably be what your weakness deserves."

"Do not be alarmed," said the emperor. "Tomorrow the prince shall die, and his teachers shall bear him company."

"Only keep your word in this," said the empress.

But on the morrow the irresolute king was again persuaded to alter his purpose, for, just when the prince was about to be led to the place of execution, the fourth master approached the emperor and said:—

"You seem to me to be acting most foolishly in having your son put to death for the sake of a woman. A woman's word and a woman's love are a weak foun-

dation to build on. She will love you to-day and will forget you to-morrow for another, and your wife, I take it, is not much more to be relied on than the Countess of Lothringen."

"I do not know her story," said the emperor, "please tell me it."

"With pleasure, and may you derive instruction from it."

THE COUNTESS OF LOTHRINGEN.

"Once upon a time there lived in Lothringen a count who loved his wife so dearly that he did not believe he could live without her, and she returned his love so ardently that no one had ever seen a woman so devoted to her husband. It came to pass, however, that the count caught a severe sickness, whereof, in course of time, he died. His widow was naturally quite inconsolable in her grief, and not only followed him to the graveyard, shedding tears, as other widows do, but sat down by the grave, and would not suffer herself to be led away from it on any pretext. To all expostulations she only gave one answer, and that was that she meant to stay there till she pined to death, after which she desired to be buried beside her husband, so as never to be separated from him again. Her friends and relatives then came and said to her:—

"‘Listen to reason and give over sorrowing, for you are still young, and you may yet get a husband who will console you for the one you have lost.’

"But she only shook her head and refused to be comforted. However, when she could in no wise be induced to leave the grave, in order to prevent her freezing or starving to death, they built up round her a sort of chapel, brought fuel, meat and drink, and then left her alone, sitting with her husband's coffin

before her, and spending the day and night in weeping and lamentation. The report of her fidelity was spread far and wide, and many a married man quoted her wifely love as an example to his own spouse.

“ Shortly afterwards a robber chanced to be caught and hung. To prevent the criminal’s relatives from stealing the corpse from the gallows a watch was stationed at the place of execution, with strict injunctions to keep a careful look-out, for if the robber’s body was stolen the soldier would be hanged instead.

“ When night came on, the soldier tried to keep watch as well as he could, but it was bitterly cold, and he began to freeze. Seeing a light glimmering at some distance off, and thinking it was a peasant’s hut, he went there to get something to warm him. The gallows, however, was erected close to the churchyard, and the light he saw came from the chapel wherein the unfortunate countess was sitting. The soldier knocked and was admitted.

“ First he only asked to be allowed to warm himself, and the widow, without uttering a word, bade him take a seat before the fire which had been kindled for her in the chapel. After the soldier had warmed himself he began to think it would be just as well to get something to eat, so he, therefore, asked the mourner if she had any bread to give him. This request was also granted, and the soldier got both meat and drink. The wine made him more talkative, and he at last succeeded in getting the widow to give up her silence and answer his questions. He was a droll fellow, and that was the reason why the widow could not help sometimes smiling at his jests. When the conversation had got started the soldier suddenly asked her how so young and lovely a woman could at her time of life think about death; life still lay before her with all its pleasures and delights. The widow, on hearing this, became all of a sudden serious, and

replied that all hope was now over for her, and that her only wish on earth was soon to rest beside her dead husband.

“The soldier, however, was obstinate, and would not drop the subject to which he had led the conversation, but began again to talk about her youth and beauty, commended her fidelity, and tried to show the folly of such an immoderate grief.

“‘Think, too,’ said he, ‘you have duties towards others. You have made the dead man the best wife he could wish for, and he was happy in your love as long as he lived; but, as you are such a beautiful woman, you are capable of making a husband happy, and why will you not do this? It is only stupid and ugly women who ought to say they will not marry, for by this they dissemble the fact that nobody will have them.

“‘Beautiful women do not act in this way, and when a widow remains unwed I’ll venture to wager a hundred to one that it is only because she is so old or so ugly that no one will dare to have her. Now if you were to follow the example of these antiquated matrons people will most certainly believe, in the course of a few years, that the poor Countess of Lothringen did not so much grieve for her husband as for the fact that nobody wanted to rescue her from her state of widowhood.’

“Neither the soldier’s flatteries nor his efforts at exciting her vanity failed in their effect, and her answers grew more and more lame; but suddenly, while they were talking, a noise was heard from the direction of the gallows. The soldier seized his lance at once and rushed out, alas, too late, for when he reached the gallows he found it empty; the robber’s body had been carried off. He then remembered with terror the punishment that awaited him, and did not know what he was to do. Downcast and

bewildered, he returned to the chapel, and there he told the widow what had happened to him, and asked her if she knew of any means of saving him. The latter, who had meanwhile been pondering over the soldier's words, replied:—

“‘I think you were right in what you said just now, and I will follow your advice. I will save you if you will promise to take me to wife.’

“‘The soldier who did not know how he was to get himself out of the fix he was in, and, moreover, was pleased enough to have the beautiful widow, promised this cheerfully, whereupon the widow said:—

“‘One corpse is much like another. If you hang a body on the gallows the chances are that no one inquires closely as to whose body it was when alive. I, therefore, propose that we take my dead husband out of his coffin, and hang him up instead of the robber. That could not do him any hurt, you know, for he is dead, and could just as well hang there as be lying here, and you would be saved, and nobody would notice the exchange.’

“‘When she said this she put her proposal into execution, and in a short time her first husband had the noose round his neck, and was hanging in the robber's former place.

“‘See,’ said she, ‘all I have done for love of you. Now keep your promise and make me your wife.’

“‘No,’ answered he; ‘I have no mind to do that now I have seen how much your constancy is worth, and I have no mind to expose myself to the danger of being hanged in my turn for the benefit of a third. I, therefore, will keep my word just as much as you kept your troth to the dead man, and with that you must be content.’

“‘With this unceremonious leave-taking she had to return to her chapel-tomb to bewail her own indiscretion; but luckily, there was not so much lost, for

the soldier took good care not to disclose the true state of the case, and the widow had no other choice than to sit and mourn before the empty coffin. The fame of her steadfast love increased day by day, and the husband who hung and swung on the gallows said nothing which could alter that belief."

The emperor could not help laughing at this story, but the master said :—

"Such is woman's troth ; so see that you do not put too great faith in your wife's word, and deprive your son of life ere you have carefully ascertained whether he is guilty or not".

"Your words," answered the king, "make me reflect, and I will, therefore, defer making up my mind until to-morrow. Let the prince be taken back to the tower, there to await my further orders."

But the empress was not satisfied at this, but upbraided the emperor violently for having allowed himself to be again befooled by the prince's masters.

"It will end with you," said she, "as it did with Crassus, who likewise trusted the advice of his wise masters."

"How did it end with him ?"

"Wait, and you shall hear."

VIRGIL'S TOWER.

"Many years ago," she said, "there lived in Rome a mighty magician whose name was Virgil, but he, quite unlike others, did not employ his arts to injure, but only to help, his fellow-creatures. He kindled a great pyre outside the gates of Rome, so that the poor had always access to warmth, and he made a magic fountain with a constant stream of fresh water, and wrought many other artifices, the most wonderful of which was a tower that he built. On the top of this tower there stood a mirror, and in

this mirror people could see directly if any of the neighbouring kingdoms were devising any conspiracies against Rome. As soon as a hostile army approached Rome this was seen at once, depicted in the mirror, and the Romans, consequently, could never be taken unawares. But not satisfied with this masterpiece, Virgil placed beside the mirror a bronze man, who held in his hand a spear. If a hostile attack was apprehended from any country, they had merely to point the spear of the bronze man in the direction of the hostile kingdom, and, without a single Roman drawing his sword, the enemy's army was somehow or other destroyed, either through civil war or through the outbreak of some unforeseen natural forces.

“ The emperor of Rome, whose name was Crassus, prized this tower above everything, and even understood how to turn the bronze man's spear to profit. Being excessively avaricious, his whole thought was how he could extend his own kingdoms and subject those of his neighbours. This was easy enough when this marvellous tower was completed. He irritated the other princes in every conceivable way, so that they at length grew wroth and began to make war on him ; but they had hardly got an army together before Crassus directed the bronze man's spear at them, and then the enemy's army was destroyed by flood, earthquake, water-spout or lightning, upon which Crassus immediately took possession of the defenceless country, and appropriated the treasures of the dead prince. By these infamous means he was, as you may suppose, universally hated by all his neighbours, but so great was their fear of the magic tower that none of the neighbouring princes dared take any measures, but submitted to the shameful treatment through which Crassus tried to incite them to war.

“ Among them there was one, the prince of Apulia, whose honour Crassus had deeply wounded, and it was only with great difficulty that he could restrain his rage. Now, at his palace there were three wise men, who, perceiving the prince's sadness, approached him and said :—

“ ‘ My lord, would you like us to help you to destroy Crassus's tower ? ’

“ ‘ Should I like it ? No one could do me a greater service than that of wreaking my revenge on that greedy and overbearing scoundrel. ’

“ ‘ Then give us four sacks of gold, and then you will see that the avaricious Crassus will betray the overbearing Crassus. ’

“ The prince did not hesitate to give them the gold they wanted, and with it they departed to Rome. As soon as they reached the city they secretly buried a sack of gold before each of the city gates, and then they presented themselves before the Emperor Crassus, to whom they gave themselves out to be wandering soothsayers who had heard talk of the emperor's wisdom, and, for that reason, desired employment with him. Crassus, who liked to have soothsayers and wizards in his service, made no difficulty about giving them a place in his palace, and, in a short time, they insinuated themselves into his highest favour. One day one of them said to him :—

“ ‘ My lord, I dreamed a strange dream last night, which can have no other meaning than that there is a great treasure buried in your kingdom ’.

“ ‘ Where do you think this treasure is ? Do you know anything about it ? If so, we must begin searching for it at once. ’

“ ‘ I think I know that too, but I am a poor man, and I should not like to go quite unrewarded if the treasure should be really discovered. If you will

promise to give me half the gold I find, I shall be happy to show you the place, and give you the other half of the treasure.'

" 'Very well, I agree to your proposal, but let us hasten so that no one else may forestall us.'

"The emperor, who could hardly master his impatience, hastened, under the guidance of the three soothsayers, to that city gate where the first sack of gold was buried, and, naturally, they had not long to seek before they recovered the gold. Crassus was now delighted beyond all measure, and kept, though with aching heart, his promise to give the soothsayer one half of it.

"On the following morning the second soothsayer came to him and said :—

" 'My lord, I too have dreamed about a great treasure. Will you, on the same condition as yesterday, help me to find it?'

" 'Willingly,' replied Crassus, 'only persevere with your good dreams, and there will be no squabbling about terms when it comes to realising your interpretation.'

"Crassus, thoroughly delighted, followed the soothsayer to the second city gate, and there he found a fresh sack full of the metal he prized so highly.

"On the third day, when he met the last of the soothsayers, he called out to him from a distance :—

" 'Well, perhaps you, too, had a dream last night?'

" 'Perhaps I have,' answered the soothsayer with a smile.

" 'Good! Soothsayers ought always to be like that, and every soothsayer who does not spend his nights in dreaming of treasures is an idler who deserves to be flayed alive. So you, too, have dreamed about a sack of gold?'

" 'That I have. But you know the conditions: we are to have equal shares.'

“ ‘Agreed ; but now for the treasure.’

“ The same thing happened as before, and Crassus had the joy of carrying half a sack of gold to his well-filled treasury. His faith in the ability of the three soothsayers to find treasure was now unbounded, so he was angry and unhappy when he met the soothsayers on the fourth day, and none of them had dreamed anything the previous night. They certainly promised to do their best, but the succeeding nights were equally unlucky, and Crassus then began to reproach them, in wrathful words, for their idleness, giving them to understand that he would stop their board and lodging unless they gave a better account of themselves.

“ When the three knaves had, by these means, gained the confidence and excited the cupidity of Crassus they proceeded to take the last step by going up to him and saying :—

“ ‘My lord, we dreamed again last night, and, curiously enough, we all three had the same dream, which seems to go to show that we have not made a mistake. We have dreamed of an immense treasure, but, before we tell you anything more about it, you must first promise solemnly to share half of it with us on the same conditions as before.’

“ ‘That I solemnly promise you ; so now tell me your dream without more ado, for I am burning with impatience.’

“ ‘Our dream was this : Right under the tower on which the mirror and the bronze man stands we saw a treasure the like of which nobody on earth has ever beheld, which seemed to us so huge that it would need all the horses in Rome for weeks to carry it to your treasury.’

“ ‘Was that what you all dreamed ?’

“ ‘We have told you so.’

“ ‘Then I must believe you ; but you must know

that this is a very serious matter indeed, for you are aware of the singular properties of this wonderful tower, and that the Roman people will never suffer any tampering with it on any consideration whatever, for the safety of the city depends on it.'

" 'There is no real necessity to damage the tower in any way if we use ordinary care in our excavation. The tower itself, of course, can remain as it is; all we have got to do is to dig a passage to the treasure.'

" 'I trust that such may be done, but, in any case, it would never do to dig by the tower for people to see you or there would be a revolt. You must steal there secretly by night. I shall take good care that you are not disturbed.'

