



SEVEN
CHAMPIONS
OF CHRISTENDOM.

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St. Denis of France.

THE
SEVEN CHAMPIONS
OF
CHRISTENDOM



"KINGE ARTHUR, HIS ROUNDE TAIBLE"

LONDON:

JAMES BLACKWOOD AND CO.,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE
SEVEN CHAMPIONS
OF
CHRISTENDOM.

BY RICHARD JOHNSON.

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWARD H. CORBOULD.

LONDON:
JAMES BLACKWOOD & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

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P R E F A C E.

No Work, perhaps, has been more extensively read, and more generally appreciated, than "THE FAMOUS HISTORIE OF THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS OF CHRISTENDOM;" indeed, it is impossible to tell how much this extraordinary production of a comparatively unknown author, may have influenced the early literature of the country. It undoubtedly inspired the poet Spenser, —the first book of whose "Faery Queen" is founded on the first part of the "Champions;" and it is generally believed that Shakspeare was as familiar with this work of Richard Johnson as with those of Plutarch or Chaucer.

In the absence of any particulars of his life, we can only gather from the works attributed to him, that Richard Johnson was an author of repute, towards the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth centuries. Although the "Seven Champions" is the work by which he is best known, he wrote or compiled several volumes of ballads and romances. The first part of the "Seven Champions" was probably published in 1576, and the second part some time before 1580.

The materials which Johnson has so skilfully worked up into a history, equally poetic and romantic, he doubtless found in the traditional tales and knight-errantry common in his day throughout Europe, and which have been largely drawn upon by the romance writers of other countries. There are occasional details and allusions in the original version, which, although, if judged by the standard of the period, they could not fairly be objected to, have been omitted in the present edition, as perhaps too coarse for the more sensitive modern reader; and the work generally has been slightly condensed, where this could be done without affecting the continuity of the narrative.

It is believed that, in its present form, the "Famous Historie" will be acceptable to many who have but a dim recollection of the fascination of its pages before the existing phalanx of modern novels had almost driven it from the field, and will be welcome reading to the youth of both sexes who have had no farther opportunity of making the acquaintance of its heroes than that afforded by the exploits of St George and the Dragon in the arena of an amphitheatre.

LONDON, *November*, 1861.

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THE
SEVEN CHAMPIONS
OF
CHRISTENDOM.

CHAPTER I.

The strange and wonderful birth of St George of England. His being stolen from his nurse, by Kalyb, the Lady of the Woods. Her love to him, and her gifts. He encloses her in a rock of stone, and redeems six Christian knights out of prison.

AFTER the angry gods had ruined the capital city of Phrygia, and turned king Priam's glorious buildings to a waste and desolate wilderness, duke Æneas, driven from his native habitation, with many of his distressed countrymen, wandered about the world, like pilgrims, to find some happy region, where they might erect the Palladium, or image of their subverted Troy; but before that labour could be accomplished, Æneas ended his days in the confines of Italy, and left his son Ascanius to govern in his stead. Ascanius dying, left the sovereign power to Sylvius; from whom it descended to the noble and adventurous Brute, who being

the fourth in lineal descent from Æneas, first conquered this island of Britain, then inhabited with monsters, giants, and a kind of wild people, without any form of government.

Thus began the island of Britain to flourish, not only in magnificent and sumptuous buildings, but in courageous and valiant knights, whose most noble and adventurous attempts in the truly heroic feats of chivalry, Fame shall draw forth, and rescue from the dark and gloomy mansions of oblivion.

The land was now replenished with cities, and divided into shires or counties; dukedoms, earldoms, and lordships were the rewards of merit and noble services performed in martial fields, and not bestowed as bribes to enslave the state, or given to indulge the slothful pride and effeminacy of the flatterers of the prince.

The ancient city of Coventry gave birth to the first Christian hero of England, and the first who ever sought adventures in a foreign land; whose name is to this day held in high esteem through all parts of Europe, and whose bold and magnanimous deeds in arms gave him the title of "The valiant knight, St George of England," whose golden garter is not only worn by nobles, but by kings, and in memory of whose victories the kings of England fight under his banner. It is the history of this worthy champion of our native country, that, by the assistance of the heavenly muse, divine Calliope, I have undertaken to write.

Before his birth, his mother dreamed that she had conceived a dragon, which should cause her death. This frightful dream she long kept secret, till the pain-

ful thought grew so heavy, that she was scarce able to endure it; so taking an opportunity to disclose it to her lord and husband, then lord high steward of England, she struck such terror to his heart, that for a time he stood speechless; but having recovered his lost senses, he answered in this sort:—"My dearest and most beloved lady, what art and science can perform, with all convenient speed shall be essayed; for never will I close my eyes till I have found some skilful person, who will undertake to unfold the mystic meaning of these terrific dreams."

This noble lord, leaving his delightful partner in company with other ladies, who came to comfort her in her melancholy condition, took his journey to the solitary walks of Kalyb, the wise lady of the woods, attended only by a single knight, who bore under his arm a white lamb, which they intended to offer as a sacrifice to the enchantress. Thus travelling, for the space of two days, they came to a thicket beset about with old withered and hollow trees, wherein they were terrified by such dismal croakings of the night raven, hissing of serpents, bellowing of bulls, and roaring of monsters, that it seemed to be rather the habitation of furies than a mortal dwelling; here was the dark and dreary mansion of the enchantress, Kalyb, lady of the woods, in the midst of which she took up her abode, in a lonely cave, which had a strong iron gate at its entrance, whereon there hung a brazen trumpet for those to sound who wanted audience.

The lord and knight, first offering their lamb with all humility before the postern of the cave, then casting off all fear, blew the trumpet, the sound of which seemed

to shake the very foundation of the earth. After which, they heard a loud and hollow voice utter the following words :

“ Sir Knight, from whence thou cam'st return ;
Thou hast a son most strangely born ;
A champion bold, from thee shall spring,
Who'll practise many a wondrous thing ;
Return, therefore, make no delay,
For all is true that here I say.”

This dark riddle, or rather mystic oracle, being thrice repeated in this order, so much amazed them, that they stood in doubt whether it were best to return, or sound the brazen trumpet a second time ; but the lord high steward, being persuaded by the knight not to move the impatience of Kalyb, rested content with the answer she had given them, and, quitting the enchanted cave, made all the speed he could to his native habitation. In the mean time, his lady, being over-anxious with extreme pain and anguish, gave up her own life, to save that of her infant. On his breast Nature had pictured the lively image of a dragon ; upon his right hand a blood-red cross, and a gold garter on his left leg. He was named George, and three nurses were provided for him ; one to nurse him, another to lull and rock him asleep, and the third to prepare his food. But not many days after his birth, the fell enchantress Kalyb, being an utter enemy to all true nobility, by the help of charms and witchcraft, found means to steal away the infant from his careless nurses.

The lord high steward of England at this time returning, how were his expectations frustrated ! he

found his wife in her cold grave, and his son carried he knew not whither. The news of these disasters for a while bereaved him of his wits, and he stood senseless.

He mourned many months for his loss, and sent messengers into every corner of the land to make inquiry after his son; but no man was fortunate enough to return with happy tidings. He, therefore, storing himself with gold and many precious jewels, resolved to travel the world over, to find what he wanted, or to leave his bones in some remote region. So leaving his native country, he wandered from place to place, without success, till, through care and age, his locks were turned to silver grey, and his venerable beard became like down upon a thistle: at length, quite wearied out with grief and fruitless toil, he laid himself down close by the ruined walls of a decayed monastery in the kingdom of Bohemia, and there finished his inquiry and his life together. The common people of the country, coming to the knowledge of his name by a jewel he wore in his bosom, caused it to be engraven on a marble stone, right over the place where he was buried. And there we will leave him to sleep in peace, and return to his son, still kept by Kalyb, the lady of the woods, in her enchanted cave.

And now twice seven times the sun had run his annual course since Kalyb had first in keeping the noble St George of England, whose mind often thirsted after honourable adventures, and who many times attempted to set himself at liberty; but the fell enchantress, regarding him as the apple of her eye, appointed twelve sturdy Satyrs to attend his person, so

that neither force nor policy could further his intent. She kept him not to insult over as a slave, nor triumph in his wretchedness, but daily fed his fancy with all the delights that art or nature could afford; for she placed her whole felicity in him, and loved him for his beauty. But he, seeking glory from martial discipline and knightly achievements, utterly refused her proffered love, and highly disdained so wicked a creature. Whereupon she, seeing how much he neglected her, drawing him to a private part of the cave, began thus to court him:

“Thou knowest, divine youth, how eagerly I have sought thy love, and how I doat upon thy manly charms; yet thou, more cruel than the Lybian tiger, dost reject my sighs and tears. But now, my dear knight, if thou wilt but love me, for thy sake I will show all the power of my magic charms, move heaven, if thou requestest it, to rain down stones in showers upon thy enemies: I will convert the sun and moon to fire and blood, depopulate whole regions, and lay the face of nature waste.”

Our noble knight St George, considering that love might blind the wisest, and guessing, by these fair promises, that he might find an opportunity to obtain his liberty, made her this answer:

“Most wise and learned Kalyb, thou wonder of the world, I will condescend to all thy heart desires upon these conditions: That I may be sole governor and protector of this enchanted cave, and that thou discoverest to me my birth, my name, and parentage.”

She very willingly consented to these terms, and began to answer his demands as follows: “Thou art

by birth," said she, "son to the lord Albert, high steward of England; and from thy birth to this day have I kept thee, as my own child, within these solitary woods." So taking him by the hand, she led him into a brazen castle, wherein were imprisoned six of the bravest knights of the whole world. "These," said she, "are six worthy champions of Christendom: the first is St Denis of France, the second St James of Spain, the third St Anthony of Italy, the fourth St Andrew of Scotland, the fifth St Patrick of Ireland, the sixth St David of Wales; and thou art born to be the seventh, thy name St George of England, for so shalt thou be named in times to come."

Then leading him a little farther, she brought him into a magnificent building, where stood seven of the most beautiful steeds that ever eye beheld. "Six of these," said she, "belong to the six champions, and the seventh, whose name is Bayard, will I bestow on thee." Then she led him to another apartment, where hung the richest armour in the world; there choosing out the strongest corslet from her armoury, she with her own hands buckled it upon his breast, laced on his helmet, and dressed him in the armour: afterwards bringing forth a mighty falchion, she likewise put it in his hand, and said to him: "Thou art now clothed in richer armour than Ninus the first monarch of the world. Thy steed is of such force and invincible power, that whilst thou art mounted on his back, no knight in the world shall be able to conquer thee. Thy armour is of the purest Lybian steel, that no battle-axe can bruise, nor any weapon can pierce. Thy sword, which is called Ascalon, was made by the

Cyclops; it will hew in sunder the hardest flint, or cut the strongest steel; and in its pummel there lies such magic virtue, that neither treason, witchcraft, nor any other violence can be offered to thee so long as thou wearest it.