"The three traitors did not require to be told this twice, but, directly night came on, they started for the doomed tower, and set about destroying the foundations as thoroughly as they could. When they had been working away for some hours the tower was already tottering towards its fall. Then they poured pitch and tar into the underground passages they had excavated, set light to it all, and then made their escape as soon as they could. They had hardly got beyond the gates of the city before they heard an awful din. It was the enchanted tower tumbling down, crushing in its fall the mirror and bronze man into a thousand atoms.

"No sooner had the report of this reached the neighbouring kingdoms than the people armed themselves and besieged Rome in order to revenge the indignities they had had to put up with for so many years. The Romans had not only to trust to their own resources, but, as soon as they got to know of the cause of the tower's destruction, they were so furiously enraged with their avaricious emperor that they burst into his palace and dragged him out into the street. To punish him for his avarice they

poured molten gold down his throat, and thus the death of Crassus was brought about through the faith he had put in the lies of the three wise men.

"The only difference between you and Crassus," the empress went on to say, "is that he listened to three scoundrels whereas you let yourself be fooled by seven. But I wash my hands of it, as I have warned you."

"No misfortune has happened yet," said the emperor, "and to defer a resolution is not the same as breaking it. My son shall die—that I have promised you once for all—and to-morrow shall be his last day."

When morning dawned the fifth master approached him and said:—

"You have again given orders that your son is to be slain. I am astonished that you, who are a wise man, should allow yourself to be guided by a woman who is at once capricious and unstable. Camillus acted more wisely than that."

"Who was he?"

"He was a Roman citizen whose story I will tell you if you promise me to defer the execution for another day."

"I have delayed it now for so many days that I think I can well delay it for another. But now let me hear your story."

THE TRIAL OF PATIENCE.

"Camillus was a rich and respected citizen of this town. He had long remained unmarried, but at last he fell in love with a young girl, and, after a short courtship, made her his wife. She was very beautiful, but thoughtless and capricious, like other rich and idle women, and although her husband did all he could to satisfy her, yet she was, nevertheless, often displeased and given to lamenting that he did

not love her if he did not immediately grant her all her unreasonable wishes. At last she got it into her head that he loved another, and then she went to complain to her mother about it.

“ ‘Try him,’ said her mother, ‘by giving him some considerable vexation. If he bears it patiently it will be a sure proof that he loves you and no one else.’

“ ‘That is a good idea, and I will try it at once.’

“ Not far from his house Camillus had a beautiful garden which he greatly prized, and in it there grew a certain tree which he valued more than all the rest, and had on that account ordered his gardener to tend it so carefully that not the least hurt should befall it. On one occasion he went away, and his wife, directly he was absent, walked into the garden, called to the gardener, and ordered him to collect fuel ere his master returned. He did as he had been told, but, when he came with the wood, the wife was dissatisfied and said :—

“ ‘This will not do. These trees neither give warmth nor shed perfume. Cut this one down instead’—and she pointed to the one that Camillus liked best—‘for that seems to me to be the best.’

“ ‘My lady,’ answered the gardener, ‘you must surely know that my master likes this tree more than all the rest, and has told me to take especial care of it. I dare not cut it down merely for fire-wood.’

“ ‘You must do what I tell you, and do not trouble yourself about what may come afterwards. I will take the responsibility upon myself.’

“ The gardener had no choice but to obey her order, and the majestic tree was cut down. When Camillus came home and his wife told him what she had done, he exclaimed :—

“ ‘Wife, wife, did you not know that this tree

was dearer to me than all the rest? How could you then make me so unhappy?’

“Then she began to cry, and said:—

“‘Alas, that you should take it so much to heart! My only thought was to afford you pleasure, and I, therefore, fancied you would like to have a fire made of this tree. But it is ever thus—I can never please you.’

“‘Calm yourself,’ said he. ‘You meant well, and I was wrong to be angry. Let bygones be bygones, and we will think no more about the matter.’

“Then he patted her cheeks in a friendly way, and things went on well for a while; but it was not long before her old whims came back, and she again went to her mother for advice.

“‘Try him once again,’ said her mother, ‘and see if his patience still lasts.’

“The daughter determined to do so. Now, Camillus had a hound of which he was very fond, and which always followed him about. One evening, when Camillus and his wife were sitting in front of the fire, the hound, which had been lying at his master’s feet, jumped on the bed and laid himself down on a costly scarlet coverlet. The wife got up quite quietly, took a sharp knife, and stabbed it in the neck before Camillus could prevent her, and immediately it gasped and died. Then Camillus rushed up, this time in a great rage, and cried out:—

“‘Are you quite out of your senses to slay my best hound before my eyes?’

“‘So your dirty wet hounds are to soil my bed and destroy my precious quilt without my having a right to punish them?’

“‘I do not mind your punishing them, but you cannot call it fit punishment to kill a hound for a fault which deserved nothing more than a blow with a stick.’

“‘Now I see how it is,’ said she. ‘I am of no account in your eyes, and you value a dog’s life more than mine. If it had bitten me to death you certainly would not have acted so hastily. A time, however, will come when you will repent of your cruelty, and be ready to give all your hounds to have me back again.’

Then she began to sob and bewail her lot, and the end of it was that Camillus begged her pardon for his hastiness, and said he was convinced she had killed the hound merely out of concern for his household goods. It was a long time, however, before she showed a good-humoured countenance, although at last she became pacified, and ceased worrying herself with her old suspicions; but after a few months they came back again, and she went and complained to her mother for the third time.

“‘Try him once more,’ said she, ‘and this time choose something really difficult. If he stands the trial you need trouble yourself no more. Any other man would have lost patience long before this.’

“‘I have thought of testing him on Christmas day, which is not far off. Then we shall have many strangers, knights and squires coming from all parts of the country to us. When they have sat down to table I shall drag the tablecloth on to the floor, and see what he will do then.’

“‘Try that,’ said her mother. ‘That plan seems to me to be infallible.’

“On Christmas day many people came; the gentlemen sat at one end of the table and the ladies at the other, and the hostess sat in their midst. Bread was placed before each guest, and great goblets of wine were laid on the table. As soon as the meat was served, the wife hastily laid hold of the cloth and drew it towards her, whereby all the wine was spilt and all the victuals fell to the ground and were spoilt.

“ ‘I crave your pardon,’ she exclaimed, ‘I only wanted to take my bunch of keys which was lying on the table, and, as I did so, I happened to disturb the cloth, and that caused the accident.’

“ Her husband only turned red and looked at her savagely, but he said not a word. After a little while he mastered himself and turned to the servants, saying quietly: ‘Lay a clean cloth, and go and see if there is any other food to be found’. Luckily the larder was well furnished, so another cloth was soon laid on the table and loaded with meat and drink. The guests soon forgot the mishap which had marked the beginning of the banquet, and the feast went on amid joy and mirth until evening, when the guests departed. Directly Camillus and his wife were alone together he sent a message for a leech. When the leech arrived he said:—

“ ‘My wife has been ill for a long time, and I am afraid that her blood has mounted to her brain, so please bleed her and restore her by that means to health’.

“ It was now the wife’s turn to be frightened. She wept and protested that she was perfectly well, and begged to be spared.

“ ‘*You* well?’ retorted her husband. ‘You are mistaken, my love, if you imagine that a woman in full possession of her senses could act as you do. I have never seen surer signs of a disordered brain. Do not attempt to resist, but resign yourself with a good grace. When we have drawn that overflow of blood from you, you will, I think, be calmer.’

“ Then the leech laid hold of her left arm and opened the veins in it. Her tears were of no avail, and the blood ran till she changed colour.

“ ‘Now we will take the right arm,’ said her husband, ‘for I wish her to be thoroughly cured.’

“ The poor creature was hardly able to show further resistance, and, after being bled on the other

arm, she was so exhausted that she could scarcely drag herself to bed with the help of the others. When she was put to bed her husband bent over her and said :—

“ ‘ Evil must be driven out by evil. Do you think you are now completely restored to health so as not to be subject to a fresh attack of madness ? ’

“ ‘ No,’ she replied, ‘ I shall never get that again, for I am quite cured.’

“ It was thus that Camillus acted,” the wise master went on to say, “ and perhaps you would have acted judiciously if you had cured your wife by the same means. A man ought not to be governed by a woman’s whims, for if he does he will come to misfortune in the long run. He should first find out for himself and then act.”

“ That is what I am doing,” said the emperor, “ and no one can charge me with having made too hasty a resolution. I certainly listen to what the empress has to say, but I make up my mind myself as to how I shall act. Let the execution, however, be put off for the present.”

Nevertheless the resolution which the emperor had now come to was not very lasting. Hardly had he been alone with the empress before her words made him hesitate.

“ Ah,” she said, “ now I understand what those impostors are about. The only one who loves you and tries to protect your life is your wife, and that is why they are taking all the pains they can to disparage and make light of woman’s loyalty. There is scarcely any crime of which they fail to accuse woman. They say she is whimsical, false and selfish, and you naturally believe all their stories ; my words have no weight with you, and thus they have an opportunity of putting their infamous plans into execution. Such stories as theirs are only invented

by those who fear the self-sacrificing loyalty of woman, which has often confounded man's false calculations. They have taken good care, I ween, not to tell you anything of women who have remained steadfast, and, therefore, I shall tell you the story of

“THE ASH GIRL.

“In Brittany there dwelt a knight in bygone times who was married to a woman whose evil tongue seldom spared a neighbour. If she could not say anything right out disparaging the knights' wives in her part of the country, she tried at any rate to make them ridiculous, and her sharp tongue always came to the help of her perversity. Not far from her there lived another lady who had a great many children, and over their number her neighbour was wont to make merry. Now it came to pass that the lady with the many children on one occasion had twins, and then the sneering at her began in good earnest, for her neighbour said so many sarcastic and venomous things about her, that the poor lady and her twins became a jest all over the country-side. Retribution, however, was at hand. She who had so freely scoffed and jeered at the other, had twins herself one day, and, when she found that out, you may be sure she was not delighted, for she justly feared having all her sarcasms paid back with interest, and becoming as much a laughing-stock as the person to whom she had been so unmerciful. To escape this unpleasantness there was only one expedient possible, and that was to expose one of the children so that nobody should find out anything about twins having been born. Her dread of the venomous tongues of the neighbourhood was greater than her love for her children. She, therefore, determined to get rid of one of the two little daughters she had got.

She handed the child over to a girl in whom she could trust, and the latter, one dark night, went to a wood that was a considerable distance from the castle, and there laid the little girl under an ash tree, where the wild beasts might easily put an end to its fragile existence if hunger did not first do so. Although the girl and her mistress were convinced that the little baby would perish in the forest, yet they were loth to leave it without some sign by which it might be recognised. When the maid was starting from the castle the châtelaine fastened a valuable gold ring round the child's arm, and gave the maid a beautifully embroidered quilt wherein to wrap the girl when she hid it in the wood. This the maid did, and then rode off leaving the baby in the wild wood.

"But Providence watched over the abandoned infant. Near the place where the maid exposed the child there was a convent of nuns to which certain pious women had withdrawn for the purpose of spending their lives in pious exercises and charity. On the morning following the child's exposure some of the nuns were walking out in the wood for recreation, and reached the ash tree at the foot of which the little girl was lying.

"‘Just look,’ exclaimed one of them, ‘there is a bundle lying under the old ash tree. What ever can it contain?’

"Urged by curiosity they went up to it, opened the coverlet, and found the sweetest little girl you could imagine inside it. The good nuns were at once amazed and distressed.

"‘What shall we do,’ said they, ‘for we cannot take the child with us to the convent, and still less can we leave it here in the forest?’

"‘But why cannot we take the child with us to the convent?’ said one of them. ‘We ought to exercise

charity towards the weak and helpless, and it would be hard to find, methinks, a more helpless being than this poor little creature. I propose, then, that we adopt the child and make it our own. If we bring it up in our convent I fancy it will be a source of joy to us. The valuable armlet the child wears, and this costly coverlet, tell me that she is of noble birth. Some day, very likely, she will recover her parents, and resume the station in life to which it has pleased God to call her, and then they will be grateful to us for what we have done.'

"The others thought this suggestion excellent, and the nuns consequently made up their minds to adopt the child as their own. They did not give it any name, but, as the little girl had been found under an ash tree, they all called her the Ash Girl, and they carefully preserved the armlet and quilt, in the hope that some day these might prove useful in discovering the foundling's parentage.

Meanwhile the Ash Girl grew into a young maiden and became fairer and lovelier day by day. She was not only beautiful, but so good and tractable that the nuns were well repaid for the good deed they had done. It was, therefore, not surprising that she became the pet of all, for she had a kind word for every one, and tried to make herself generally helpful.

"Close to the convent there towered a mighty stronghold owned by Buren of Dalen, a young count who enjoyed a high reputation for lofty lineage and chivalrous prowess in all the country-side. In his hunting excursions into the forest he now and then came across the Ash Girl, and entered into conversation with her, and in the course of their talk he received from her such clever and thoughtful answers to his questions that he soon felt it absolutely necessary to meet her daily, and the poor Ash Girl, who from the very first moment had been fascinated by the

young count's courteous ways, soon perceived that she could not live without him. Every day as the count came riding up to the old ash tree, where they kept their tryst, she was there to meet him. One day he said to her:—

“‘My good girl, you see how hard it is for me to be away from you, and what pleasure it is for me to hasten hither to meet you. The days seem barren and dreary when you are absent, and I know not what to do with myself. I have, therefore, one boon to crave at your hands. Abandon your convent and accompany me to my castle, so that you may ever stay with me.’

“‘Ah,’ said she, ‘you know that your will is law to me, and I would gladly do the utmost in my power to give you pleasure. I am fully aware that the good nuns, whom I have to thank for so much, will grieve if I abandon them, and, it may be, that I shall be acting wrongly in so doing; but my heart tells me that it is you I ought to follow.’

“‘My poor Ash Girl, I thank you for the kindness you are showing me, but there is one thing I must say to you at once. I know you love me, and that my love for you is great; but you can never be my wife. Beautiful and good as you are, you are nevertheless a foundling whose birth no one knows, and my relations will never suffer me to choose other than a knight's daughter for my wife.’

“‘I do not wish it. I only want to be near you, see you every day, and talk to you whenever you please. My happiness does not ask for much.’

“‘Well and good. Sit on my horse in front of me, and then let us ride to my castle.’

“‘She obeyed, and even there she had the good luck to win the hearts of all through her goodness and modest demeanour. She regarded herself in the light of a servant, and did everything to fulfil the

slightest wishes of the young count. Thus several years passed away, and nothing occurred to mar her happiness. Every day she used to meet the count, and never an unkind word passed between them. One day, however, she noticed him looking uneasy and distressed.

“‘What ails you?’ she asked.

“‘Alas,’ he replied, ‘what I have long been fearing has now come to pass. My vassals and my relatives are all insisting on my marrying some knight’s daughter so as to provide myself with an heir to my property. I have for a long time refused, but now I can refuse no longer, and that unfortunate step has to be taken. God knows what this will cost me for your sake and mine.’

“When the Ash Girl heard this she turned pale and felt as if her heart would break, but she controlled her feelings, and said, with her usual calm and gentle voice:—

“‘Methinks they wish you well, so you must follow their advice. Think not of me. I have never indulged the hope of becoming your wife, and have wished for nothing but to be your servant. If your young wife will keep me as such in her house, I shall be pleased to stay; but if she will not, well, I have been so happy in past years that that happiness will suffice me for life.’

“With these words she turned away and left the room in order to hide the tears that fell in spite of her; but, when she went among the other servants, no one perceived in her any trace of the sufferings she had undergone, and she was even brisker than the rest in assisting in the preparations for the young count’s wedding. With her own hands she adorned his bridal chamber, and felt she could not deck it richly enough to please the woman who, nevertheless, was about to rob her of all the happiness she had.

“The trumpets that announced the entrance of

the wedding party into the castle-yard were already sounding, and she cast a last glance at the bridal chamber to see if everything was in readiness. Her eyes happened to rest on the coverlet that lay spread over the marriage bed, and it did not seem to her to be beautiful enough. Then she remembered the gold-embroidered silken coverlet in which she had been wrapped when laid as a newly-born babe under the ash tree in the forest. As this coverlet, together with the armlet, was the only token she possessed of her unknown parents, she had preserved both articles carefully ; but now that it was a question of making the young bride happy, she was ready and willing to deprive herself of them. So she hurried up to her own chamber, took the coverlet out of the chest where it had lain treasured, hastened down, and spread it on the bride's bed. She then went down to the great staircase where the count was receiving his bride and all the knights, squires, dames and damsels who had accompanied her to her new home. The Ash Girl stationed herself among the rest of the servants, and made a low curtesy when the young and radiantly beautiful lady passed her. The guests soon dispersed among the various apartments, and the count, gloomy and preoccupied, followed the bride and her mother through the different rooms. At last they came to the bridal chamber. The bride's mother had scarcely cast a glance at the silken coverlet that lay outspread on the bed before she called out sharply :—

“ ‘Where is this coverlet from, and how did it come here?’ ”

“ ‘I do not know,’ replied the count, ‘but I will ask my servants.’ ”

“No one, however, could give any account of it, and all replied that no one but the Ash Girl had arranged the room.

“ ‘Call her hither, then.’

“ ‘She came and answered the count’s question :—

“ ‘Be not angry with me, noble lord, if I have done aught amiss ; but the coverlet that lay here previously did not seem to me beautiful enough, so I took one which I myself had, and laid it there instead’.

“ ‘But tell me how you got it,’ exclaimed the châtelaine.

“ ‘Ah,’ replied the Ash Girl, ‘I have had the coverlet as long as I have lived. I am a poor foundling, and, when I was discovered in the forest, I was wrapt up in it.’

“ ‘Had you,’ said the lady in a faltering voice, ‘anything besides this coverlet ?’

“ ‘Yes, I had also this armlet.’

“ ‘Then she exhibited the armlet that the maid had fastened on her **arm** when she was left under the ash tree. When the châtelaine beheld this she was overcome with emotion, and began to weep bitterly. At last she said :—

“ ‘God has heard my prayer, then, and my punishment is now over. Know, then, that I had two twin daughters, but, out of cowardly fear of malicious gossip, I exposed one of them in a forest. God punished me sorely, and the pangs of conscience have never ceased to torment me since that day. Now I can expiate my crime. One of my daughters is she who to-day shall be a bride ; the other is this poor girl.’

“ ‘Having said this she folded the Ash Girl in her arms, and besought her again and again for forgiveness for the cruelty she had shown her ; but the Ash Girl, who never found it difficult to pardon, kissed away all her mother’s tears, and said that she had nothing to forgive.

“ ‘The end is not difficult to guess. The Ash Girl

was a knight's daughter, and the count could now marry her just as well as her sister. He had no further need to hide his affection, so he, therefore, spoke of them to the bride and her mother. The other daughter declared that her sister had a better right than she to the count's hand, and refused to marry a man who did not love her, and whose bride she had only consented to become at her parents' bidding. The Ash Girl then stepped into her place, and became his bride before night. The guests who came to assist at the second sister's wedding thought the exchange somewhat curious, I suppose; but they had not long talked to the Ash Girl before they understood how she had grown so dear to the count, and all the household rejoiced exceedingly, for they knew what a good mistress she would make. With this the story of the Ash Girl ends. She was now a rich and powerful châtelaine, but she continued being as gentle, humble and good as when she was only a servant.

"Such is woman," said the empress. "She is for love and sacrifice, but often mistrust and scorn are her only reward; that, at least, has been mine, and you are ready to believe the first lie any one tells you about women."

"Certainly not," answered the emperor, "but I wished to consider, and I have postponed the matter, so that no one should be able to accuse me of over haste. But now my resolution is fixed. To-morrow my son shall die."

No execution, however, took place that day, for, ere the prince had been led off, the sixth master came forward to help him.

"Woman's cunning," said he, "is great, and she is often faithless, even when appearances are most in favour of her. A proof of this is to be found in the story of the queen in the tower."

“How does that story run?”

“It runs as follows:—

THE QUEEN IN THE TOWER.

“In a country called Mons Bergerie there dwelt a knight who once had a dream that fastened itself indelibly in his memory. He thought he saw a lady whose beauty surpassed all he had hitherto seen, He tried in vain to drive away this dream-picture, but it recurred to him continually. At last he fell into a profound melancholy, and could think of nothing else.

“In order not to perish, he resolved to go out into the world to seek after this marvellous woman of whose actual existence he no longer had a doubt. He wandered from country to country, yet always without finding what he sought. During his travels he came to the king of Hungary, who, as it then happened, was sorely beset by enemies. The knight, who was impelled by constant restlessness, and did not know exactly what he was going to do, joined the king's troops, and fought with such bravery in these battles that he won the king's highest favour, without, however, entering into his service or swearing allegiance to him. One day, when the war was over and the knight was about to depart, he went, absent-minded as usual and pondering over his dream, out into the town to look about him, and so came to a lofty tower which stood some distance outside the walls. By chance he cast his eyes up towards the tower, and saw at a window the very lady whose image had so stamped itself in his memory. In his amazement he took a step backwards and then stopped short. He saw, too, that she also blushed. He looked at her for a long time, but the window was placed high up in the tower,

and any conversation between them was quite out of the question. After a while he returned to find out who the mysterious lady could be, and that was no difficult matter. On asking one of his friends about her the latter answered :—

“ ‘ Do not you, who have been in this country so long, know that? The king is married to the loveliest woman that is anywhere to be seen, but he is so jealous of her that she has little joy out of her high station. In order that she may not get even the chance of speaking to any one else but himself, he has had her shut up in this inaccessible tower. He always keeps the keys about him, and, notwithstanding her beauty, she is nothing but a hapless prisoner, who cannot, alas, ever hope to regain her freedom.’ ”

“ This story still further inflamed the knight’s passion, and after a little while he again returned to the tower, and he did not remain many minutes before the gloomy walls ere the queen appeared at the window, this time not merely to look at him. She fixed her gaze keenly on him, and, just as she was on the point of withdrawing, let fall a letter that dropped at his feet. When he opened this he found it filled with protestations of love and entreaties for him to release her from the captivity in which she was forced to live. This was more than the knight dared hope for, and his mind was now made up, whereupon he hastened to the king and said :—

“ ‘ I had intended, now the war is over, to depart, but I have changed my mind. I cannot return to my native country, for from it I was obliged to flee through having slain a man of lofty birth in a combat. His relations would hound me down and take my life were I to go back. I cannot do better elsewhere than here, so I ask you if you will take me into your service.’ ”

“‘You have displayed such valour in war,’ answered the king, ‘that such a proposal could not fail to delight me. I will not merely take you into my service, but also give you the rank you deserve. You shall be my chancellor and second in authority to myself.’

“‘Such distinction is too great, and all I hope is that I may show myself worthy of your confidence. There is, however, one thing more I would ask you—that is, as I am now thinking of remaining in your kingdom, I should like to build myself a house to dwell in, and the high office you have given me seems to make this still more necessary.’

“‘Choose any spot you desire, and I will have a house built for you worthy of the services you have rendered.’

“The knight then mentioned a spot quite close to the tower, and on it the king had a house built for him. When this was ready the knight sent for a master builder renowned for his skill, and said to him :—

“‘I am thinking of giving you a task to perform, but it is of vital importance to me that not a Christian soul shall have the slightest suspicion of what I am about to bid you do. Now, in the first place, can I depend on your discretion?’

“‘Not a single word shall escape my lips.’

“‘Well and good; but understand that, at the slightest attempt to tell tales, it would be best for you to confess your sins and prepare for death, for your life will not be worth many minutes’ purchase.’

“‘You can fully rely upon me; but only tell me what you want.’

“‘I want you to dig a secret passage from this house to the tower right opposite, but the passage must be so cunningly constructed that no one can perceive where it leads to.’

“‘Do not be alarmed; the openings shall be so cleverly concealed that even you yourself shall not discover them without a secret mark which I shall set over them.’

“Hereupon the master builder set to work, and in a short time he was able to report that the passage was finished. The knight tried it, and found that the master had not exaggerated his skill, whereupon he turned to him and said:—

“‘The work is good, but tell me if there is any one who has any suspicion of what you have been doing during the last few days.’

“‘No one even knows where I have been, and the secret is well kept.’

“‘It shall be still better kept,’ said the knight, who, as he spoke, drew his sword and stabbed the master to the heart so that he should not betray him.

“When he had guarded himself against discovery by this deed, he determined to try the secret passage. He stole through it, and soon afterwards got into the tower without any one having detected him, and was there received and warmly welcomed by the faithless queen, who at once began to discuss with him how they should escape without the king finding them out. They talked to each other for a long time, and, as the knight was departing, the queen gave him a valuable ring, which he put on his finger. This ring nearly brought him to grief, for the king noticed it one day, and recognised it as one that he had given to his wife some time before. As he was a cautious man he did not like to say anything before he had convincing proofs at hand. He, therefore, took leave of the knight hastily, and hurried to the tower to surprise his queen. But although he had not betrayed his surprise by his countenance, yet his glance at the ring had not escaped the knight’s notice, and the latter suspected the risk he was

running. Whereupon he, being nimbler than the king, hurried to his house as fast as he could, rushed through the secret passage, returned the ring to the queen, and just managed to close the door after him as the king entered the tower, which, on this occasion, he locked more carefully than usual after him. Even then he would not betray his suspicions, but began to talk about indifferent matters, and inquired after the health of the queen. The latter pretended to be very unhappy, and answered:—

“‘How do you think I can be happy when I am forced to spend all my life within four walls, without ever having speech of any human being, or ever seeing the sun except through these window-gratings?’

“‘Be calm, and do not take it so bitterly. It is only because I love you so dearly that I keep you thus shut out from the world. Do I not do all I can to make your life here as pleasant as possible? You get jewels and precious things which make all other women envious of you. Do you not remember the ring that I gave you not so very long ago?’

“‘Certainly I remember it.’

“‘Let me see it for a moment.’

“‘What would be the use of that?’ answered the sly queen, who wanted to tease him for a little while.