Thus the enchantress, Kalyb, was so blinded by the love she had for him, that she not only bestowed all the riches of her cave upon him, but gave him power and authority, by putting a silver wand in his hand, to work her own destruction. For coming by a huge rock of stone, he struck it with this enchanted wand, whereupon it immediately opened, and exposed to view a vast number of young infants, whom the enchantress had murdered by her witchcraft and sorceries. "This said she, "is a place of horror, where nought is heard but shrieks and groans of dying men and babes; but if your ears can endure to hear, and eyes behold them, I will lead you that way." So the lady of the woods, boldly stepping in before, and little suspecting any danger from the secret policy of St George, was deceived in her own practices; for no sooner had she entered the rock, but he struck the silver wand thereon, and it closed in an instant; and there confined her to bellow forth her lamentable complaints to senseless stones, without any hope of being released.

Thus this noble knight punished the wicked enchantress, Kalyb, and likewise set the other six champions at liberty, who rendered him all knightly courtesies, and gave him thanks for their safe deliverance. So providing themselves with all things suiting their generous purposes, they took their journey from the enchanted grove. Their proceedings, fortunes, and heroical adventures, shall be shown in the chapters following.

CHAPTER II.

St George slays the burning dragon in Egypt, and redeems Sabra, the king's daughter, from death. Is betrayed by Almidor, the black king of Morocco, and sent to the Soldan of Persia, where he slew two lions, and remained seven years in prison.

AFTER the seven champions departed from the enchanted cave of Kalyb, they made their abode in the city of Coventry for the space of nine months; in which time they erected a sumptuous monument over the remains of St George's mother. And at that time of the year when Flora had embroidered the green mantle of the spring, they armed themselves like knights-errant, and took their journey to seek for foreign adventures, accounting nothing more dishonourable than to spend their time in idleness, and not achieve somewhat that might make their names memorable to posterity. So travelling thirty days without any adventures worth noting, at length they came to a broad plain, where stood a brazen pillar, and where seven several ways met, which the worthy knights thought a proper place to take leave of each other, and every one went a contrary road; we will, for this time, likewise take leave of six, that we may accompany the fortunes of our English knight, who, after many months' travel by sea and land, happily arrived within the territories of Egypt, which country was then greatly annoyed by a dangerous dragon. But before he had journeyed far in that kingdom, the silent night outspread her sable wings, and a still horror seemed to cover every part of nature. At length, he came to a poor old hermitage, wherein he proposed to seek some repose for himself and

horse, till the rosy-fingered morning should again re-luminate the vault of heaven, and light him on his destined course. On entering the cottage, he found an ancient hermit, bowing under the weight of age, and almost consumed with holy watching and religious tears, to whom he thus addressed himself :

“Father, may a traveller, for this night, crave shelter with you for himself and horse ; or can you direct me to any town or village to which I may proceed on my journey with safety.”

The old man, starting at the sudden approach of St George, made him answer :

“That he need not to inquire of his country, for he knew it by his burgonet,” (for indeed thereon were engraved the arms of England.) “But I sorrow,” continued he, “for thy hard fortune, and that it is thy destiny to arrive in this our country of Egypt, wherein those alive are scarce sufficient to bury the dead ; such cruel devastation is made through the land by a most terrible and dangerous dragon, now ranging up and down the country ; the raging appetite of which must every day be appeased with the body of a virgin, whom he swalloweth down his envenomed throat ; and whenever this horrid sacrifice is omitted, he breathes such a pestiferous stench as occasions a mortal plague. And this having been practised for twenty-four years, there is not now one virgin left throughout all Egypt but the king’s daughter ; and she, to-morrow, is to be made an offering to the dragon, unless there can be any brave knight found who shall have courage enough to encounter him, and kill him ; and then, the king hath promised to give such a knight his daughter, whose

life he shall have saved, in marriage, with the crown of Egypt after his decease."

This royal reward so animated the English knight, that he vowed he would either save the king's daughter, or lose his own life in so glorious an enterprise. So taking his repose that night in the old man's hermitage, till the cheerful cock, the true messenger of day, gave him notice of the sun's uprise, which caused him to buckle on his armour, and harness his steed with all the strong caparisons of war, he took his journey, guided only by the hermit, to the valley, where the king's daughter was to be offered up in sacrifice. When he approached within sight of the valley, he saw at a distance the most amiable and beautiful virgin that ever eyes beheld, arrayed in a pure white Arabian silk, being led to the place of death, accompanied by many sage and modest matrons. The courage of the brave English knight was so stimulated by this melancholy scene that he thought every minute a whole day till he could rescue her from the threatened danger, and save her from the insatiable jaws of the fiery dragon; so advancing towards the lady, he gave her hopes that her deliverance was at hand, and begged her to return to her father's court.

The noble knight, like a bold and daring hero, then entered the valley where the dragon had his abode, who no sooner had sight of him, than his leathern throat sent forth a sound more terrible than thunder. The size of this fell dragon was fearful to behold, for, from his shoulders to his tail, the length was fifty feet; the glittering scales upon his body were as bright as silver, but harder than brass; his belly was of the colour of

gold, and larger than a tun. Thus weltered he from his hideous den, and so fiercely assailed the gallant champion with his burning wings, that at the first encounter he had almost felled him to the ground; but the knight, nimbly recovering himself, gave the dragon such a thrust with his spear, that it shivered in a thousand pieces! upon which, the furious dragon smote him so violently with his venomous tail, that he brought both man and horse to the ground, and sorely bruised two of St George's ribs in the fall; but he, stepping backwards, chanced to get under an orange-tree, which had that rare virtue in it, that no venomous creature durst come within the compass of its branches; and here the valiant knight rested himself, till he had recovered his former strength. But he no sooner felt his spirits revive, than, with an eager courage, he smote the burning dragon under his yellow burnished belly, with his trusty sword Ascalon; and from the wound there came such an abundance of black venom, that it spouted on the armour of the knight, which, by the mere force of the poison, burst in two, and he himself fell on the ground, where he lay for some time quite senseless, but had luckily rolled himself under the orange-tree, where the dragon had not power to offer him any farther violence. The fruit of this tree was of that excellence, that whoever tasted it was immediately cured of all manner of wounds and diseases.

Now it was the noble champion's good fortune to recover himself a little by the pure aroma of the tree, and then he chanced to espy an orange which had lately dropped from it, by tasting of which he was so refreshed, that in a short time he was as sound as

when he began the encounter. Then knelt he down and made his humble supplication, that heaven would send him such strength and agility of body as might enable him to slay the fell monster; which being done, with a bold and courageous heart, he smote the dragon under the wing, where it was tender and without scale, whereby his good sword Ascalon, with an easy passage, went to the very hilt, through the dragon's liver and heart; from whence there issued such an abundance of reeking gore, as turned all the grass in the valley to a crimson hue; and the ground, which was before parched up by the burning breath of the dragon, was now drenched in the moisture that proceeded from his venomous bowels, the loss of which forced him to yield his vital spirit to the champion's conquering sword.

The noble knight, St George of England, having performed this, first paid due honour to the Almighty for his victory; and then, with his sword, cut off the dragon's head, and fixed it on a truncheon made of that spear which, at the beginning of the battle, shivered in pieces against the dragon's scaly back. During this long and dangerous combat, his trusty steed lay, as it were, in a swoon, without any motion; but the English champion now squeezing the juice of one of the oranges in his mouth, the virtue of it immediately expelled the venom of the poison, and he recovered his former strength.

There was then in the Egyptian court, and had been for some time, Almidor, the black king of Morocco, who had long sought the love of Sabra, the king's daughter; but by no policy or means could he accomplish what his heart desired. And now, having less

hope than ever, by the successful combat of St George with the dragon, he resolved to try the utmost power of art, and treacherously despoil the victor of his laurels, with which he falsely designed to crown his own temples, and thereby obtain the grace of the lady, who loathed his company, and more detested his person than the crocodile of the Nile. But even as the wolf barks in vain against the moon, so shall this fantastical and cowardly Almidor attempt in vain to seize the glory won by the English knight; although he had hired, by gifts and promises, twelve Egyptian knights to beset the valley where St George slew the burning dragon, who were to deprive him by force of the spoils of his conquest. Thus, when the magnanimous champion came riding in triumph from the valley, expecting to have been received as a conqueror, with drums and trumpets, or to have heard the bells throughout the kingdom ringing with the joyful peals of victory, and every street illuminated with bonfires and blazing tapers; contrary to his expectation, he was met with a troop of armed knights, not to conduct him in triumph to the Egyptian court, but, by insidious baseness and treachery, to deprive him of his life, and the glory he had that day so nobly acquired by his invincible arms: for no sooner had he passed the entrance of the valley, than he saw the Egyptian knights brandishing their weapons, and dividing themselves, to intercept him in his journey to the court. So, tying his horse to a tree, he resolved to try his fortune on foot, there being twelve to one; yet did St George, at the first onset, so valiantly behave himself with his trusty sword Ascalon, that, at one stroke,

he slew three of the Egyptian knights, and before the golden chariot of the sun had gone another hour in its diurnal course, some he had dismembered of their heads and limbs, and some he had cut in two, so that their entrails fell to the earth, and not one was left alive to carry home the news of their defeat. Almidor, the black king, stood the whole time of the battle on the top of a mountain, to behold the success of his hired champions; but when he saw the dismal catastrophe of these mercenary knights, and how the good fortune of the English champion had carried the honour of the day, he cursed his destiny, and accused blind chance of cruelty in thus disappointing the hopes of his treacherous enterprise: but having a heart full fraught with malice and envy, he secretly vowed to himself that he would practise some other treachery to bring St George to destruction. So running before to the court of king Ptolemy, and without relating what had happened to the twelve Egyptian knights, he cried out, "Victoria, Victoria, the enemy of Egypt is slain!" Upon which, Ptolemy ordered every street of the city of Memphis to be hung with rich arras and embroidered tapestry, and likewise provided a sumptuous chariot of massive gold, the wheels and other timberwork whereof were of the purest ebony; the covering, rich silk embossed with gold; this, with a hundred of the noblest peers of Egypt, attired in crimson velvet, mounted on milk-white coursers, richly caparisoned, attended the arrival of St George, who was conducted in the most solemn manner into the city, all the loftiest as well as the sweetest instruments of music both going before and following after the resplendent chariot in which he was

drawn to the court of king Ptolemy; where he surrendered up the trophies of his conquest into the hands of the beauteous Sabra, who was so ravished with the noble person and princely presence of the English knight, that, for a time, she was scarcely able to speak; but having recovered herself, she took him by the hand, and led him to a rich pavilion, where she unbuckled his armour, and with the most precious salves soothed his wounds, and with fine linen cloths wiped off the blood; after which, she conducted him to a rich repast, furnished with all manner of delicate meats, where the king her father was present, who inquired of his country, parentage, and name. After the banquet was over, he conferred on him the honour of knighthood, and put upon his feet a pair of golden spurs. But the lovely princess, his daughter, could feast on nothing but the hopes of the champion's love; and, having attended him to his night's repose, she sat near his bed, and striking the melodious strings of her lute, lulled him to rest with the sweetest harmony that ever was heard.