“‘I want to show you how valuable it is, for I am certain that it is not to be matched anywhere.’

“‘I am convinced of the contrary. Most certainly there must be many like it, for it is not at all uncommon.’

“‘Well, produce it, then.’

“‘It is now locked up, and I have not seen it for several weeks.’

“‘Perhaps you have lost it?’

“‘How could I lose anything in this wretched tower, where there is not even a rat to keep me company?’

“ ‘Why do you make so much ado about complying with my wish? But now I demand to see it, and woe betide you if it be missing.’

“ ‘Well, I suppose I must try to find it,’ replied the queen calmly, ‘for it cannot be gone.’

“ She then got up and made a pretence of searching in her coffers, enjoying the sight of the king getting more and more angry; but, when she perceived that he could no longer control himself, she consented at last to produce the ring, which she had only hidden away a few minutes before. She handed it carelessly to the king, saying:—

“ ‘This, I think, was the ring you meant’.

“ When the king found that she still had the ring in her possession, he was so astounded that he did not know what to say.

“ At first he only stared at it, and then he began examining it eagerly, and found that it was actually the identical ring he had a short time before given the queen. There was no possibility of a mistake, and he was then convinced that the knight’s ring merely resembled this in an amazingly marked degree. Nevertheless, before he went, he examined every nook and corner of the tower, without, however, discovering anything of a suspicious nature, so skilfully was the door of the passage concealed.

“ Some time afterwards he met the knight again.

“ ‘My lord,’ said the latter, ‘I have just had good news from my fatherland. You recollect that I fled because of my killing my adversary in a combat. Meanwhile my friends have succeeded in pacifying the relatives of the deceased, and I have got permission to return. Although I have been so happy while staying with you, yet you can understand that my own country is dearer to me than any other land on earth, so I must, therefore, crave your leave to depart.’

“‘I shall certainly be sorry to be deprived of you, but I have no right to keep you here against your will. You must, therefore, go and take back with you on your journey my thanks for the valuable service you have done me. But how do you know all this?’

“‘The news was brought me by one who is very dear to me. Shortly before I was drawn into the unfortunate duel which compelled me to flee, I was betrothed to a young lady of noble birth and great beauty. During my absence she has loyally done all she could to make it possible for me to return, and when this was done, she herself hastened here to be the first to bring me those glad tidings. I have, therefore, one more boon to crave of you. I should much like to entertain you in my house before I take my departure, and I should be very grateful if you would let me and my betrothed be married.’

“This the king readily promised to do, and, on the following day, he and his chief lords went to the knight’s house, and there a sumptuous banquet awaited them. The knight’s betrothed, who received the guests, was none other than the faithless queen, who pretended to be a foreigner. She was dressed in a peculiar fashion, so as to produce the impression that she had come from abroad and did not know the customs of Hungary. When she had dressed herself in that style she proceeded to the knight’s abode by means of the secret passage, and there, with her cold-blooded audacity, greeted her husband just as if he had been a total stranger to her. The king started at seeing the knight’s betrothed. He plainly recognised his own queen, whom he believed to be shut up in the tower, and he could not credit such effrontery, but stood for a moment perplexed and doubtful, not knowing what to think or how to act. After that he hurried to the tower, opened the heavily-bolted iron doors, and rushed into the queen’s room ;

but meanwhile she had had time to change her dress and hurry back through the passage, and was thus able to receive her husband there. She asked him quietly the reason of his entering her room in such a hurry. When the king found her in her old seat and in her everyday clothes, and did not perceive a trace of agitation about her, he was convinced that he had been duped by an astonishing likeness between the queen and the foreign lady. He stammered a few words of excuse for his abruptness, and returned, after a little while, to the knight and was again bidden welcome by the foreign lady, who now ushered him into the banqueting-hall. The king, however, during the whole of the meal, could not eat a morsel; but only sat and stared at the knight's betrothed, who, with easy politeness, fulfilled the duties of a hostess. At nightfall he arose to leave, and the knight followed him out, and exacted a promise from the king that he would on the following day allow his own chaplain to marry the knight and the foreign lady. When they parted the bewildered monarch again visited the tower, and examined all the locks with redoubled scrutiny, and then went into the queen's bedchamber, where he found his wife asleep. On seeing this he was fully convinced that he had only been subjected to a singular hallucination, and then went to bed himself, without waking the queen, and calmly fell asleep.

“On the morrow when he got up the queen feigned to be still asleep. The king looked at her for a long time, and then departed silently so as not to disturb her, examined the tower once more, bolted the gate, and immediately afterwards visited the knight, and was after a while received by the latter's betrothed, who was now clad in bridal array. The king no longer cherished any suspicions, but politely took her by the hand and conducted her to the castle

chapel, and there his chaplain united her to the knight. After this he gave the newly-married couple a splendid banquet, and, towards evening, he and his courtiers followed them to the ship in which they departed, followed by the good wishes of the poor deluded king.

"Gradually the sails disappeared on the horizon, and the king betook himself to his tower, which he found shut and barricaded, as he had left it; but on reaching the queen's room he discovered it to be empty, and then he understood that he had been befooled. This faithlessness so powerfully affected him that he fell into a deep melancholy which, in a short time, ended his life. The secret passage was not discovered for many years after his death, and only then did they understand how the cunning queen had managed to elude her husband's watchfulness.

"Such," said the master, on concluding his story, "is woman's fidelity. The man who relies on it is sure to be cozened sooner or later, so think carefully before you lay your hands on your own son, who has loved you so dearly, for, when he is gone, you will fall soul and body into your wife's clutches."

"Your story," replied the emperor, "has made me cautious, and I will put off the execution until to-morrow. Very likely, in the meantime, I shall have come to some decision."

However, when he was closeted with the empress he found her beside herself with rage.

"Greater madness and worse vacillation," said she, "I could never have imagined. A lying story diverts you at once from your sagest resolutions; in fact you are nothing but a babe, with whom any one may do as he likes if he only gives it an apple. However, as these knaves have filled your ears with so many wicked stories against us women, you must

now let me tell you a true story which took place here in Rome."

THE ROMAN COUNT.

"Once upon a time there was a Roman count who had a wife remarkable not only for her beauty but also for her virtue and cleverness, and they lived happily together for many years. The count, however, heard a pilgrim who had lately returned from the Holy Land preaching about the oppression that the Christians were forced to submit to on the part of the fierce Saracens. This preaching made such an impression on the count that he resolved to take the Cross, and go to the Holy Land to fight against the Saracens. His spouse sought in vain to dissuade him.

"'Thither,' said she, 'so many knights have betaken themselves before you, and they have, nevertheless, accomplished nothing, so I pray you remain at home, where you are happy, and have equally good opportunities to devote yourself to chivalrous feats.'

"'These considerations,' replied the count, 'are selfish, and I will not look to my own profit but that of all Christendom, which demands that every knight should sacrifice his life and blood to redeem the Holy Sepulchre, and, if others fail in their duty, I will not do so.'

"'God forbid that I should seek to keep you from what you yourself consider to be right. Go, then, if you desire, and take with you on your journey the good wishes of your spouse. Bear yourself like a brave and honourable knight, and my prayers shall not cease to follow you.'

"The count at once prepared for his journey and parted from his wife, not without difficulty, as with heavy tears she bade him farewell. His voyage was

a prosperous one, but, in his very first battle, he had the misfortune to be taken prisoner. In company with certain other Christian knights, he was carried off to the Sultan's chief city, and all were made slaves. For two years the count had to work harder than any of his own labourers had ever done. Like a beast of burden he dragged a plough, and, when he was weary, the overseer's whip was ready to curl at once about his back. This harsh treatment, starvation, and other privations gradually broke down the knight's pride, and soon his only thought was that of gaining release from this awful captivity.

"One day the Sultan himself came to inspect the Christian slaves who were working on his estates, and when the count saw the commander of the Infidels he lowered his pride, and besought for freedom with tears in his eyes; but the Sultan only scowled and answered:—

"'Were you to grovel before me every day of your life it would profit you little. Such things have no effect on me; rather it is a pleasure to me to witness you humiliated—you Christians who in your own countries boast that you will drive us out of the land that our forefathers won. Take my word for it, you need work which will drive your arrogance out of your bodies. I will, nevertheless, point out to you a means of release. I certainly do not love you Christian knights, but your women are beautiful, and so I do not object to seeing my harem filled with my enemies' wives. If you can induce your wife to come here and be my slave I will set you free. If she loves you she will purchase your freedom, methinks; if not you will have to keep on dragging the plough till you drop down dead.'

"'Alas, my lord, you cannot be so cruel as that. Were I to buy my own freedom by my wife's honour, my reputation as a knight would receive an inefface-

able stain, and I should never again dare to appear among my own people.'

" 'I do not care a jot for your ideas of honour or indignity, but you have heard my last word, and it is that nobody but your wife can regain you your liberty.'

" When the poor count was alone he began pondering over the Sultan's words. The remnants of chivalrous pride were roused against the thought of accepting the Sultan's infamous proposal, but the sufferings he had undergone had already so degraded him that he at length reconciled himself to the proposal, and wrote a letter to his wife in which he depicted all the miseries he would have to suffer, and implored her to save him if at the price the Sultan had demanded. By good words and promises of reward he induced one of his taskmasters to be his messenger.

" The latter actually went to Rome and handed the letter to the countess. When she read it she began to weep bitterly, for she not only bewailed her husband's captivity, but was also pained at finding that it had already so deeply destroyed his courage and sense of honour that he no longer blushed at consenting to sell his own wife to an Infidel. She wrote him a letter immediately, representing to him how impossible such a proposal was, and showing how both his and her own honour forbade such a transaction. She besought him, however, not to despair, for assuredly his freedom might be purchased for gold and silver. She handed the letter to the messenger, who took it off with him to the Saracens. The messenger, however, had scarcely gone before she began to consider whether she could not redeem the captive knight by her own cleverness. She did not ponder long, but quickly resolved to act. She cut off her beautiful long tresses, and had a

tonsure shaved on the crown of her head, laid aside her womanly apparel, and put on the long cloak of a wandering friar. Then she hung her harp and lute at her side, and stood arrayed like a vagabond clerk, and so well disguised that nobody could recognise in her a lovely countess. Finally she managed to overtake the departing messenger, whom she soon met and joined, without his suspecting that the merry clerk and the mourning countess were one and the same person.

“On their way certain other travellers joined them, and it soon became a large party; but the chief of them all was the blithe young clerk who always knew how to keep up the travellers’ spirits with his lays. Every man among them loved him from his heart, but the Saracen messenger was the most attached to him.

“‘Listen, young man,’ said he at last, ‘I have a proposal to make to you. In my country there are no minstrels such as you, and if you will come with me I have no doubt but what your lays will bring you fortune. My lord the Sultan is liberal, and looks not at gold when it is a question of rewarding those who have won his favour. Come with me, then, and I will promise you that you will have no reason to regret the journey.’

“‘Very well,’ replied the pretended clerk, ‘people in my line in life have no home, and I had as lief accompany you as journey to some other land. It has always been a pleasure to me to see foreign countries, and I have heard so much about the wealth and splendour of the Saracens that I will joyfully avail myself of your invitation; so the matter is settled.’

“They pursued their journey, and at length reached the Sultan’s capital, and everything happened as the messenger had predicted. As soon as

the Sultan heard the notes of the harp and lute he was beside himself with joy, for he had never heard anything like it before. He at once gave orders that the strange clerk should be led to the chief place in the banqueting-hall, and that the daintiest dishes should be set before him. In acknowledgment of this the clerk sang one song after another until he noticed, to his delight, that he had completely gained the hearts of the Saracens, for they vied with one another in showing him attention, and on all their countenances he saw a smile of satisfaction.

“But as the mirth ran higher and higher in the Sultan’s palace the poor count grew more and more sad. He had got the countess’s letter through the messenger who had returned, and he found that she would not consent to the dishonourable proposal he had suggested. Instead of feeling proud at the lofty sentiments that her letter disclosed, he became embittered at her refusal. His sufferings during his captivity had so destroyed his mind that he had only one thought left, which was to regain his freedom, no matter how. Gloomy and hopeless, he had returned to his task on the following morning, and the thoughts he devoted to his wife whilst he stooped over the plough were anything but friendly. The poor countess, who had hastened out to cast from a distance a glance at the Sultan’s wretched captives, had difficulty in recognising her knightly spouse in the dirty and ragged Christian slaves. When she perceived this change she could not restrain her tears; but, in order not to betray herself, she mastered her grief, and returned to the palace with a joyful visage, and there she again gladdened with her songs and minstrelsy the Sultan and his courtiers.

“In this wise four weeks passed away without any one suspecting who the pretended clerk actually was; but when that time drew to a close, and the countess

thought herself certain of accomplishing her purpose, she went to the Sultan and said:—

“‘As you are aware, my lord, we minstrels are a restless race, loving to roam from one place to another. The kindness with which I have been treated is certainly so great that I almost feel myself prompted to break off my former mode of life and remain here for ever; but further consideration has taught me that I shall act best by following the example of the rest of my fraternity, not settling so long in one place as to become a resident. Now, it has been my good luck to gain your favour, but were I to remain here any longer I might perhaps lose it. I, therefore, beg to thank you for the graciousness you have shown me, and demand leave to go on my way.’