No sooner had the morn displayed her beauties in the east, and gilded with her radiant beams the mountain tops, than Sabra repaired to the English champion's lodgings, and presented him with a diamond of inestimable value, which she prayed him to wear on his finger, not only as an ornament, but as it was endued with many most excellent and occult virtues. The next who entered the room was Almidor, the treacherous black king of Morocco, having a bowl of Greek wine in his hand, which he offered to the noble champion St George of England; but when he stretched forth his arm to accept the same, the dia-

mond, which the fair Sabra had made him a present of, waxed pale, and from his nose fell three drops of blood, which the king's daughter observing, suspected some secret poison to be infused in the wine; whereupon she shrieked out so loudly, and so suddenly, that it alarmed the whole court, and carried her suspicions to the ears of her father; but so great was his love for the black king, that he would not give credit to any thing which could be suggested against him.

Thus was Almidor a second time prevented in his evil designs, which made him more enraged than a chased boar; yet, resolving the third attempt should pay for all, he impatiently expected another opportunity to put his fiendish purposes in execution.

St George remained many days at the Egyptian court, sometimes revelling among the gentlemen, dancing and sporting among the ladies, at other times in tilts, tournaments, and other noble and heroic exercises; and all that time was the breast of the beauteous Sabra inflamed with the most ardent love for him, of which the treacherous Almidor had intelligence from many secret sources, and many times his own ears were witnesses to their meetings. One evening in particular, after sunset, it was his fortune to wander near a garden wall to taste the cooling air, where the two lovers, without seeing him, were seated in a bower of jessamine, and after much talk, he heard the love-sick Sabra thus complain:—

“ My soul's delight, my noble George of England, dearer than all the world beside, why art thou more obdurate than the flint, since all my falling tears can never mollify thy heart? Not all the sighs, the many

thousand sighs, I have sent as messengers of my true love, were ever yet requited with a smile. Refuse not her, my dear-loved lord of England, refuse not her, that, for thy sake, would leave her parents, country, and inheritance, although that inheritance be the crown of Egypt, and would follow thee as a pilgrim through the wide world. The sun shall sooner lose his splendour, the pale moon drop from her orb, the sea forget to ebb and flow, and all things change the course ordained by nature, than Sabra, heiress of Egypt, prove inconstant to St George of England; let then, the priests of Hymen knit that gordian knot, the knot of wedlock, which death alone has power to untie."

These words so fired the champion's heart, that he who before had never given way to any passion but the love of arms, was almost entangled in the snares of love. Yet, to try her patience a little more, he made her this answer:

"Lady of Egypt, art thou not content that I have risked my own life to preserve yours, but you would have me also sacrifice my honour, give over the chase of dazzling glory, lay all my warlike trophies in a woman's lap, and change my truncheon for a distaff.—No! Sabra; George of England is a knight, born in a country where true chivalry is nourished, and hath sworn to see the world, as far as the lamp of heaven can lend him light, before he is fettered in the chains of wedlock. Therefore, think no more of one that is a stranger, a wanderer from place to place, but cast your eyes on one more worthy your own high rank. Why do you decline the suit of Almidor, who is a king, and

would think no task too arduous to obtain your love?"

At which words, she instantly replied :

"The fell king of Morocco is more blood-minded than a serpent, but thou as gentle as a lamb; his tongue more ominous than the screeching night owl, but thine sweeter than the morning lark; his touch more odious than the biting snake, but thine more pleasant than the curling vine. What if thou art a stranger to our land, thou art more precious to my heart, and more delightful to my eyes, than crowns and diadems."

"But stay," replied the English champion: "I am a Christian, madam; thou a Pagan. I honour God in heaven; you, a vile impostor here below. Therefore, if you would obtain my love, you must forsake your Mohammed, and be baptized into the Christian faith." "With all my soul," replied the Egyptian lady; "I will forsake my country's gods, and for thy love become a Christian." And thereupon she broke a ring, and gave him one half as a pledge of her love, and kept the other half herself; and so, for that time went out of the garden.

The treacherous Almidor, who had listened during all this discourse, was galled to the very heart to hear how much his mistress despised him and his proffered love; but was now resolved to strike a bold stroke with the king her father, to separate her from his too successful rival; and, accordingly, hastened away to the Egyptian king, and, prostrating himself before him, declared that he had overheard a deep-concerted plan of treason, laid between his daughter and the English knight; that she had given him a solemn pledge of

love, and with that pledge a promise to forsake the faith of Egypt, set the great prophet at defiance, and embrace the Christian doctrine.

“Now, by our holy prophet,” replied the king, “this hated Christian shall not reap the harvest of our daughter’s love, for he shall lose his head, though not in our court, where we have heaped such honours on him. But, Almidor, be secret, and I will acquaint you with my purpose : I will send him to my kinsman, the Soldan of Persia ; from whom he shall never more return to Egypt, except his ghost bring tidings of his fate in that country.” And to answer this purpose they contrived between them the following letter :

‘ To the Soldan of Persia,

‘ I, Ptolemy, king of Egypt, and the eastern territories, send greeting to thee, the mighty Soldan of Persia, great emperor of the provinces of the larger Asia. I make this my request, trusting to the league of friendship between us, that thou put the bearer hereof, thy slave, to death ; for he is an utter enemy to all Asia and Africa, and a proud contemner of our religion. Therefore fail not hereof, as thou tenderest our mutual friendship. So we bid thee, farewell.

‘ Thy kinsman,

‘ PTOLEMY, King of Egypt.’

As soon as this letter was signed and sealed with the great seal of Egypt, St George was sent in embassy with the bloody sentence of his own destruction ; and was sworn, by the honour of knighthood, to deliver it safe ; leaving behind him, as a pledge of his fidelity, his good steed, and trusty sword Ascalon, in the keeping of Ptolemy, taking with him only one of the king’s horses, for his easy travelling.

On the day that St George reached the Soldan's court, there was a solemn procession in honour of the false prophet Mohammed, with which the English champion was so moved, that he tore down their ensigns and streamers, and trampled them under his feet: upon which the infidels presently fled to the Soldan for succour, and showed him how a strange knight had despised their prophet, and trod their banners in the dust. Whereupon he sent a hundred of his armed knights to know the cause of that sudden uproar, and to bring the Christian champion bound into his presence; but he entertained these Persian knights with such a bloody banquet, that most of their heads were tumbled in the dirty streets, and the channels overflowed with streams of their blood; the pavement before the palace was almost covered with slaughtered men, and the walls were besprinkled with purple gore. At last the alarm-bell was rung, and the beacons set on fire; upon which the populace rose in arms, and came flocking about the English champion, like swarms of bees; whereat, through his long fatigue, and the multitude of his enemies, his undaunted courage was forced to yield, and his resistless arm, wearied with the fight, constrained to let his weapon fall to the ground. And thus he, whose valour had sent thousands to wander on the banks of Acheron, stood now obedient to the mercy of his enemies, who, with their brandished weapons and sharp-edged falchions, environed him about.

“Now, bloody-minded monster,” said the Soldan, “what countryman soe'er thou art, Jew, Pagan, or misbelieving Christian, look for a sentence of severe

punishment for every drop of blood thy unhappy hand hath here shed ; first, thy skin shall be flayed from off thy flesh alive ; next, thy flesh shall be torn with red-hot pincers from thy bones : and lastly, thy limbs parted from each other by wild horses." This bloody sentence being pronounced by the Soldan, St George answered in the following manner :

"Great potentate of Asia, I crave the liberty and law of arms, whereby all the kings of the earth are by oath for ever bound. First, in my native country, my descent is of royal blood, and therefore I challenge a combat ; secondly, I am an ambassador from the mighty Ptolemy, king of Egypt ; therefore is my person sacred : lastly, the laws of Asia, and indeed of all nations, grant me a safe conduct back ; and Ptolemy is answerable for every thing I have done."

Thereupon he delivered the letter, sealed with the great seal of Egypt, which was no sooner broken open and read, than the Soldan's eyes sparkled with fire, and upon his brow sat the image of wrath and indignation.

"By the report of Ptolemy," said the Soldan, "thou art a great contemner of our holy prophet, and his laws ; therefore his pleasure is, that you be put to death ; which, I swear by Mohammed, shall be fulfilled."

Upon this he gave him over to the safe custody of a hundred of his guards, till the time of execution, which was ordered to be in thirty days. Hereupon they disrobed him of his rich apparel, and clothed him in base and servile weeds ; his arms, that were lately employed in supporting the mighty target, and wielding the

weighty battle-axe, were now strongly fettered with iron bolts; and those hands which were wont to be garnished with steel gauntlets, they bound with hempen cords, till the purple blood started from his fingers' ends; and being thus despoiled of all knightly dignity, he was conveyed to a dark dungeon where the light of heaven was never seen, nor could the glorious sun send one gladdening ray to show a difference betwixt day and night. All his comfort was to reckon up the number of Persians he had slain; sometimes his restless thoughts were pondering on ungrateful Ptolemy, and sometimes running on the charms of lovely Sabra, distracted with reflecting how she had borne his sudden departure.