“‘Although I should be happy to keep you with me,’ replied the Sultan, ‘yet I will not put any obstacles in the way of your wishes, for I owe you a debt of thanks for the joy your merry lays have given me. You are free to do what you list—to stay if you choose, or, if you would prefer to travel, that you are also at liberty to do. Still, no one shall say with truth that the Sultan has shown himself ungrateful to the wandering bard. Here are gold and pearls and precious stones. Take as much treasure as you wish, and if you have any further desire, do not hesitate to express it, for my power is great, and you shall not plead in vain.’

“‘For favour so great as this I can only render bare thanks, but I cannot touch your treasures, for although my ballads may have given you cause to doubt it, I am, nevertheless, a serious man who has renounced the world and its allurements. From my garb, if not from my conduct, you will perceive that I am a monk, and we monks do not get together earthly possessions, still less do we possess treasures such as you have offered me. Do not be wroth with

me if I cannot avail myself of your generous offer, but grant me another boon instead which is more in keeping with my position.'

" 'I will not constrain you, but only tell me what you desire and your boon shall be granted.'

" 'My lord, I have noticed that you possess many Christian slaves, many of whom have in days gone by been rich and mighty lords, and it must be a bitter thing for them to have to pass their lives as bondsmen; wherefore, if you would show me some signal mark of your favour, permit me to bestow freedom on one of them. This will be for me a more than sufficient reward.'

" 'You have my word for it, and I will not break it, even should I wish for some time yet to crush the haughtiness of these arrogant knights. Let them, therefore, be called in in a body, and then you can choose out the one on whom you will bestow freedom.'

" The Christian slaves were now led in, and the countess discovered her spouse amid the throng. She, nevertheless, dissembled her joy, and inspected with calm countenance the unfortunate creatures. The Christians, who were aware of the issue at stake, gazed at her again with uneasy, imploring eyes, for each of them hoped that he would be the fortunate one, though none dared to express his prayer by a single word. When the good countess perceived this agonising unrest she was loth to keep them longer in suspense, but went promptly up to the Roman count, laid her hand upon his shoulder, and said in a voice that she tried to make as firm as possible:—

" 'The Sultan has bestowed on me the right to grant freedom to one of his Christian slaves. You are all strangers to me, and, therefore, I know not which of you has done the most to deserve this favour, but I choose you out because you seem to

me in the sorriest plight of all, and most in need of freedom. Go back to your own country, then, and to your wife, and forget the sufferings you have undergone, and be happy once more.'

"When she had said these words her voice stuck in her throat, and she was obliged to turn away to avoid betraying herself by her tears, nor did she dare show herself to her husband lest he should discover who she was, and, by some oversight, betray her. They therefore went their own ways from the Sultan's capital, and did not meet before they reached Rome.

"The countess was the first to arrive, and some days afterwards a pilgrim in tattered raiment knocked at the castle door. It was the count, who had at last reached home. The countess immediately ran up to fold him in her arms, but the count pushed her back roughly, exclaiming:—

" 'Do not attempt to show any feigned joy, for it will not deceive me, you faithless woman. I asked you for help, and all you had to give me was fair words, and if a stranger had not interposed on my behalf I should have pined away in captivity. Let others, then, pronounce on your infidelity. I shall summon my vassals and friends at once, and they shall say what punishment a wife like you deserves.'

"Quietly, without saying a single word in reply, the wronged woman withdrew, and the exasperated count was not long before he carried out his threat. He set forth his grievances before his friends and underlings, and, as is usually the case, not one undertook the defence of the accused; but, on the contrary, every one tried, to the best of his power, to put the worst construction on the case. Moreover, some of the count's friends mentioned about the countess having disappeared for a long time from her home without any one knowing whither she had

gone, and, naturally, this journey of hers was construed in the worst possible manner. When they had deliberated for a while on this matter their unanimous opinion was that a wife like that deserved no better fate than to be disowned by her husband.

“ They had hardly pronounced this judgment before another knock came to the castle door, and, on its being opened, a wandering clerk came in. The count recognised his deliverer at the first glance, and his joy was as great as his rage had previously been. He ushered the traveller into the banqueting-hall and presented him to all his friends and vassals there as the man whom he had to thank for his freedom. All of them then surrounded the newcomer to press his hands and thank him, but the stranger answered briefly, and as soon as the wine came in his melancholy seemed to vanish. He sat at the foot of the chair of honour, let his fingers sweep over the harp-strings, and soon began to chant a ballad which told of the count’s own imprisonment. First, the gifted clerk described how the count went forth to the wars, young, chivalrous and fired with enthusiasm for renown and the redemption of the Holy Sepulchre; how the miseries and toils of captivity made a sullen and mean-spirited slave of the knight, so that he was willing to purchase his release at the price of his wife’s honour. The clerk went on to sing about the countess’s grief at receiving the melancholy tidings of the count’s captivity, and her resolve to liberate him herself; but when he got so far with his story as to relate how the countess cut her locks off so as to assume the garb of a wandering minstrel—then, and not before, did the count understand everything. He started up and knelt down at the singer’s feet to implore her pardon. The countess, however, stooped over him, imprinted a kiss on his forehead, and folded him in her arms. After

holding him thus for a long time, all was forgiven, without a word being uttered.

"This," said the empress when she had finished her story, "is a tale of a noble-minded woman's fidelity. She, too, like myself, had been exposed to the lies of slanderers, and even her husband suspected her."

"Now," replied the emperor, "I no longer suspect you, and to-morrow I shall give you a proof of this. I suppose the last of the seven wise masters will try to turn me from my purpose, and I will let him tell his story; but I pledge you my word as emperor that nothing shall change my resolution. Come with me, and you shall see that my irresolution is over."

With these words they parted, and the empress then thought she had gained the day. On the following day the emperor, as usual, gave orders for the prince to be taken to the place of execution, and this time he went there himself, and the empress accompanied him. When the mournful procession was about to start, the last of the seven masters made a deep obeisance to the emperor and said:—

"Sire, you have allowed all my colleagues to tell you a story, and I trust you will not refuse me this favour. My story shall be short, and I shall not entreat you for the prince's life, for, as I suppose your wife will have the last word, we can but delay, and not prevent, the death penalty that threatens our pupil. Let me, therefore, tell my tale, and when I have finished it you will be quit of us."

"Very well," said the emperor, "out with your story, but I give you no hope of its influencing my decision, for that is now irrevocable and not to be altered."

PAPIRIUS.

"There was once upon a time in Rome," began the master, "a young lad of the name of Papirius,

who was remarkable amongst all lads of his own age for his wisdom and understanding. His father, too, cherished great hopes of the boy, and determined to accustom him from his early years to hear serious questions discussed, for which purpose he was in the habit of frequently taking the boy with him to the Hall of Council when the foremost men in the city deliberated on the affairs of Rome, and afterwards he used to exercise his son's wits by conversing with him about the matters that had been discussed. Other children of Papirius' age were not, I take it, allowed to listen to these secret conferences, but Papirius had shown himself so reticent and trustworthy that no one hesitated to make an exception in his favour.

"On one occasion there had been a very grave discussion in the Hall of Council, and all those present had most solemnly pledged themselves not to disclose by so much as a whisper what had taken place; nevertheless it was bruited in the town that something of grave import had been in question. Every one was on the tip-toe of curiosity to learn what this could be, and the one who suffered the worst torment was Papirius' mother. First, she tried to worm the secret out of her husband, but, not succeeding in this, she turned to Papirius and said:—

"'There is reported to have been a very important question lately under discussion in the Council. Not that I am in the least degree curious, yet, nevertheless, it might give me some little amusement to hear what the wise lords were talking about. As you were present you can easily tell me about it all.'

"'I did not understand what they were talking about, and I only noticed that they kept on for a long time and got very angry.'

"'Do not try to make yourself out more stupid than you are. You have got both eyes and ears, and

I am certain that you made use of both on that occasion, so tell me what they said, and do not attempt to keep your mother in the dark about it.'

" 'Dear mother, do you not know that it is strictly forbidden to reveal what takes place in Council, and that the severest punishment awaits the person who betrays State secrets? If it got to be known that I had gossiped outside we should all be in an evil plight.'

" 'Yes, *if* it got known. For my part, I do not wish you to shout the secret out in the streets, but only to tell it to me; and what is entrusted to me will be well guarded, for I am as silent as the grave. You know, my dear boy, how I abhor all gossip, and if I only knew what they were talking about in the Council I should not betray even by a look that I knew more than other people.'

" Papirius did not know what to do, for he was loth to disobey his mother; yet, on the other hand, he was well aware that it was a deadly crime to betray a secret not his own, and on which the weal and woe of many depended. His mother, however, pestered him so persistently, that at last he could not escape except by satisfying her curiosity by a fictitious account.

" 'Mother, you know what risk I am running by revealing this secret, but if you promise me solemnly that you will not, by word or look, betray me, I will tell you all about it.'

" 'How can you think me so mad? The count himself cannot keep it more secret than I shall.'

" 'Listen, then. It has been proposed to the Council that every man shall henceforth have a right to have two wives instead of one. No decision has yet been arrived at, but, as far as I could see, the majority were unanimous in regarding the proposal as a fit and proper one, and it will probably be accepted at the next meeting.'

"When Papirius' mother heard this she was at first speechless with amazement, next she crossed herself in terror, and then flew like an arrow across the street to her nearest neighbour.

"'Nice times we are living in,' exclaimed she. 'God grant we may all be dead and buried deep in the earth, and so escape seeing all the misery in store for us.'

"'What is the matter? You thoroughly frighten me. Tell me what has happened.'

"'Not a syllable shall ever pass my lips, but it is terrible to have to hear such horrors without being able to stir one's hand or foot to prevent them.'

"'What horrors?'

"'Do not ask me, for I cannot answer you; but there is one thing I can say, and that is that nothing more scandalous has ever been proposed, I should think. And to imagine that we married women would put up with the like.'

"'Is it the discussion in the Council that you mean?'

"'Yes, it is indeed; but I have promised not to betray what I know even by a look, so it will be no use your trying to get it out of me. If the secret came out both I and my family would be ruined.'

"'You can rely on me, for I shall not betray you. A secret that is entrusted to me is as well kept as if it was locked up sevenfold.'

"'Can I really rely on you?'

"'As surely as on yourself; my mouth will be as if sealed.'

"'Well, know then—but not a hint of it to any Christian soul—that it has been determined by the Council that a man henceforward may take two wives, perhaps more—just as with those Turkish dogs. Just as if we had not difficulties enough in making both ends meet in housekeeping. But everything, I suppose,

will be taken from us and given over to the new wives that are to come, and we old ones are to be thrown aside in the lumber-room—that's all the thanks we shall get for having toiled and moiled all our lives. Isn't it enough to make one burst with rage?'

“‘ You may well say so. Two wives! Just as if the lazybones did not find a difficulty in feeding one. It would be far more sensible now if a poor wife had a right to have two husbands; for she can always mind her own business, and with the two about her they would become meeker than they are now, when every one fancies he is cock of the walk. These fine gentlemen would have to learn to ask where they now order.’

“ After they had been complaining one to the other for a while they separated, but the neighbour who had learnt the secret could not keep it many minutes, and, very soon afterwards, sat with an equally trustworthy and reticent woman friend, to whom, after much beating about the bush, she confided the secret; but not before she had received a solemn promise from her not to betray it to any one. This promise the third person kept—for two or three minutes—but as she also possessed a trustworthy friend, she was bound to go to her to warn her, and, somehow or another, the secret escaped her. And so it went on and on, and before night there was not a single woman in the whole of Rome who did not know to the minutest detail what had been said in the Council.

“ At first they confined themselves to talking to one another about the horrible proposal in secret, but soon, when they found out that the secret was everywhere known, they began discussing openly what should be done, and at last they all met in a body at a public meeting, at which, with the greatest unanimity, they passed a general resolution which they agreed on

laying before the Council. The councillors assembled one night in the Hall of Council were exceedingly amazed at seeing all the women in the town moving in solemn procession across the square, and standing in front of the council-chamber. One of the councillors went out to ask them what they wanted.

“‘Ah,’ replied one who spoke for the rest, ‘we want every wife in the town henceforward to have a right to have four husbands. This wish of ours seems to us so reasonable that we hope the Council will not reject it.’

“When the councillors heard this speech they believed at first that all the women had gone mad, but on beginning to question them, they discovered the cause of their mad proposal, and as Papirius was found to be the originator of the report, he was summoned and questioned as to how he had hit upon such a preposterous lie; but he related how he was unable by any other means to elude his mother’s inquisitiveness, and added that he did not believe he had done anything wrong after his mother had solemnly promised him not to reveal to any one what he had told her.

“The upshot of it was that the women scandal-mongers were laughed to scorn, and went back home humiliated and ashamed. Papirius was, however, highly commended for his discretion, and was still allowed to be present at the deliberations of the Council.”

“I have heard your story,” said the emperor when the master had finished, “and I also understand its meaning without your having to explain it to me. You shall not, however, continue to defame the empress. My resolution is fixed, and your story has not caused me to think otherwise.”

“That was not my intention, however. My purpose was only to delay the execution for a few

minutes, and that I have succeeded in doing. Seven days have now elapsed since the prince was thrown into prison, during the whole of which time he has kept an unbroken silence ; but his time of trial is now over, and he can now without peril defend his own cause."

The emperor, on hearing this, was exceedingly astonished, and all the people who stood around him began to cry out in a loud voice that now the truth would out at last. The prince, however, approached his father, bent his knee in homage to him, and said :—

"My noble father, you were wrong to be angry at my silence. Even before I had left my teachers and come hither I had read in the stars about the peril that here awaited me. I found out that the first word I spoke would cost me my life ; and that my only salvation was to keep silent for seven days, whatever might happen. You know yourself how hard a thing this has been to me, and how great is the debt of gratitude that I owe to my masters, who, with so much wisdom and at so great a peril to themselves, preserved my life during these troublous days. Now that awful time is over I can speak once more. In the first place, I beseech you not to cherish any groundless suspicions about me, otherwise your fate may be like that of the man who, through similar apprehensions, threw his son into the sea.

"My son," said the emperor, "I am not suspicious, and no one can more fondly hope than I that you will be able to defend yourself against the charges brought against you ; but I do not know the story to which you allude, and, therefore, ask you to tell it me. As every one of your masters has favoured me with a story, it will not be too much to ask you to do the same."

"With pleasure," replied the prince.

THE RAVENS.

“Once upon a time there was a mighty man who had a son who, although he was only twelve years old, was, nevertheless, especially renowned for his knowledge and wisdom. On one occasion both father and son put out to sea, in order to visit a pious hermit who lived on a rock in the sea; but, while they were sailing, two ravens flew down on to the prow, and began to croak.”

“‘I am almost certain,’ said the father, ‘that this croaking is a real language, and that the birds are talking to each other.’

“‘Would you like me to explain their conversation to you, for, in addition to the subjects I have learnt, I also understand the speech of birds.’

“‘Well, what is it they say?’

“‘They are talking about us, and telling a wonderful tale. They are saying that a time shall come when you will be glad to give me water when I want to wash myself, and my mother will hand me a towel like a servant-maid.’

“When the father heard these words he was beside himself with rage, and cried out:—

“‘You conceited boy, that time shall never come’.

“Saying this, he seized his son by the waist, threw him into the sea, and sailed away without heeding, in his anger, his son’s cry for help.

“Luckily the lad was a good swimmer, and understood how to keep afloat for a time. Whilst swimming he prayed God fervently for help, and at last, wearied out and almost unconscious, he reached a barren rock that rose sheer out of the sea. There he dwelt for a time without any other food than raw birds’ eggs, or any other drink than the rain-water which had collected in the crevices of the cliff. At last a fisherman came to the rock, took the boy with

him to shore, and there sold him for twenty golden marks to a knight who was taken by his handsome and agreeable looks. The lad stayed for some years with this knight, and gained more and more the good graces of his lord and lady.

“Over the country wherein the knight dwelt there reigned a king who, on one occasion, was sorely puzzled on account of three ravens continually hovering round his throne, croaking and flapping their wings, and refusing to be driven away. The king marvelled greatly as to what this could portend, and, in order to get some light on the matter, he summoned all the wisest men that were to be found in his kingdom, and asked their counsel. Among those who presented themselves was the knight himself, and, in his retinue, the youth who had grown so dear to him that the knight found a difficulty in tearing himself away from him. When all the knights had assembled, the king turned to them and informed them of his reason for having had them summoned, concluding by saying :—

“‘If there is any one among you who can tell me why these birds are continually croaking over my head, I will give him my daughter to wife, and with her half my kingdom.’

“But all were silent, and none had any answer to give. The young man, seeing this, turned to his lord and said :—

“‘If the king will perform what he has promised, I will interpret for him what the birds are saying.’

“‘Have a care, I pray you, in what you are doing,’ answered the knight, ‘for if you should make a mistake it will cost you your life. Remember the saying, “Speech is silver, but silence is gold.”’

“‘There is no danger, and if he will only keep his promise I shall, I think, be able to tell him the truth.’

“ When the knight heard that his squire was confident of success he got up, and, turning to the king, said :—

“ ‘ There is a young squire in my train who professes to interpret the speech of birds, but, ere he speaks, he would first have your word that you will keep your promise to him who shall interpret what these ravens are saying.’

“ On the king repeating his promise, the squire stepped forward and said :—

“ ‘ My lord and king, of these three ravens that are croaking here, two are males and one is a female. The big raven which is now flying by himself has been for thirty years the husband of the female raven ; but, as you will remember, a year ago there was a great famine in the land, and then he abandoned her, and went his own way, whereupon the other raven took compassion on her, adopted her, and gave her food, and so she became his wife. When food became plentiful the runaway came back, and demanded her back from the other, who refused, and said that he who had abandoned his wife when she most needed his help, had thereby forfeited all his claims. This is what they are disputing about now, and on which they are asking your verdict.’

“ When the king heard this he said :—

“ ‘ My verdict is that he who in the hour of need gave her food and shelter must be allowed to keep her in the days of abundance.’

“ When the big raven heard this verdict he croaked mournfully, and spread out his wings to fly away by himself ; but the other two flew off together twittering merrily. The king, on seeing this, understood that the squire had correctly interpreted the birds’ screams, and so gave him his daughter to wed, made him a present of half his kingdom, and had him solemnly crowned king.

“Shortly after this the squire’s father fell into poverty, and had to sell all his possessions. He was loth to remain longer in his native place, but set out for foreign parts, and settled in a town which belonged to the young king’s kingdom. On hearing that his father had fallen into poverty and was living in his neighbourhood, he at once sent a message to him, saying that the king of the land wished, on the following day, to banquet at his house. The poor man, however, blushed at his poverty, and answered the messenger :—

“‘Your king is welcome, but tell him that it sorely hurts me that my poverty is now so great that I have no longer the means of entertaining so illustrious a personage as he in a manner befitting his rank ; but that the little I have is, nevertheless, at his disposal.’

“On the following day the young king reached his father’s house without being recognised ; but, as he was about to alight from his horse, his father ran up and wanted to hold the stirrups for him ; but the king declined this attention, and walked into the house. However, when he was about to wash his hands before the meal, his father came up and presented him with water, and his mother handed him a towel wherewith to dry himself. The king, however, would not suffer this, but bade one of his suite perform this service.

“When he had washed he turned to the old man and said :—

“‘Father, what I prophesied to you when you threw me into the sea has now come to pass, for I am your son whom you thought dead and gone. Out of over-hastiness and through a baseless suspicion, you treated me in the way you did ; but let bygones be bygones, and instead let us rejoice and be glad that we have found one another at last.’

“Dear father,” the prince went on to say, turning to the emperor, “you, too, were about to treat me in just the same way, when you condemned me to death without judge or jury. You suspected that as soon as I had gained a certain influence in your kingdom, I would avail myself of my power to overthrow and injure you. How greatly you were mistaken, for I would rather die the most agonising death than allow a hair of your head to be hurt. All that people have told you about me is untrue. It was your treacherous empress herself who proposed to me to get you out of the way, so that she and I might afterwards share your throne and kingdom, and when I rejected with indignation this shameful proposal, she took to accusing me in order to save herself.”

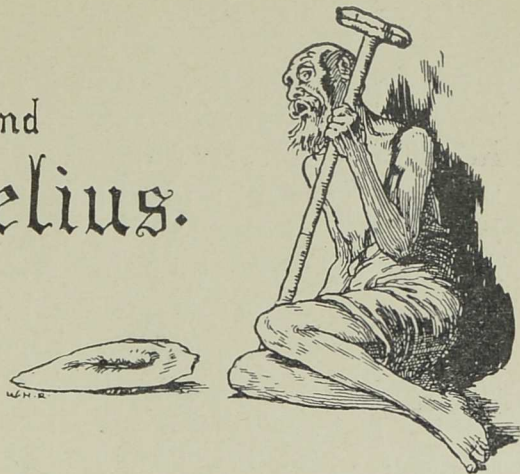
After he had thus spoken, the king looked at his wife, and found the confirmation of his son’s statement plainly written on her countenance. She made no attempt to deny her guilt, but fixed her eyes on the ground without saying a word.

The emperor looked at her for a long time, and at last said :—

“You yourself have been your own judge and deserve no pity. The punishment that you intended for my son you yourself shall now suffer.”

He then gave orders that a pyre should be raised, and on it the faithless woman was burnt. But the emperor and his son lived for many years together in love and unity, and, in the wise prince’s time, no kingdom was ever better governed than was his.

Amicus and Amelius.



MANY hundred years ago, when King Pippin ruled in France, there lived a Count of Alverno who was famed for his piety. After being married for some time he had a son, and the birth of this son filled him with the keenest joy. He hesitated for a long time as to what name he should give the infant, but at last he had recourse to his chaplain for advice, as well as for the christening.

“My lord,” the chaplain replied, “of late I have often seemed to see your son in my dreams, and, judging by them, I think a great and glorious future awaits him, wherefore I feel myself unworthy to bestow a name on him, but would propose instead to put off that ceremony until the boy grows big enough to be taken to Rome, where the Pope himself might baptise him and give him a name that he deems most fitting. I shall be happy to do you service, but at this child’s baptism worthier lips than mine must pronounce the holy words.”

The count approved of this advice, and resolved to put off the baptism for a while. As soon as the boy was two years old, and stout and hardy withal, so as to be able to bear the discomforts of travel, the count placed him in front of him on the pommel of his saddle, and betook himself to Rome. They stopped

on the way at a town called Lucca, and there met at the inn a knight of Bericano who was travelling to Rome for a similar purpose. The knight of Bericano had also a son, and this son he meant to take to Rome so that the Pope might baptise him. But the strange part of the story was that the count's son and the knight's son were both born on the same day, were of the same height, and so like one another that even their fathers had some difficulty in distinguishing one child from the other. This seemed to the count and knight as a sign from heaven that both children were destined in life for one another, and they therefore determined to travel the remainder of the distance together. During the journey both the little boys became acquainted with one another, and it was not long before they got to be such great friends that neither could be away from the other. They ate at the same table, drank out of the same cup, and slept at night in the same bed. Young as they were, they, nevertheless, swore eternal friendship, and this promise was also ratified by their fathers.

At length they reached Rome, and the count and the knight went up to the Pope, fell on their knees before him, and said :—

“Holy Father, we are the Count of Alverno and the Knight of Bericano, and have come to Rome to beseech of you a favour. Each of us has a son, and our prayer is that you, Holy Father, will christen both the boys and give them names. We would give them the best that lies in our power, and no greater gift can they receive than that of receiving holy baptism at your hands.”

The two fathers then produced the costly gifts wherewith they thought to do honour to the Pope, but the latter replied :—

“I will not accept your gifts, for God forbid I should baptise any one for filthy lucre ; neither do I

need them. Give them to the poor instead, for that, in good sooth, shall better profit your children than if those precious things were garnered in my treasure-house; but the boon you crave I will fain grant, and though I myself am only a poor, sinful creature, yet the baptism I am about to bestow will be none the less holy for that."

He thereupon took both the children by the hand, ushered them into the Church of the Lateran, and there christened them himself, calling the count's son Amelius and the knight's son Amicus. Then he gave each of them, as a memorial, a costly drinking cup, adorned with gold and precious stones, and said to them:—

"Always keep these beakers as a memorial of the most momentous hour in your lives, and may they ever remind you that you are Christians, as well as of the duties imposed on you by the names you bear".

The count and the knight again kneeled down before the Pope and thanked him for the favour he had shown their sons, as well as for the costly gift each child had received.

On looking at the two beakers they discovered that these were exactly alike, so that neither could be distinguished from the other any more than Amicus could be distinguished from Amelius. When they had marvelled at this singular accident, they separated one from the other and rode homewards each his own way, after they had first solemnly promised each other to remind their children of the mutual friendship they had plighted one another.

Many years passed away, and Amicus grew into a sturdy stripling who, in understanding and chivalrous pastimes, distinguished himself from the youths of his own age. When he was twenty years old his father was seized with a grave sickness, which soon laid him on his deathbed. On learning that his

days were numbered, he summoned Amicus to him and said :—

“ My son, it is idle to disguise the truth from you any longer. In a few days you will be fatherless and alone in the world. I hope, however, that I have given you such an education that you will understand how to bear this sorrow as a man, and lead a life befitting a son of mine. Always keep in mind that you are a Christian knight, and, therefore, you must never blot your escutcheon by any base or sordid deeds. I have steadfastly endeavoured to keep this escutcheon spotless. So order your life that you too, some day, may hand over to your son, as an inheritance, this same shield as untarnished as you received it. Be faithful to your lord, brave before the foe, good to such as need your help, steadfast in friendship, and never forget Amelius, the Count of Alverno's son. You two were meant by Providence for each other, and my last prayer is that you never fail to remain faithful to his friendship. Receive a father's blessing, and be ever mindful of my words.”