Thus Sorrow was his companion, and Despair his chief solicitor, till Hyperion's golden car had rested thirty times in the purple palace of Thetis; which was the precise time allotted by the Soldan of Persia for him to live; so expecting every minute the wished-for messenger of death, he heard afar off the terrible roaring of two lions, which for the space of four days had been restrained from food and natural sustenance, that with the more eagerness and fury they might satiate their hunger with the body of the thrice-renowned English champion. The cry of these lions so terrified his mind, that the hair of his head grew stiff; on his brow were large drops of sweat, and in his soul arose such fire and rage, that with violence he broke his chains asunder, then rent his amber coloured hair from his head, with which he wrapped his arms, preparing for the assault of the lions, which he imagined were designed to be the executioners of the Soldan's sentence

against him, as indeed they were; and at that instant the guards, who brought them, let them out of the dungeon upon him. But such was his invincible fortitude, and so careful was he in his defence, that when the starved lions came running on him with open jaws, he courageously thrust his sinewy arms, which were covered with the hair of his head, into their throats, whereby they were presently choked, and he then pulled out their hearts.

Which spectacle the Soldan's guards beholding, were so amazed with fear, that they ran in all haste to the palace to acquaint the Soldan with what had happened, who thereupon commanded every part of the court to be guarded with armed soldiers, supposing the English knight rather some monster, from the infernal regions, than one of the human species. And such terror seized the Soldan, when he heard that he had killed the two lions, after having slaughtered two thousand Persians with his own hands; and being likewise informed of his having destroyed the burning dragon of Egypt, that he caused the dungeon wherein he was kept, to be doubly fortified with iron bars, lest, by force or stratagem, the champion should recover his liberty, and thereby endanger the whole kingdom of Persia. Here, for the term of seven winters, he remained in the greatest want and distress, feeding upon rats, and mice, and creeping worms, which he caught in the dungeon; nor tasting, in that whole time, any bread but what was made of bran, and drinking only channel water, which was daily served him through the iron gates. Here we will now leave St George, languishing under want and oppression, and return to

Égypt, where we left Sabra, the champion's betrothed lady, lamenting the absence of him whom she loved dearer than all the world besides.

Sabra was the fairest virgin that ever eye beheld. In her nature had shown the utmost perfection; her body was straighter than the stately cedar, and the tincture of her skin surpassed the beauty of the Paphian queen; but one was bending with her weight of woes, and the other tarnished with the brackish tears that daily trickled down her cheeks, whereon sat the image of discontent, and she herself seemed a mirror of patient sorrow. All company was loathsome to her sight; she shunned even the fellowship of those ladies who were once her most intimate companions, and betook herself to a solitary chamber, where, with her needle, she amused the time; and having wrought the figures of many a bleeding heart, she bathed them with the tears that fell from her eyes; then, with her auburn locks that hung in wanton ringlets down her neck, she dried them up; and thinking on the plighted promises of her dearly-loved knight, fell into these sad complainings:

“O Love!” said she, “more sharp than keenest razors, with what inequality dost thou torment my wounded heart, not linking my dear lord's in like affection with it. O Venus! whom both gods and men obey, if thou art absolute in thy power, command my wandering lord to return, or let my soul be wafted to his sweet bosom, where my bleeding heart already is enshrined. But, foolish fondling that I am! he hath rejected me, and even shuns my father's court, where he was honoured and esteemed, to wander through the

world to seek another love. No, no, it cannot be; he is more constant, his mind more noble than to forget his plighted vows; and much I fear some treachery has bereft me of him, some stony prison keeps him from me, for only chains and fetters could thus long withhold him from me. If so, sweet Morpheus, god of golden dreams, reveal to me my love's abode, show me in sleep the shadow of his lovely form, give me to know the reason of his sudden departure, and of his long and painful absence."

After this exclamation, she closed her radiant eyes in sleep, when presently the very image, as she thought, of her dearly-loved knight, St George, appeared; not as he was wont, in shining arms, and with his burgonet of glittering steel, nor mounted on his stately steed, decked with a crimson plume of spangled feathers, but in worn-out and simple attire, with pale looks and emaciated body, like a ghost just risen from the silent grave, breathing, as it were, the following sad and woful expressions:

Sabra, I am betrayed for love of thee,
 And lodged in cave as dark as night;
 From whence I never more, ah woe is me!
 Shall have the pleasure of thy beauteous sight:
 Remain thou true and constant for my sake,
 That of my absence none may 'vantage make.

Let tyrants know, if ever I obtain
 What now is lost by treason's faithless guile,
 False Egypt's scourge I ever will remain,
 And turn to streaming blood Morocco's soil.
 That hateful prince of Barbary shall rue
 The fell revenge that is his treason's due.

The Persian towers shall smoke with fire,
 And lofty Babylon be tumbled down;

The cross of Christendom shall then aspire
To wear the proud Egyptian triple crown.
Jerusalem and Judah shall behold
The fall of kings by Christian champions bold.

Thou maid of Egypt, still continue chaste,
A tiger seeks thy virgin's name to spoil;
Whilst George of England is in prison placed,
Thou shalt be forced to wed against thy will;
But after this shall happen mighty things,
For from thy self shall spring three wondrous kings.

This strange and woful speech was no sooner ended, but she awakened from her sleep, and presently stretched out her arms, thinking to embrace him, but met with nothing but empty air, which caused her to renew her former complaints.

“Oh! wherefore died I not in this my troublesome dream,” said the sorrowful lady, “that my ghost might have haunted those inhuman monsters who have thus betrayed the bravest champion that the eye of heaven, or the sons of earth, have ever beheld? For his sake will I exclaim against the ingratitude of Egypt, and fill every corner of the land with echoes of his wrongs. My woes are greater, and by far exceed the sorrows of Dido, queen of Carthage, mourning for Æneas.”

At last, her father, understanding what ardent affection she bore to the English champion, spoke to her in this manner :

“Daughter, I charge thee, on the obedience and duty which thou owest to me, both as thy father and thy king, to banish from thy thoughts all fond affection for the wandering knight whom thou hast unworthily made the object of thy love, for he hath neither

home nor habitation. Thou seest he has forsaken thee, and in his travels is wedded to another. Therefore, as you value my love, or dread my displeasure, I charge thee again to think no more of him; but cast your eyes on the black king of Morocco, who is deserving of thee, and whose nuptials with thee I intend to celebrate in Egypt shortly, with all the honours due to my own and his high rank."

Having said these words, he departed, without waiting for an answer; by which fair Sabra knew he was not to be thwarted in his will. Therefore she poured forth these sad words:

"O unkind father! to cross the affection of thy child, and thus force love where there is no liking; yet shall my mind continue true to my dearly-loved lord; although I be forced to obey, and marry Almidor, yet shall English George alone possess my heart.

Which words were no sooner ended, than Almidor entered her chamber, and presented her with a wedding-garment, which was of the purest Median silk, embossed with pearls and glittering gold, and perfumed with Syrian powders; it was of the colour of the lily, when Flora has bedecked the fields in May with nature's ornaments; glorious and costly were her vestures, and so stately were the nuptial rites solemnized, that Egypt admired the grandeur of her wedding, which for seven days was held in the court of Ptolemy, and afterwards at Tripoli, the chief city of Barbary, where Almidor's reluctant bride was crowned queen of Morocco; at which coronation the conduits ran with Greek wine, and the streets of Tripoli were beautified with pageants and delightful

shows. The court resounded with melodious harmony, as though Apollo with his silver harp had descended from the heavens; such tilts and tournaments were performed betwixt the Egyptian knights and the knights of Barbary, that they exceeded the nuptials of Hecuba, the beautiful queen of Troy. These revellers we leave for this time to their own enjoyments, some masking, some dancing, some singing, some tilting, some banquetting. We also leave the champion of England, St George, mourning in his horrible dungeon in Persia, and return to the other six champions of Christendom, who departed from the brazen pillar, every one his several way, whose knightly and noble adventures, if the Muses grant me their assistance, I will most amply detail, to the honour of Christendom.

CHAPTER III.

St Denis, the champion of France, lives seven year in the shape of a hart; and proud Eglantine, the king of Thessaly's daughter, is transformed into a mulberry tree; they recover their former shapes by means of St Denis's horse, and travel to the Thessalian court.

WE now call to mind the long and weary travels of St Denis, the worthy champion of France, after his departure from the other six champions at the brazen pillar, as you heard in the beginning of the former chapter, from which he wandered through many a desolate grove and wilderness, without any adventure worth noting, till he arrived upon the borders of Thessaly, (at that time a land inhabited only by wild beasts;) wherein he endured such a scarcity of victuals, that he

was forced, for the space of seven years, to feed upon the herbs of the field, and the fruits of trees, till the hairs of his head were like eagles' feathers, and the nails of his fingers like birds' claws; his drink, the dew of heaven, which he licked from the flowers of the field; his attire, the bay leaves and broad docks that grew in the wood; his shoes, in which he travelled through many a thorny brake, the bark of trees. But at last, it was his fortune, or cruel destiny, (being overprest with the extremity of hunger), to taste and feed upon the berries of an enchanted mulberry tree, whereby he lost the lively form and image of his human substance, and was transformed into the shape and likeness of a wild hart; which strange and sudden transformation, this noble champion little suspected, till he espied his misshapen form in a clear fountain, which nature had made in a cool and shady valley; but when he beheld the shadow of his deformed body, and how his head, lately honoured with a burgonet of steel, was now disgraced with a pair of sylvan horns; his countenance, which was the index of his noble mind, now covered with the likeness of a brute: and his body, which was erect, tall, smooth, and fair, now bending to earth on four feet, and clothed in a rough hairy hide of a dusky brown colour; having his reason still left, he ran again to the mulberry-tree, supposing the berries he had eaten to be the cause of his transformation, and there laying himself upon the ground, he thus began to complain:

“What magic charms, or what bewitching spells,” said he, “are contained in this cursed tree, whose deceitful fruit hath confounded my future fortunes,

and reduced me to this miserable condition? O thou celestial Ruler of the world! O merciful power of heaven! look down with pity on my hapless state; incline thine ears to listen to my woes; I, who was a man am now an horned beast; a soldier, once my country's champion, now a timorous deer, the prey of dogs; my glittering armour changed into a hairy hide, and my brave array, now vile as common earth; henceforth, instead of princely palaces, these shady woods must be my sole retreat, wherein my bed of down must be a heap of sun-dried moss; my sweet music, blustering winds, that with tempestuous gusts make the whole wilderness tremble; the company I am obliged henceforth to keep, must be the Sylvan Satyrs, Dryads, and airy Nymphs, who never appear to human eyes, but at twilight or the midnight moon; the stars that beautify the crystal vault and wide expanse of heaven, shall hereafter serve as torches to light me to my woful bed; scowling clouds shall be my canopy; and my clock, to give me notice how the time runs stealing on, the dismal sounds of hissing snakes or croaking toads!"