The Knight of Bericano, after uttering these words, closed his eyes, and, in the course of a few hours, ceased to live. Poor Amicus then experienced what it was to be alone in the world. He had hardly followed his father to the grave before his neighbours and vassals began to rebel against him. One seized one excuse, another another, to take up arms against him, and, in a short time, Amicus was in open feud with them all. He protected himself valiantly against the wolves that sought to snatch for themselves the heritage of the orphaned youth ; but he soon grew weary of this strife, and said to himself :—

“ Why should I stay longer in a country where I have not a single friend, and where all are bent on my destruction ? The world is large, and, perhaps, I shall be lucky enough to find some spot where people

will feel kindly towards me, and have a friendly word for me besides. Rather than wrangle and squabble about these miserable acres, I will abandon them altogether, mount my trusty steed, and, sword in hand, go out into the world in quest of my good friend Amelius."

It was not long before he carried out his plan, and one fine day rode forth from his ancestral castle, followed by only a few squires, to seek the Count of Alverno. Ill-luck, however, pursued him. Tidings of the old knight's death and the straits of Amicus had reached Amelius, who, loyal to his promise when a child, resolved to hasten to his friend's assistance, and thus they missed each other on the road. When Amicus reached the Count of Alverno's castle Amelius had already departed, and when the latter arrived at the castle of Bericano he found it occupied by his friend's enemies, and that Amicus himself had disappeared. However, as both were young and eager for adventures, they did not let themselves be disheartened at this check, but proceeded from one castle to another, each hoping to meet his friend.

Whilst they were thus roving about Amicus came one day to a castle, and was there very hospitably received. He abode there for several weeks. When he was about to resume his travels the lord of the castle said to him :—

"Young man, I cherish a love for you, and, therefore, will make you an offer. You no longer possess a house or home that you can call your own. I will give you both. Stay with me and I will give you my only daughter for wife. You know I have no son to inherit after me, and, therefore, my property will pass to my daughter. She cannot protect it by herself, so I must take heed to give her a husband in whom I can trust. Now, I have tried you and found that you are not only a brave young man, but also

wise and good, and I, therefore, ask you if you are willing to be my son-in-law. Do not spurn this offer, for after my death all my worldly goods will be yours, and you will be your own master."

"Noble knight," replied Amicus, "how can I be aught but grateful to you for the kindness you would show me. Your daughter is very dear to me, and even without the goods you are offering me, I would gladly accept such a bride from your hands; nevertheless, I know not how to answer you. From the days of my tender infancy I promised to maintain inviolate a loyal friendship with Amelius, the Count of Alverno's son, and directly after my father's death I determined to seek this friend whom I have not seen since we both received baptism from the Pope. Alas, as yet I have not found him, and I will not, at any price, take my ease before I have met him, and renewed the friendship of our infant years. I can only accept your offer on one condition, and that is that you will not hamper my freedom. Directly after the wedding I must go forth into the world, and until I have found again my good friend Amelius, I shall take no rest."

"Think not that I am angered at the words you have uttered. The man who is a steadfast friend should surely make a steadfast husband, and I, therefore, consent to your wish. Take my daughter, and then go in quest of your friend."

The old knight had the marriage of his daughter and Amicus celebrated, but not many days after the festivities were over and the guests gone, Amicus took leave of his wife and his wife's father, mounted his horse, and rode away in quest of Amelius.

One evening shortly afterwards he met a pilgrim who was going on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Dionysius, which lies not far from Paris. According to his custom, Amicus stopped his horse, and asked

the pilgrim if he had seen or heard speak of his good friend Amelius, and though the pilgrim could not afford him any information, Amicus gave him a costly mantle, and said:—

“Pray to God that I may find my friend again”.

The pilgrim expressed his thanks and pursued his way to Paris; but he had not fared many miles before he again met a knight, who stopped his horse and asked him if he had met any knight of the name of Amicus. The pilgrim looked at the man who put the question, and answered:—

“Sir, why do you try to make a fool of me, and by an ill-timed jest efface the memory of your bounteous gift? Do you think that I do not know you again, although you have changed your attire and got other servants?”

“You are mistaken, my good friend. I have never seen you before, and he whom you met must have been some one else.”

“Do you think I have not eyes in my head? Only a few hours ago I was, as you know, talking to you, and you gave me this cloak. Now you come to me again as if we had never met, asking me after a knight called Amicus, just as you asked me a little while ago after one called Amelius.”

“Ah, now I understand it all. It was my good friend Amicus you just met. As children he and I were as like one another as twins, and this likeness, it seems, still exists. Here is gold and silver for you, but only tell me which way he went so that I may hasten after him.”

“The way is easily found, for it is the highway from Paris. If you make haste you can overtake him before dusk.”

Amelius did not need to be told twice, but dug his spurs into his horse, and galloped in the direction that the pilgrim had pointed out, at such a pace that

sparks flew from his horse's hoofs. After some hours he perceived a knight riding up a hill, accompanied by only a few squires. When the latter heard the trampling of a horse behind him he turned sharply round, let down his vizor, drew his sword, and called out:—

“Halt and tell me what your errand is. I am Amicus of Bericano, and no man passes me whose purpose I do not know.”

When Amelius heard these words he jumped off his horse and rushed up to Amicus.

“So I have found you again,” he cried. “I am Amelius, who have sought you for years.”

In an instant the two friends were clasped in each other's arms, and it seemed as if their joy would never end. They renewed their promise of steadfast friendship, and rode on together to the castle of the old Count of Alverno, and there they stayed for many months without being able to tear themselves away from one another. At last Amicus said:—

“My good friend, we have met each other once more after many years, and the friendship which our fathers promised in our names—a friendship which we ourselves ratified—can never more be broken, but shall assuredly last for the rest of our lives. But we have also other duties. When I married I received full permission to go out into the world in quest of you; but now that I have found you again, it is my duty to return to my wife. I, therefore, bid you farewell, only, however, on the condition that we meet every year and spend some months together.”

“I promise you that from the depths of my heart,” replied Amelius. “Shall we meet again in a year's time? So far as I am concerned, I have been thinking of going to the emperor, Karl the Great, in Paris, to find employment at his court.”

“There is no better school for a young knight

than that," said Amicus; "but take heed of the pitfalls of life at court, and believe not every fair word that is said to you. There are many who seem to be our friends, but who, nevertheless, in the end prove themselves to be our enemies."

"Do not be anxious," replied Amelius, "for I am not so inexperienced as you imagine, and I shall, I think, be able to take care of myself."

"I hope so, too," said Amicus; "but should you get into any difficulties out of which you cannot extricate yourself, you know you have always a friend in me, and that I am always ready to stand by you."

"I thank you for that promise," said Amelius, "but I do not think I shall have to remind you of it."

"Well and good," replied Amicus. "In about a year I shall go and look for you at the court of the Emperor Karl."

Then they separated, Amicus to return to his wife, and Amelius to proceed to Paris, where he soon found such high favour with the Emperor Karl that the latter appointed him his chancellor. This advancement, however, naturally made many envious of him, though, out of fear of incurring the emperor's displeasure, they did not dare to exhibit their real sentiments. Instead, they sought by flattery and friendly words to curry favour with the new favourite, and the one who succeeded best in this was the emperor's Master of the Horse, a knight named Arderik, who, without any difficulty, gained the confidence of the unsuspecting Amelius, and, in a short time, found an opportunity of availing himself of this for the purpose of ruining the new chancellor.

The emperor had a daughter with whom Amelius was in love, but neither he nor the young princess dared think about marriage, for they fancied that the mighty emperor would never consent to give his daughter to the son of the simple count. They there-

fore met in the greatest secrecy, and, at their stolen meetings, they formed plans how they might best elude the emperor's vigilance, and flee to some strange and far-off country where they might marry without having to dread the consequences of the emperor's wrath. Amelius chose Arderik for his confidant, and the latter thus got a knowledge of all Amelius' plans, and even of the day on which he and the princess thought of taking flight. Instead of dissuading Amelius from this rash attempt to defy the emperor's power, he encouraged him in it as best he could; but one day, when the emperor was about to take his seat at table and Amelius was handing him the towel and basin for the customary ablution before meals, Arderik cried out:—

“Sire, take no water from the hands of this foul traitor. He is unworthy to serve you.”

“What do you mean?” asked the emperor in astonishment.

“What I mean is that while you are thinking Amelius everything that is good, he is trying to heap insults and dishonour on your head. I have for a long time held my tongue out of dislike to betray a friend, but now that my lord's honour is at stake, I can do so no longer. Amelius and your daughter have, for some time past, had secret meetings with each other, and now they have reached such a pitch of impudence as to resolve to flee from France, so as to flout your paternal authority with greater impunity.”

The emperor looked at the disconcerted Amelius for a long while without uttering a word. At last he said:—

“Is this true what Arderik says?”

Amelius, who had meanwhile somewhat regained his presence of mind, replied:—

“True it is that I love your daughter, but it is false that I have had any secret meetings with her,

still more that I dreamt of flouting you by running away with her. What Arderik says is merely slander intended to blacken my character and rob me of your favour."

"I would fain believe what you say, for I cannot imagine your being false; but it is one man's word against another's, and I must find out the truth."

"Sire," said Arderik, "I stand by what I said, and I am prepared to defend my words at the risk of life and limb, so we must appeal to the judgment of God. Choose for us some place for combat, let each of us make solemn oath that he has spoken the truth, and then let us decide the matter by wager of battle. God will give the victory to him who fights for a righteous cause."

"Let it be as you propose," said the emperor. "Both of you must meet in a week's time, and may each, with sword and lance, maintain the truth of his words."

After pronouncing this sentence he bade Amelius and Arderik depart and not show their faces at court before the day fixed for the combat. When Amelius was alone he began to consider his position, and then found that his levity, credulity and lack of consideration had brought him to certain ruin. As a knight he could not avoid the combat, for that would have been tantamount to acknowledging that he was either a coward or a liar; still less could he commit himself to God's judgment, and swear that Arderik had spoken falsely, for that would have been to forswear himself.

Whilst he was pursuing this melancholy train of thought he perceived a rider galloping from the wood, and, on the latter approaching him, he discovered him to be Amicus, who had, in pursuance of his promise, come to visit him. As soon as Amicus recognised Amelius he leapt from his horse and ran towards him, but stopped on seeing his friend's troubled and dejected countenance.

“What is amiss with you?” cried Amicus. “You look like a man in utter despair. Has any misfortune befallen you?”

“Alas, it has. The peril wherein I stand is so dire that I had forgotten that this was the very day we had appointed for our meeting.”

“Tell me, Amelius, what has befallen you.”

“Alas, that is a melancholy tale.”

Amelius then went on to relate everything that had taken place, and how he was threatened with death and dishonour. When he had ended his tale, Amicus said:—

“You have acted like a madman. I warned you against trusting the glib tongues of the court, and yet you have confided your secrets to a rival such as Arderik. Without the emperor’s knowledge you have won his daughter’s heart, and, instead of frankly confiding in the emperor, you have tried to throw dust in his eyes by means of a falsehood. He was fond of you, and who knows but that he would have given you his daughter for wife? Now you have thrown away this chance. You cannot fight with Arderik, for God cannot grant you victory in such a cause, and neither can you dare to make oath of the truth of your words, when the day of the combat comes round. Nevertheless, all is not lost. As a child I swore to be your friend, and that promise I will keep even if it should cost me my life. Listen, then, to what I am about to propose. We two are so much alike that no one can distinguish us, and if I appear in the lists instead of you, no one will notice the exchange; for, as you are aware, no one either knows me at this court, or has heard any talk of our resemblance to each other. Without committing perjury, I can affirm that *I* have never had any secret meetings with the princess, and that *I* have never thought of running away with her. Be sure that you

inform the princess of this substitution, so that she may testify, without scruple, to the truth of my words. I think I shall then contrive to punish the treacherous Arderik as he deserves. I will, however, keep myself concealed until the day of the combat arrives, so as to prevent any one from suspecting my presence. If you will but act frankly all will, I think, go well."

"Ah, my friend, how can I thank you for what you are about to do for me?"

"Do not talk of it," replied Amicus, "for I am but doing my duty, and I know you would do the same for me were I in your position. There is only one boon I crave of you, and that is that, if I fall, you will look after my wife, and see that she does not lack a protector."

"Trust in me. If I did not know your prowess I should never have agreed to expose you to this danger; but now, alas, I have no other choice than to accept your generous offer."

Until the appointed day Amicus lay hidden in Amelius' abode; but in the morning, before the combat was to begin, he clad himself in his friend's armour, and was so like him that no one could suspect any deception. When he had donned his armour he proceeded to the church, where the Empress Hildegard, the young princess, and all the ladies of the court had assembled for High Mass. The emperor and his courtiers, amongst whom was Arderik, were also present. At the end of Mass the empress and all the ladies with her besought God to bestow victory on him who had justice on his side, and to punish him who should fight unfairly.

When Amicus heard this prayer he began to question himself, and discovered that he had embarked on a very questionable adventure, which must needs call down God's wrath on him.

"However treacherous Arderik may have been,"

said he to himself, "nevertheless the charge he has brought against Amelius is true, and his cause is so far more righteous than mine. If I kill him I shall have to answer to God for his death, and if he kills me, then I justly fall as a knight forsworn."

The feeling of something deceitful in the cause for which he was about to fight laid so strong a hold on him that he went up to Arderik, grasped his hand, and said:—

"Noble Arderik, why should we fight each other? Let us acknowledge that we have acted like madmen. Withdraw your charge and let us be friends as before."

"I do not value your friendship a farthing, and I am less inclined than ever to withdraw my words. Acknowledge instead your own guilt, or be prepared to die."

"As you refuse to take the hand I offer you in reconciliation, let your blood then be upon your own head."

After they had uttered these words they both mounted their horses and rode into the lists. Arderik was the first to ride up to the stage whereon the emperor and his courtiers had taken their places as spectators and arbiters of the fight. He halted, and exclaimed in a high voice:—

"I, Arderik, who now stand here, do declare and make oath that this Count Amelius has insulted the emperor, inasmuch as he has kept secret trysts with the emperor's daughter, and has arranged with her to flee secretly from the kingdom. I am ready to defend this charge with my life's blood, and I commend my cause to the judgment of God."

Then Amicus rode up and said:—

"And I hereby declare and make oath that I intended no insult to the emperor; that I have never had any meeting with his daughter, and I have not

thought of fleeing from the kingdom with her. I am prepared to maintain this declaration with my life's blood, and I commend my cause to the judgment of God."

Each immediately rode back to his place. At a nod from the emperor the heralds blew their trumpets as a signal for the fray to begin, and both knights rushed at each other. The combat lasted fiercely for some time, but Amicus at last pierced Arderik's breastplate with his lance, and stretched him dead on the ground.

When the combat was at an end the emperor rose from his seat, turned to the victor, and said:—

"You have manfully refuted the charge brought against you, and not a stain clings to your honour. I can now say what I did not wish to tell you until I saw the issue of this fray. You have acknowledged that you love my daughter, and I know that your affection is not unrequited. Take her now from my hands as the reward of your bravery, and show yourself, by deeds of knightly prowess, worthy of this grace."

Amicus made no answer, but merely bent his knee to the emperor in gratitude for this favour. Then he went, followed by his squires, into Amelius' dwelling, there to take off his dusty and bloodstained armour. In the most breathless haste he informed his friend of the issue of the strife, as well as of the emperor's unexpected favour.

"The peril in which you stood has now turned to happiness, and you have received more than you dared hope for. Only employ the future aright, and let the past serve you as a warning. As regards myself, I must now steal away, so that no one may suspect my presence here; but should you ever need my help again, you know where I am to be found. And now farewell."

The two friends embraced each other, and Amicus stole away in disguise, and returned home, while Amelius once more appeared at court, and there received all sorts of congratulations on the victory he had won. In a short time his marriage to the princess was celebrated, and he thereby became a prosperous and influential man.

The deception, however, could not go unpunished, and some time afterwards Amicus was seized by a grievous visitation, inasmuch as he was struck by the mysterious sickness that is called leprosy, whereby he became crippled in all his limbs, so that he had to be carried about and fed like a child; and as this disease is very contagious, he became a terror to all about him. Every one avoided him, and nobody would associate with the wretched man who had thus been visited by God's punishment. Even his own wife took part with his persecutors, tortured and plagued him in every way, so that his home soon grew quite unbearable. In his dire distress he turned to his two squires who had still remained faithful to him.

"My friends," said he, "you see how grievous my sufferings are, and how all abandon and persecute me. I try to bear everything with patience, inasmuch as I am aware that this punishment has come justly upon me; for although not actually, yet nevertheless, I have morally been guilty of a great perjury, as well as of an endeavour to set at nought God's judgment. I feel, however, that I can no longer bear my home, and I, therefore, beseech you to carry me to Rome, for, possibly, the Pope may by his prayers procure me some alleviation of my torments."

His two squires did as he had bidden them, and carried him themselves to Rome; but not even there would his horrible disease quit him. The Pope received him with great kindness.

"I cannot," said he, "give you back your health. You have committed a grievous sin, and you are reaping the reward of your misdeeds. Only through patience in suffering and unfeigned repentance, and not through any prayers of mine, can you appease God, so that He may take your sickness away. I will help you, however, as far as I am able, for you are an unhappy creature. You are welcome to stay with me, and I will take care that you lack nothing for your sustenance."

Amicus tarried for some years in Rome, with such measure of comfort as his pains allowed; but soon there came a time of dearth and famine: bread was nowhere to be found, and people died by thousands of starvation. The poor and the sick were, naturally, the worst sufferers, for now the strong and hearty had all they could do to live, but for those who of themselves could not perform any useful tasks there was soon nothing to spare. The maintenance that Amicus had enjoyed was withdrawn, and his two squires only succeeded with difficulty in procuring food for him. One day, however, they said to him:—

"My lord, you must needs admit that we have honestly tried to fulfil our duties towards you. We can do so no longer, for neither by honest labour nor by asking alms can we scrape together enough to feed ourselves, much less you. It is true that we are loth to abandon you, but necessity constrains us to it, unless all three of us are to succumb to starvation. Tell us, however, ere we go our several ways, if there be aught that we can do for you."

"Woe is me, I have no right to lay further behests on you, for you have already done all that good servants could do, and you have stood by me more loyally than my wife and my nearest kinsfolk. Abandon me, then, and let me die here, for I have deserved my fate. Seek only to save yourselves."

“Do not despair, for perhaps something may yet be done for you.”

“No, let no human being take further heed of me.”

“But had you not, in days gone by, a friend?”

“Yes, Count Amelius; but he is a happy man, and the happy easily forget the wretched.”

“Would you like us to carry you to him? Peradventure, he will take pity on you.”

“Do as you think best; I, for my part, am too helpless to have any will of my own.”

Then both his squires took him on their shoulders, and carried him day and night until they reached the castle where Amelius dwelt with his wife and his two sons. On reaching the castle they laid their hapless lord on the ground, and knocked at the door that was set apart for beggars and poor wayfarers. Amelius, who had just sat down to table, heard the knocking, and said to one of his servants:—

“There is some wandering beggar at my gate imploring an alms. Take this bread and give it him, and let him quaff a draught of wine ere he goes on his way.”

With these words he filled the goblet that stood on the table before him, and handed it to his servant. This goblet, however, was the same that he had received as a christening-gift from the Pope. The servant departed to do his master's bidding, but very soon came running back.

“My lord,” cried he, “there is something very strange about this beggar. When I approached him I noticed in his hand a goblet exactly like the one I was myself carrying, and had I not seen them both at the same time, I could have sworn that he had stolen it. But how comes a miserable beggar to own so precious a thing as that?”

Amelius, on hearing these words, turned pale, and gave orders that the beggar should be brought to



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"CARRIED HIM DAY AND NIGHT."

him ; and, when the latter was carried in, Amelius gazed for a long time at the misshapen cripple, and at last exclaimed :—

“Tell me how you contrived to get possession of the goblet that I see in your hand”.

“Alas, my lord, I have had it nearly all my life. When I was two years old I was baptised in Rome by the Pope himself, and he gave me this goblet as well as the name of Amicus.”

He had scarcely uttered these words before Amelius rushed up to the leper and folded him in his arms.

“Ah, I have found you again,” he exclaimed, “and now we shall never more be parted. I have to thank you for all the happiness I enjoy. It was you that gave me wife and children, lands and castle. Had it not been for you, I should have been an infamous felon ; but while I have gained so much at the hands of Providence, you have only reaped a harvest of pain and misery. How is this possible?”

“Alas, my friend Amelius, you must call to mind the oath I once falsely swore when I fought with Arderik. I am paying the penalty of that now.”

“You are suffering, then, for me, who have wealth and abundance, without knowing that all of it was purchased at the cost of your happiness. How shall I ever repay such a sacrifice ? But I will do all that in me lies to assuage your misery. Stay with me always, look on my house as your home, and my wife and I will be your servants.”

Then the countess came up and thanked him, with tears in her eyes, for the devoted friendship he had shown to her husband, and the two tried to do their utmost to mitigate his pains and sufferings. At night Amelius had a bed prepared for him in his own bedchamber, so as to be immediately at hand if help were needed.

One night, shortly after this, whilst Amicus was

lying and tossing about restlessly on his couch, he fancied he saw a bright light opposite his bed, and in this light he caught a glimpse of an angel. The angel said to him :—

“Art thou asleep, Amicus?”

“I sleep not: sleep is only for those who are happy.”

“Listen to me. Thou hast grievously sinned, but thou hast shown in thy suffering the patience of Job, wherefore the Lord has had pity on thee. At God’s behest I have come to show thee a means of deliverance that depends not on thee, but on thy friend Amelius. Thou hast sacrificed everything for him; but if he will sacrifice for thee in return the dearest thing he has, thou shalt be released from thy sufferings. Amelius has two young sons, at once his joy and pride. If he will slay them with his own hand and bedaub thy body with their blood, thou shalt be made whole again.”

“Rather than demand such a sacrifice,” exclaimed Amicus, “I would fain suffer worse torments than those I now endure.”

“I have performed my task, and you must make your own choice.”

After uttering these words the angel vanished, but that moment Amelius woke up and exclaimed :—

“To whom were you talking?”

“I was not talking to any one. You must have dreamt it.”

“No, I heard it quite plainly. Some one was in the room.”

Amelius got up immediately and examined the lock, but found the door fastened, so that nobody could have gone out that way. Then he repeated his question, and pressed Amicus so long that the latter began to weep. At last he said :—

“Since you insist upon knowing it, Amelius, it was

an angel that revealed himself to me, and it was to him that I was speaking."

"What did the angel say to you?"

"Alas, my friend, do not constrain me to answer you. Believe me it is best for us both that you cease questioning me."

"I will not cease asking you until you have fully answered my question."

"Then I must tell you all, but bear in mind that it was you who forced me to speak."

"Speak, then; I accept all the consequences."

"The angel said to me that I might be healed, but only on condition that you slew your sons with your own hand, and washed me in their blood. However, I implore you not to dwell for an instant on this cruel thought, and to forget what you have forced me to tell you."

When Amelius heard these words he gazed at Amicus for a long time, and at length said to him:—

"I took you into my house when you were rejected by all. My wife and I have tried to tend you in your sickness as well as if you had been our own child, and yet you have the heart to come forward with such a cruel lie."

"Alas, my brother," answered Amicus weeping, "believe what you please, but abandon me not in my misery."

"My friendship for you shall never fail; but by this same friendship, by our honour as knights, by the memory of our common baptism, I appeal to you to tell me if that which you have just said is true."

"It is true by all these ties."

When he had uttered these words Amelius turned pale, and said to himself:—

"Once upon a time he was ready to lay down his life for me; for me he has risked the salvation of his soul, and he has undergone all the sufferings of

leprosy for me. He has been faithful to me to death, so how can I be right in abandoning him? Is it not written: 'ALL YE WILL THAT MEN SHOULD DO UNTO YOU, THAT DO YE ALSO TO THEM'? How can I hesitate, then, to sacrifice for him all that is dear to me in life?"

His resolution was now made, and he went to the room where his wife and children were sleeping. When he reached it he woke up his wife, and asked her to go into the church and pray for him.

"Go," said he, "and pray for a wretch who sorely needs your prayers."

As she was in the habit of obeying him without murmuring, she got up and went her way. When Amelius was alone he approached the bed in which his two children were sleeping, and gazed at them in silence for some time as they lay asleep with their arms around each other's necks. When the wretched father saw this he leant over the bed and wept bitterly, saying:—

"When was there ever a father that was obliged to slay his own children?"

The little ones woke up just then, stretched out their hands towards him, and smiled. He kissed them and said:—

"Poor children, you smile unconscious that henceforth all joy in this house will be turned to mourning".

Then he drew his sword, and cut off their heads, and after collecting their blood, laid them down again in their bed just as they had been when they were asleep, and returned to Amicus.

"See," said he, "I have made for you a greater sacrifice than that of my own life. You shall now be made whole again."

Thus speaking, he rubbed him with the blood, and instantly Amicus arose hale and hearty. When Amelius had arrayed him in his costliest apparel, the

two friends went together to church to thank God for what He had wrought.

In the church they met the count's wife. She was no longer able to distinguish one from the other, but had to ask which of them was her husband.

"I am Amelius," replied the count, "and this is my good friend Amicus, who has been cured of his leprosy."

"But how did that happen?"

"Ask no questions," answered Amelius with a sigh, "but let us bow down before the decree of God."

After finishing their prayers in church they returned home; but the countess, who perceived Amelius' silent grief, and could not understand it, said to him:—

"Shall we go and fetch our children here, so that they may rejoice with us?"

"They sleep in peace," replied Amelius. "Do not trouble their slumbers."

He himself, however, stole to their room in order to take one more look at their dear faces. Then he beheld a new miracle, for he saw both the boys lying in bed just as he had left them. They were, however, no longer dead, but sleeping and smiling as in their former sleep; only on their necks was seen a small red line like a sword-scar.

Then he understood that the Lord had only wished to try him, and, shouting for joy, he hurried back to Amicus.

"Brother," cried he, "the children are alive; you are guiltless towards me, and no secret remorse shall henceforth disturb our friendship. It has now been tried, and it shall endure as long as we live. We twain have suffered, but now our sorrow is changed into joy."

With these words he clasped Amicus to his breast, and the two friends were nevermore separated from one another.

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