Thus during many days this champion of France continued in the shape of a hart, in greater misery than the unfortunate English champion in Persia, not knowing how to recover his former shape and human substance. But one day, as he lamented the loss of his natural form, under the branches of that enchanted mulberry-tree, which was the cause of his transformation, he heard a most grievous and terrible groan, upon which, suspending his sorrows for a time, he heard a hollow voice breathe from the trunk of the tree the following words:

Cease to lament, thou famous man of France,
 With gentle ears come listen to my moan;
 In former time it was my fatal chance
 To be the proudest maid that e'er was known;
 By birth I was the daughter of a king,
 Though now a breathless tree, and senseless thing.

My pride was such that heaven confounded me—
 A goddess in my own conceit I was:
 What nature lent, too base I thought to be,
 But deemed myself all others to surpass;
 And therefore nectar and ambrosia sweet,
 The food of heaven, for me I counted meet.

My pride despised the finest bread of wheat,
 And purer food I daily sought to find!
 Refined gold was boil'd, and formed my meat,
 Such self-conceit my senses all did blind;
 For which the gods above transformed me
 From human substance to this senseless tree.

Seven years in shape of hart thou must remain,
 And then the purple rose, by Heaven's decree,
 Shall bring thee to thy former shape again,
 And end at last thy woful misery;
 When this is done, be sure you cut in twain
 This fatal tree wherein I do remain.

After he had heard these words he was so much amazed at the strangeness thereof, that for some moments he was deprived of speech; and the thoughts of his long-continued punishment bereaved him of his understanding; but at last, recovering his senses, he bitterly complained of his misfortunes.

“Oh! unhappy creature,” said the distressed champion, “more miserable than Progne in her transformation, and more unfortunate than Actæon, whose perfect picture I am made! His misery continued but a short time; for his own dogs, the same day, tore him into

a thousand pieces, and buried his transformed carcass in their hungry bowels; but mine is appointed by the angry destinies, till seven times the summer's sun shall yearly replenish its radiant brightness, and seven times the winter's rain shall wash me with the showers of heaven."

Such were the complaints of the transformed knight of France, sometimes remembering his former fortunes, how he had spent his days in the honour of his country; at other times thinking upon the place of his nativity, renowned France, the nurse and mother of his youth; and again treading with his foot (for hands he had none) in sandy ground, the print of the words which he had heard from the mulberry-tree, and often times numbering the minutes of his tedious punishment. But during the whole term of his seven years' misery, his trusty steed never once forsook him, but with all love and diligence attended on him day and night, never straying from his side; and if extreme heat in summer, or pinching cold in winter, grew troublesome to him, his horse would shelter and defend him.

At last, after the term of seven years had fully expired, when he was to recover his former substance and human shape, his good horse, which he regarded as the apple of his eye, clambered a high and steep mountain, which nature had beautified with all kinds of fragrant flowers, as odoriferous as the gardens of the Hesperides; from whence he pulled a branch of purple roses and brought it betwixt his teeth to his distressed master, still lying in the same disorder and discontent, under the mulberry-tree. The champion of France no sooner beheld this, than he remembered

that by a purple rose he should recover his former shape, and so joyfully received the roses from his trusty steed; then casting his eyes up to heaven, he conveyed these consecrated flowers into his empty stomach.

After which he lay down upon the bosom of his mother earth, where he fell into such a sound sleep, that all his senses and vital spirits ceased to perform their usual offices for the space of four-and-twenty hours, in which time the windows and doors of heaven were opened, from whence descended such a shower of rain, that it washed away his hairy coat and beast-like shape; his horned head and long visage were turned again into a lively countenance; and all the rest of his members, arms, legs, hands, feet, fingers, toes, with all the rest of nature's gifts, received their former shape.

But when the good champion awakened from his sleep, and perceived the wonderful goodness of heaven, in transforming him to his human likeness, he first gave honour to Almighty God; next, blessed the ground whereon he had lived so long in misery; then beholding his armour, which lay near him, quite stained, and almost spoiled with rust; his burgonet and keen-edged sword besmeared over with dust; and lastly, pondering in his mind the faithful service his trusty steed had done him, during the time of his calamity, whose sable-coloured mane hung frizzling down his brawny neck, which before was wont to be platted curiously with artificial knots, and his forehead, which was always beautified with a tawny plume of feathers, now disfigured with overgrown hair, the good champion, St

Denis of France, was so grieved, that he stroked down his jetty back till the hair of his body lay as smooth as Arabian silk; he then pulled out his trusty falchion, which in so many fierce assaults, and dangerous combats, had been bathed in the blood of his enemies, but by the long continuance of time lying idle, was now almost consumed with cankered rust, and by great labour and industry, he recovered its former beauty and brightness.

Thus both his sword and horse, his martial furniture, and all other habiliments of war, being brought to their first and proper condition, the noble champion resolved to pursue his intended adventure in cutting down the mulberry-tree; so taking his sword, which was of the purest Spanish steel, he made such a stroke at the root thereof, that at one blow he cut it quite asunder, from whence immediately flashed such a mighty flame of fire, that the mane was burnt from his horse's neck, and even the hair of his own head would have been fired had not his helmet preserved it. No sooner was the flame extinguished, but there ascended from the hollow tree a virgin, (in shape like Daphne, whom Apollo turned into a bay-tree,) fairer than Pygmalion's ivory image, or the northern snow; her eyes more clear than the icy mountains, her cheeks like roses dipped in milk, her lips more lovely than Turkish rubies, her alabaster teeth like Indian pearls, her neck seemed an ivory tower; the rest of nature's lineaments a stain to Juno, Pallas, or Venus: at whose excellent beauty, this valiant and undaunted champion was more astonished than at her wonderful transformation; for his eyes were ravished with such exceeding

pleasure, that his tongue could remain no longer silent, but was forced to unfold the secrets of his heart, and in these terms he began to utter his mind :

“Thou most divine and singular ornament of nature!” said he, “fairer than the feathers of the sylvan swan that swims upon Meander’s crystal streams, and far more beautiful than Aurora’s morning countenance, to thee, the fairest of thy sex, most humbly, and only to thy beauty, do I here submit my affections. Also I swear, by the honour of my knighthood, and by the love of my country of France, whether thou art an angel descended from heaven, or a fury ascended from the vast dominions of Proserpine ; whether thou art some fairy or sylvan nymph, which inhabits this fatal wood, or else an earthly creature, for thy sins transformed into this mulberry-tree ; I cannot judge. Therefore, sweet saint, to whom my heart must pay its due devotion, unfold to me thy birth, parentage, and name, that I may the bolder presume upon thy courtesies.” At which demand, this new-born virgin, with a shame-faced look, modest gesture, sober grace, and blushing countenance, began thus to reply :

“Sir knight, by whom my life, my love, and fortunes are to be commanded, and by whom my human shape and natural form are recovered ; first know, that I am by birth the king of Thessaly’s daughter, and my name was called for my beauty, proud Eglantine ; for which contemptuous pride, I was transformed into this mulberry-tree, in which green substance I have continued fourteen years. As for my love, thou hast deserved it before all knights in the world, and to thee do I plight that true promise before the Omnipotent

Judge of all things. And before that sacred promise shall be infringed, the sun shall cease to shine by day, the moon by night, and all the planets forsake their natural order."

At which words the champion gave her the courtesies of his country, and sealed her promises with a loving kiss.

After which, the beautiful Eglantine weaved herself a garment of green rushes, intermixed with such variety of flowers, that it surpassed, in workmanship, the Indian maidens' curious webs; her curling locks of hair continued still of the colour of the mulberry-tree, and made her appear like Flora in her greatest royalty, when the fields are decked with nature's tapestry.

Thus, in green vestments, she is ready, in company of her true love, the valiant knight of France, to take her journey to her father's court; where, after some few days' travel, they arrived safe, and were welcomed according to their wishes, with the most honourable entertainments. The king of Thessaly no sooner beheld his daughter, of whose strange transformation he was ignorant, than he fell into a swoon through exceeding joy, but coming to his senses, he embraced her, and proffered such courtesy to the strange knight, that St Denis accounted him the mirror of chivalry, and the pattern of true nobility.

After the champion was unarmed, his stiff and wearied limbs were bathed in new milk and white wine, he was conveyed to a sweet-smelling fire made of juniper, and the fair Eglantine conducted by the maidens of honour to a private chamber, where she was disrobed of her Sylvan attire, and apparelled in

long robes of purple silk. In this court of Thessaly we will leave our champion of France with his lady, and go forward to discourse of the other champions, relating what adventures happened to them during the seven years.

CHAPTER IV.

How St James, the champion of Spain, continued seven years dumb for the love of a fair Jewess, and how he would have been shot to death by the maidens of Jerusalem; with other things which happened in his travels.

Now must my muse speak of St James of Spain, the third champion, and what happened unto him in his seven years' travels through many a strange country by sea and land, where his honourable acts were so dangerous and wonderful, that I want skill to express, and art to describe them. Also I am forced to pass over his dangerous battle with the burning drake upon the flaming mount in Sicily, which terrible combat continued for the space of seven days and seven nights. Likewise I omit his travels in Cappadocia, through a wilderness of monsters; his passage over the Red Sea, where his ship was devoured with worms, his mariners drowned, and himself, his horse, and furniture, safely brought to land by the sea-nymphs and mermaids; until after long travel, perils, and dangerous tempests, among the stormy billows of the raging seas, he arrived in the unhappy dominions of Judah; unhappy by reason of the long and troublesome misery he endured for the love of a fair Jewess. For coming to the beautiful city of Jerusalem, (being in that age the

wonder of the world, for grand buildings, princely palaces, and wonderful temples,) he so admired its glorious situation, that he stood before the lofty walls, one while gazing upon her golden gates, glittering in the sun; another while beholding her stately pinnacles, whose lofty tops seemed to touch the clouds; another while wondering at her towers of jasper, jet, and ebony, her strong and fortified walls, glittering spires of the temple of Sion, the ancient monument of Greece, whose battlements were covered with steel, the walls burnished with silver, the ground paved with tin. Thus, as this noble and famous knight stood beholding the situation of Jerusalem, there suddenly thundered such a peal of ordnance within the city, that it seemed, in his ravished conceit, to shake the veil of heaven, and to move the deep foundations of the solid earth; whereat his horse gave such a sudden start, that he leaped ten feet from the place whereon he stood. After this, he heard the sound of drums, and the cheerful echoes of brazen trumpets, by which the valiant champion expected some honourable pastime or some great tournament to be at hand; which indeed so fell out; for no sooner did he cast his eyes towards the east side of the city, than he beheld a troop of well-appointed horse come marching through the gates; after them twelve armed knights mounted on twelve warlike coursers, bearing in their hands twelve blood-red streamers, whereon was wrought in silk the picture of Adonis, wounded by a boar; after them, the king, drawn in a chariot by Spanish mares. The king's guards were a hundred Moors, with Turkish bows and darts, feathered with ravens' wings; after them came Celestine, the

king of Jerusalem's fair daughter, mounted on a tame unicorn. In her hand a javelin of silver, and armed with a breast-plate of gold, artificially wrought like the scales of a porcupine; her guard was one hundred Amazonian dames clad in green silk; after them followed a number of esquires and gentlemen, some upon Barbary steeds, some upon Arabian palfreys, and some on foot, in pace more nimble than the tripping deer, and more swift than the tamest hart upon the mountains of Thessaly.

Thus Nebuzaradan, the great king of Jerusalem, (for so he was called,) solemnly hunted in the wilderness of Judah, a country very much overrun with wild beasts, as the lion, the leopard, the boar, and such like; in which exercise the king appointed, as it was proclaimed by his chief herald at arms, that whosoever slew the first wild beast in the forest should have in reward a corselet of steel, so richly engraven that it should be worth a thousand shekels of silver. Of which honourable enterprise when the champion had understanding, and with what liberal bounty the adventurous knight would be rewarded, his heart was fraught with invincible courage, thirsting after glorious attempts, not only for hope of gain, but for the desire of honour, at which his illustrious and undaunted mind aimed, to immortalise his deeds in the memorable records of fame, and to shine as a crystal mirror to all ensuing times. So closing down his beaver, and locking on his furniture, he scoured the plains before the hunters of Jerusalem, in pace more swift than the winged winds, till he approached an old unfrequented forest, wherein he espied a huge and mighty wild boar, lying before his

mossy den, gnawing the mangled joints of some passenger whom he had murdered as he travelled through the forest.

This boar was of wonderful length and size, and so terrible to behold, that at first sight he almost daunted the courage of the Spanish knight: for his monstrous head seemed ugly and deformed, his eyes sparkled like a fiery furnace, his tusks more sharp than pikes of steel, and from his nostrils fumed such a violent breath, that it seemed like a tempestuous whirlwind; his bristles were harder than seven times solid brass, and his tail more loathsome than a wreath of snakes. When St James approached this huge beast, and beheld how he drank the blood of human creatures and devoured their flesh, he blew his silver horn, which hung at the pommel of his saddle by a scarf of green silk; whereat the furious monster turned himself, and most fiercely assailed the noble champion, who very nimbly leaped from his horse, and with his spear struck such a violent blow upon the breast of the boar, that it shivered into twenty pieces; then drawing his falchion from his side, he made a second encounter, but all in vain, for he struck as it were upon a rock of stone, or a pillar of iron, not hurting the boar; when at last, with staring eyes and open jaws, the greedy monster assailed the champion, intending to swallow him alive, the nimble knight trusted more to policy than fortitude, and so skipped from place to place, till on a sudden he thrust his keen-edged battle-axe down the monster's throat, and split his heart asunder. Which being accomplished, he cut off the head, and so presented the issue of the combat to the king of Jerusalem, who,

with his mighty train of knights, had now entered the forest. Having graciously received the gift, and bountifully fulfilled his promises, he demanded the champion's country, his religion, and place of his nativity. But no sooner had he intelligence that he was a Christian knight, and born in the territories of Spain, than his kindness changed to a great fury, and in these words he expressed his anger to the Christian champion :

“ Knowest thou not, bold knight,” said the king of Jerusalem, “ that it is the law of Judah to harbour no uncircumcised man, but either to banish him out of the land, or end his days by some untimely death? Thou art a Christian, and therefore shalt die: not all thy country's treasures, the wealthy Spanish mines, nor if the Alps, which divide the countries of Italy and Spain, were turned to hills of burnished gold, and made my lawful heritage, could redeem thy life. Yet for the honour thou has done in Judah I grant thee this favour by the law of arms, to choose thy death, else hadst thou suffered most grievous torment.” This severe judgment so amazed the champion, that, in desperation, he would have killed himself by his own sword, but that he thought it more honour to his country to die in the defence of Christendom. So, like a truly noble knight, fearing not the threats of the Jews, he gave the sentence of his own death. First, he requested to be bound to a pine-tree, with his breast laid open naked against the sun; then to have an hour's respite to make his supplication to his Creator; and afterwards to be shot to death by a fair virgin.

Which words were no sooner pronounced, than they

disarmed him, bound him to a pine-tree, and laid his breast open, ready to receive the bloody stroke of some unrelenting maiden: but such pity, meekness, mercy, and kind lenity lodged in the heart of every maiden, that none would take in hand, or be the bloody executioner of so brave a knight. At last the tyrannous Nebuzaradan gave strict commandment, upon pain of death, that lots should be cast among the maids of Judah that were there present, and she on whom the lot fell should be the executioner of the condemned Christian. But by chance the lot fell to Celestine, the king's daughter, being the fairest maid then living in Jerusalem, in whose heart no such deed of cruelty could be harboured. Instead of death's fatal instrument, she shot towards his breast a deeply-drawn sigh, the true messenger of love, and afterwards to heaven she thus made her humble supplication:

“Thou great Commander of celestial moving powers, convert the cruel motions of my father's mind into a spring of pitiful tears, that they may wash away the blood of this innocent knight from the habitation of his stained purple soul. O Judah and Jerusalem, within whose bosoms live a wilderness of tigers, more cruel than the hungry cannibals, and more obdurate than untamed lions! What merciless tigers can unrip that breast, where lives the image of true nobility, the very pattern of knighthood, and the seal of a noble mind? No, no, before my hand shall be stained with Christians' blood, I will, like Scylla, against all nature, sell my country's safety, or, like Medea, with the golden fleece, wander to unknown nations.”

In such manner complained the beauteous Celestine,

the king's daughter of Jerusalem, till her sighs stopped the passage of her speech, and her tears stained the natural beauty of her rosy cheeks; her hair, which glittered like golden wires, she besmeared with dust, and disrobed herself of her costly garments; and then, with a train of her Amazonian ladies, went to the king her father, where, after a long suit, she not only obtained our noble champion's life, but liberty; yet therewithal his perpetual banishment from Jerusalem, and from all the borders of Judah. So this noble and praiseworthy Celestine returned to the Christian champion, who expected every minute to be put to death; and after she had sealed two or three kisses upon his pale lips, being changed through the fear of death, cut the bands that bound his body to the tree into many pieces; and then, with a flood of tears, the emotions of true love, she thus revealed her mind:

“Most noble knight, and true champion of Christendom, thy life and liberty I have gained, but therewith thy banishment from Judah, which is a thought of horror to my soul; for in thy bosom have I built my happiness, and in thy heart I reckon the paradise of my true love; thy first sight and lovely countenance did enchant me; for when these eyes beheld thee mounted on thy princely palfrey, my heart burned in affection towards thee. Therefore, dear knight, in reward of my love, be thou my champion, and for my sake wear this ring, with this poesy engraven in it, *Ardeo affectione.*” And so giving him a ring from her finger, together with a kiss from her mouth, she departed with a sorrowful sigh, in company of her father and the rest of his honourable train, back to the city of Jerusalem, being

then near sunset. But now St James, having escaped the danger of death, and at full liberty to depart, fell into many cogitations, one time thinking upon the true love of Celestine, (whose name as yet he was ignorant of,) another time upon the cruelty of her father; then resolving to depart into his own country, but looking back to the towers of Jerusalem, his mind suddenly altered, for thither he made up his mind to go, hoping to have sight of his lady and mistress, and to live in some disguised form in her presence, and be his love's true champion against all comers. So gathering certain black berries from the trees, he coloured his body all over like a Blackmoor; and considering that his country's speech would betray him, determined likewise to continue dumb all the time of his residence in Jerusalem.

So, all things settled according to his desire, he took his journey to the city, where with signs he declared his intent, which was, to be entertained in the court, and to spend his time in the service of the king. When the king beheld his countenance, which seemed of the natural colour of the Moor, he little thought that he was the Christian champion, whom before he greatly envied, but accounted him one of the bravest Indian knights that ever his eye beheld; therefore he conferred on him the honour of knighthood, and appointed him to be one of his guard, and likewise his daughter's sole champion. Now when St James saw himself invested in this honourable place, his soul was ravished with such exceeding joy, that he thought no pleasure comparable to his, no Elysium but the court of Jerusalem, and no goddess but his beloved Celestine.

He long continued dumb, casting forth many a loving sigh in the presence of his lady and mistress, not knowing how to reveal the secrets of his mind.

Sometime after, there arrived in the court of Nebuzaradan, the king of Arabia, with the admiral of Babylon, both presuming upon the love of Celestine, and craving her in marriage; but she excluded all notions of love from her chaste mind, only building her thoughts upon the Spanish knight, whom she supposed to be in his own country.

Her importunate suitors, the king of Arabia, and the admiral of Babylon, marvelled at her melancholy; and therefore intended upon an evening to present her with some rare devised masque. So choosing out fit consorts for their courtly pastimes, of which number the king of Arabia was chief and first leader of the train, the great admiral of Babylon was the second, and her own champion, St James, called by the name of the "Dumb Knight," was the third. In this manner the masque was performed:

First, a most excellent concert of music; after which the aforesaid masquers, in cloth of gold most curiously embroidered, danced about the hall; at the conclusion the king of Arabia presented Celestine with a costly sword, on the hilt whereof hung a silver glove, and upon the point was placed a golden crown. Then the music sounded another course, of which the admiral of Babylon was leader, who presented her with a vesture of pure silk, of the colour of the rainbow, brought in by Diana, Venus, and Juno. Which being done, the music sounded the third time; in which course, St James, though unknown, was the leader of the dance,

and, at the end thereof, presented Celestine with a garland of sweet flowers, which was brought in by three Graces, and put upon her head. Afterwards the Christian champion, intending to discover himself unto his lady and mistress, took her by the hand, and led her to a stately Morisco dance, which was no sooner finished than he offered her the diamond ring which she gave him at his departure in the woods; this she presently knew by the poesy, and shortly after discovered his dumbness, his counterfeit colour, his changing of nature, and the great danger he put himself to for her sake; which caused her, with all the speed she could possibly make, to retire into a chamber which she had by, where the same evening she had a long conference with her faithful lover and adventurous champion. To conclude, they made an agreement betwixt them, and the same night, unknown to any in the court, she bade Jerusalem adieu, and by the light of Cynthia's glittering beams, stole from her father's palace, where, in the sweet company of St James, she took her journey towards the country of Spain. But this noble knight by policy prevented all likely danger, for he shod his horse backwards, whereby, when they were missed in the court, they might be followed the contrary way.

By this means the two lovers escaped from the fury of the Jews, and arrived safely in Spain, in the city of Seville, wherein the brave champion, St James, was born; where we now leave them for a time to their own contented minds. Also passing over the disturbances in Jerusalem for the loss of Celestine, the vain pursuits of adventurous knights, the preparing of fresh

horses to follow them, the frantic passion of the king for his daughter, the melancholy grief of the admiral of Babylon for his mistress, and the woful lamentation of the Arabian king for his lady and love, we will return to the adventures of the other Christian champions.

CHAPTER V.

The terrible battle between St Anthony, the champion of Italy, and the giant Blanderon; and afterwards of his strange entertainment in the giant's castle by a Thracian lady, and what happened to him in the same castle.

It was at the time of the year when the earth was newly decked with her summer's livery, that the noble champion, St Anthony of Italy, arrived in Thracia, where he spent his seven years' travel to the honour of his country, the glory of God, and to his own lasting renown. For after he had wandered through woods and wildernesses, by hills and dales, by caves and dens, and through unknown passages, he arrived at last upon the top of a high mountain, whereon stood a wonderfully strong castle, which was kept by the most mighty giant under the cope of heaven, whose puissant force all Thrace could not overcome, nor even attempt to withstand. The giant's name was Blanderon, his castle of the purest marble, with gates of brass; and over the principal gate were graven the verses following:

Within this castle lives the scourge of kings,
A furious giant whose unconquer'd power
The Thracian monarch in subjection brings,
And keeps his daughters pris'ners in his tower

Seven damsels fair this monstrous giant keeps,
Who sing him music while he nightly sleeps.

His bars of steel a thousand knights have felt,
Who for these virgins' sake have lost their lives;
For all the champions bold that with him dealt,
This most inhuman giant still survives;
Let simple passengers take heed betime,
When up this mountain they intend to climb.

But knights of worth, and men of noble mind,
If any chance to travel by this tower,
That for these maidens' sake will be so kind
To try their strength against the giant's power,
Shall have a virgin's prayer both day and night,
To prosper them with good successful fight.

After he had read this, desire of fame so encouraged him, and the thirst of honour so emboldened his valiant mind, that he vowed either to redeem these ladies from their servitude, or die with honour by the fury of the giant. So going to the castle gate, he struck so vehemently thereon with the pommel of his sword, that it sounded like a thunderclap. Whereat Blanderon suddenly started up, having been fast asleep by a fountain side, and came pacing forth of the gate, with an oak tree upon his neck, which, at the sight of the Italian champion, he flourished about his head, as though it had been a little battle-axe, and with these words, addressed the noble champion:

“What fury hath incensed thy overboldened mind, thus to venture thy feeble force against the violence of my strong arm? I tell thee, hadst thou the strength of Hercules, who bore the mountain Atlas on his shoulders, or the policy of Ulysses, by which the city of Troy was ruined, or the might of Xerxes, whose

multitudes drank up the rivers as they passed ; yet all were too feeble, weak, and impotent to encounter the mighty giant Blanderon ; thy strength I esteem as a puff of wind, and thy strokes as a few drops of water. Therefore betake thee to thy weapon, which I compare to a bulrush, for on this ground will I measure out thy grave, and after that, with one of my hands, will hurl thy feeble palfrey headlong down this steep mountain."

Thus boasted the vain-glorious giant about his own strength. During which time the valiant champion had alighted from his horse, when, after he had made his humble supplication to heaven for good fortune, he approached within the giant's reach, who with his great oak dealt toward him such vehement blows, that they seemed to shake the earth, and to rattle against the wall of the castle like thunder-claps ; and had not the knight continually skipped from the fury of his blows he had soon been killed, for every stroke the giant gave, the root of his oak entered at the least two or three inches into the ground. But it was the wisdom and policy of the worthy champion not to expend the force of his weapon till the giant grew breathless, and unable, through his long labour, to lift the oak above his head. Shortly the heat of the sun became so intolerable, that the sweat from the giant's brows ran into his eyes, and by reason he was so extremely fat, he grew so blind, that he could not see to combat any longer, and would have retired or run back again into his castle, but that the Italian champion with a bold courage assailed him so fiercely, that he was forced to let his oak fall, and stand gasping

for breath; which when this noble knight beheld, with fresh ardour, he redoubled his blows so courageously, that they fell on the giant's armour like a storm of winter's hail, whereby at last Blanderon was compelled to ask the champion's mercy, and to crave at his hands some respite of breathing; but his demand was in vain, for the valiant knight saw that now or never was the time to obtain the honour of the day, and therefore rested not his weary arm, but redoubled blow after blow, till the giant, for want of breath, and through the anguish of his wounds, was forced to bid the world farewell, and to yield the riches of his castle to the most renowned conqueror, St Anthony, the champion of Italy. But by the time the long and dangerous encounter was finished, and the giant Blanderon's head was severed from his body, the sun had mounted to the highest part of the heavens, which caused the day to be so extremely hot and sultry, that the champion's armour scalded him so much that he was constrained to unbrace his corslet, to lay aside his burgonet, and to cast his body upon the cold earth, to mitigate his extreme heat. But such was the unnatural coolness of the earth, that its vapours struck presently to his heart, by which his vital air was excluded, and his body lay exposed, without sense or moving, at the mercy of pale death, for the space of an hour.

At which time, fair Rosalinde (one of the daughters of the Thracian king, a prisoner in the castle) by chance looked over the walls, and espied the headless body of the giant, under whose subjection she had continued, in great anxiety, for the time of seven

years, and by him a knight unarmed, as she thought, panting for breath, whom she judged to be the knight that had slain the giant, and the man by whom her liberty should be recovered; she presently descended the walls of the castle, and ran with all speed to the adventurous champion, whom she found to all appearance dead. But being nothing discouraged of his recovery, feeling as yet warm blood in every member, she returned with all speed to the castle, and fetched a box of precious balm, which the giant was wont to pour into his wounds after his encounter with any knight. With which balm the courteous lady chafed every part of the breathless champion's body; one time washing his stiff limbs with her salt tears, which fell like pearls from her eyes; another time drying them with tresses of her golden hair, which hung dangling in the wind; then chafing his lifeless body again with a balm of a different nature; but yet no sign of life could she see in the knight, which caused her to despair of his recovery. Therefore, like a loving, meek, and kind lady, considering he had lost his life for her sake, she intended to bear him company in death, and with her own hands to finish her days, and die upon his breast, as Thisbe died upon the breast of her true Pyramis. Therefore, as the swan sings awhile before her death, so this sorrowful lady warbled forth this dirge over the body of the noble champion:

Muses, come mourn with doleful melody,
 Kind sylvan nymphs, that sit in rosy bowers,
 With brackish tears come mix your harmony,
 To wail with me both minutes, days, and hours,
 A heavy, sad, and swan-like song sing I,
 To ease my heart awhile before I die.

Dead is the knight for whom I live and die,
Dead is the knight who for my sake is slain ;
Dead is the knight for whom my careful cry,
With wounded soul, for ever shall complain.
A heavy, sad, and swan like song sing I, etc.

I'll lay my breast upon a silver stream,
And swim in Elysium's lily fields ;
There, in ambrosia trees, I'll write a theme
Of all the woful sighs my sorrow yields.
A heavy, sad, and swan-like song sing I, etc.

She had no sooner ended than she unsheathed the champion's sword, which was besprinkled with the giant's blood, and being on the very point of executing her intended tragedy, with the sharp-edged weapon directly against her breast, she heard the distressed knight give a terrible groan ; whereat she stopped her hand, and with more discretion regarded her own safety. For by this time the balm wherewith she anointed his body, by wonderful operation, recovered the champion, insomuch that, after some few gasps and sighs, he raised up his stiff limbs from the cold earth, where, like one cast into a trance, for a time he gazed up and down the mountain, until at last, having recovered his senses, he espied the Thracian damsel standing by, unable to speak one word, her joy so abounded. After some time he revealed to her the manner of his dangerous encounter and successful victory ; and she the cause of his recovery, and her intended tragedy. Whereupon, after many kind salutations, she courteously took him by the hand, and led him into the castle, where for that night she lodged his weary limbs on an easy bed stuffed with turtle-feathers and softest thistle-down.

The noble-minded knight slept soundly after his dangerous battle till golden Phœbus bade him good-morrow. Then rising from his bed, he attired himself, not in his wonted habiliments of war, but in purple garments, intending to inspect the rarities of the castle: but the lady Rosalinde was busied in preparing his repast, and when he had refreshed himself with a dainty banquet, he, by her advice, stripped the giant Blanderon of his iron furniture, and left his naked body upon a craggy rock, to be devoured by hungry ravens; after which the Thracian virgin discovered all the castle to the adventurous champion. First she led him to a leaden tower, where hung a hundred well-approved corslets, with other martial furniture, which were the spoils of such knights as had been violently slain. After that, she brought him to a stable, wherein stood a hundred pampered steeds, which daily fed upon human flesh; against it was placed the giant's own lodging; his bed was of iron, corded with mighty bars of steel; the tester, or covering, of carved brass; and the curtains were of leaves of gold. After this, she led him to a broad pond of water, more clear than quicksilver, whereon swam six milk-white swans, with crowns of gold about their necks.

“O here,” said the Thracian lady, “begins the depth of all my grief!” At which words a shower of tears ran from her eyes, that for a time stayed the passage of her tongue. But having relieved her heart by a few sorrowful sighs, she began in this manner to tell her misfortunes:

“These six milk-white swans, most honourable



St. Anthony of Italy.

knight, you behold swimming in the river," said the lady Rosalinde, "are my sisters, both by birth and blood, and all daughters to the king of Thrace, governor of this unhappy country; and the beginning of our imprisonment began in this unfortunate manner :

"The king, my father, ordained a solemn hunting to be held through the land, in which honourable pastime myself, in company of my six sisters, was present. So in the middle of our sports, when the lords and barons of Thracia were in chase after a mighty lioness, the heavens suddenly began to lour, the firmament overcast, and a general darkness overspread the face of the whole earth : then presently arose such a storm of lightning and thunder, as though heaven and earth had met together ; by which our lordly troops of knights and barons were separated from one another, and we poor ladies forced to seek for shelter at the bottom of this high mountain: where when the cruel giant Blanderon espied us, as he walked upon his battlements, he suddenly descended the mountain, and fetched us all under his arm up into the castle, where ever since we have lived in great slavery ; and, for my six sisters, he turned their comely bodies into the shape of milk-white swans, in the same form as here you see them swimming, but kept me ever since to lull him to sleep with sweet inspiring music.

"Thus have you heard, most noble knight, the true account of my most unhappy fortunes, and the wonderful transformation of my six sisters, whose loss to this day is greatly lamented throughout all Thracia." And with these words she made an end of her tragical

history, unable to utter the rest for weeping. Whereat the knight, being oppressed with the like sorrow, embraced her, and thus kindly began to comfort her :

“Most dear and kind lady, upon whose countenance I see how virtue is enthroned, and in whose mind lives true magnanimity, let these words suffice to comfort thy sorrowful thoughts. First, think that the heavens are most beneficent unto thee in preserving thee from the giant’s insatiate rage ; secondly, for thy delivery by my means from his slavish servitude ; thirdly and lastly, that thou, remaining in thy natural shape and likeness, may live to be the means of thy sisters’ transformation ; therefore dry up those crystal-pearled tears, and bid thy long continued sorrows adieu, for grief is companion with despair, and despair a forerunner of infamous death.”

Thus the woful Thracian lady was comforted by the noble Christian champion : when, after a few kind greetings, they concluded to travel to her father’s court, there to relate what happened to her sisters in the castle, likewise the giant’s confusion, and her own safe delivery, by the illustrious prowess of the Christian knight. So, taking the keys of the castle, which were of a wonderful weight, they locked up the gates, and paced hand in hand down the steep mountain till they approached the Thracian court, which was distant from the castle about ten miles : but by the time they had a sight of the palace the night approached, which discontented the weary travellers ; when at last, coming to her father’s gates, they heard a solemn sound of bells ringing the funeral knell of some noble party.

The cause of which they demanded of the porter, who in this manner expressed the truth of the matter to them :

“Fair lady and most renowned knight,” said the porter, “for so you seem, both by your speech and honourable presence, the cause of this ringing is for the loss of the king’s seven daughters, the number of which bells are seven, called after the names of the seven princesses, which never yet have ceased their doleful melody, since the departure of the unhappy ladies, nor ever will until news be heard of their safe return.”

“Then now their task is ended,” said the noble-minded Rosalinde, “for we bring news of the seven princesses’ abode.” At which words the porter, being ravished with joy, in all haste ran to the steeple, and caused the bells to cease; whereat the king of Thracia, hearing the bells cease their wonted sound, suddenly started up from his princely seat, and like a man amazed ran to the palace-gate, where he found his daughter Rosalinde in company of a strange knight. Which, when he beheld, his joy was so excessive, that he swooned on his daughter’s bosom; but having recovered his former senses, he brought them into his princely hall, where their entertainment was so honourable in the eyes of the whole court, that it were too tedious to describe: but their joy was presently damped by Rosalinde’s tragical discourse; for the good old king, when he heard of his daughters’ transformation, and how they lived in the shape of milk-white swans, rent his locks of silver hair, which time had dyed with the pledge of wisdom; tore his rich embroidered garments in many pieces, and clad his aged limbs in a dismal

black sable mantle; he also commanded that his knights and adventurous champions, instead of glittering armour, should wear the weeds of death, more black in hue than winter's darkest nights; and all the courtly ladies and gallant Thracian maidens, instead of silken vestments, he constrained to wear both heavy, sad, and melancholy ornaments, and even, as unto a solemn funeral, to attend him to the giant's castle, and there obsequiously to offer up unto the angry Destinies many a bitter sigh and tear in remembrance of his transformed daughters; which decree of the sorrowful Thracian king was performed with all convenient speed: and the next morning, no sooner had Phœbus cast his beauty into the king's bed-chamber, than he apparelled himself in mourning garments, and in company of his melancholy train set forward on his woful pilgrimage. But here we must not forget the champion of Italy, nor the noble-minded Rosalinde, who, at the king's departure towards the castle, craved leave to stay behind, and not so suddenly begin new travels; whereunto the king consented, considering their late journey the evening before. So taking the castle-keys from the champion, he bade his palace adieu and committed his fortune to his sorrowful journey; where we leave him in a world of discontented passion, and awhile discourse of what happened to the Christian champion and his beloved lady. After staying some time in the palace, he took Rosalinde, then weeping for loss of her father, by the hand, and in this manner intimated his intended departure:

“My most devoted lady and mistress,” said the champion, “a second Dido for thy love, a rival to Venus

for thy beauty, and Penelope's equal for constancy, the faithful love that hitherto I have found since my arrival shall be for ever shrined in my heart, and before all ladies under the cope of heaven thou shalt live and die my love's true goddess; and for thy sake I'll stand as champion against all knights in the world; but to impair the honour of my knighthood, and to live like a carpet-dancer in the lap of ladies, I will not: though I can tune a lute in a prince's chamber, I can sound a fierce alarm in the field. Honour calls me forth, dear Rosalinde, and Fame intends to buckle on my armour, which now lies rusting in the idle courts of Thrace. Therefore I am constrained (though most unwillingly) to leave the comfortable sight of thy beauty, and commit my fortune to a longer travel: but I protest, wheresoever I come, or in whatever region I be harboured, there will I maintain, to the loss of my life, that both thy love, constancy, and beauty, surpasseth all dames alive; and with this promise, my most divine Rosalinde, I bid thee farewell." But before the honourable-minded champion could finish what he proposed to utter, the lady, being wounded inwardly with extreme grief, was unable to keep silent any longer, but, with the tears falling from her eyes, interrupted his speech in this manner:

"Sir knight," said she, "by whom my liberty hath been obtained, the name of lady and mistress, wherewith you entitle me, is too proud a name for me; but rather call me handmaid, for on thy noble person will I evermore attend. It is not Thrace can harbour me when thou art absent; and before I would forsake thy company and kind fellowship, heaven shall be no

heaven, the sea no sea, the earth no earth; but if thou shouldst prove inconstant, these tender hands shall never be unclasped, but hang on thy horse's bridle, till my body, like Theseus's son, be dashed asunder against hard flinty stones: therefore forsake me not, dear knight of Christendom. If ever Camina proved true to her Sinatus, or Alstone to her lover, Rosalinde will be as true to thee." So with this plighted promise she caught him fast about the neck, from which she would not unloose her hands till he had vowed, by the honour of true chivalry, to make her the sole companion and partner of his travels.

This being agreed to, she was trimly attired like a page in green sarcenet, her hair bound up most cunningly with a silk list, artificially wrought with curious knots, that she might travel without suspicion or blemish of honour; her rapier was a Turkish blade, and her poniard of the finest fashion, which she wore at her back, tied with an orange tawny-coloured scarf, beautified with tassels of silk; her buskins of the smoothest kid-skins, her spurs of the purest Lydian steel. But to be brief, all things being in readiness for their departure, this worthy knight mounted on his eager steed, and Rosalinde on her gentle palfrey, in pace more easy than the winged winds, or a boat floating upon a crystal stream, both bade adieu to the country of Thracia, and committed their journey to the queen of chance: therefore smile heavens, and guide them with a most happy star, until they arrive where their souls do most desire. The bravest and boldest knight that ever wandered by the way, and the loveliest lady that ever eye beheld.

Here my muse must leave them for a season, and speak of the Thracian mourners, who by this time had watered the earth with abundance of their tears, and made the elements true witnesses of their sad lamentations, as hereafter related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

How St Andrew, the champion of Scotland, travelled into a vale of walking spirits; and how he was set at liberty by a moving fire. Of his journey into Thracia, where he restored the six ladies to their natural shapes, that had lived seven years in the likeness of milk-white swans; with other accidents that befell this most noble champion.

Now of the honourable adventures of St Andrew, the famous champion of Scotland, must I discourse, whose seven years' travels were as strange as any of the other champions. For after he had departed from the brazen pillar, as you heard in the beginning of this history, he travelled through many strange and unknown nations, beyond the circuit of the sun, where but one time in the year he shows his bright beams, continual darkness overspreading the whole country, and there lives a kind of people that have heads like dogs, that in extremity of hunger do devour one another, from which people this noble champion was strangely delivered; for, after he had wandered certain days, neither seeing the gladsome brightness of the sun, nor the comfortable countenance of the moon, but only guided by the planets, he happened to come to a vale of walking spirits, which he supposed to be

the very dungeon of burning Acheron ; there he heard the blowing of unseen fires, boiling of furnaces, rattling of armour, trampling of horses, jingling of chains, lumbering of iron, roaring of spirits, and such-like horrid noises, that it made the Scottish champion almost at his wit's end. But yet, having an undaunted courage, unalloyed by fear, he humbly made his supplication to heaven, that God would deliver him from that place of terror ; and so presently, as the champion kneeled down upon the barren ground, (whereon grew neither herb, flower, grass, nor any other green thing,) he beheld a certain flame of fire moving up and down before him, on which he stood for a time, uncertain whether it were best to go forward or to stand still ; but remembering himself how he had read in former times of a moving fire, called *Ignis Fatuus*, the fire of destiny ; by some, "Will o' the Wisp," or "Jack with the Lantern ;" and likewise, by some simple country people, "The Fair Maid of Ireland," which commonly used to lead wandering travellers out of their way ; the like imagination entered into the champion's mind. So encouraging himself with his own conceit, and cheering up his dull senses, lately oppressed with extreme fear, he directly followed the moving fire, which so justly went before him, that by the time the guider of the night had climbed twelve degrees in the zodiac, he was by its means safely delivered from the vale of walking spirits.

Now began the sun to dance about the firmament, which St Andrew had not seen for months before, whereat his senses much rejoiced, being covered before with darkness, and every step he trod was as plea-

surable as though he walked in a garden bedecked with all kinds of fragrant flowers.

At last, without further molestation, he arrived within the territories of Thracia, a country, as you have heard in the former chapter, adorned with the beauty of many fair woods and forests, through which he travelled with little rest, and less sleep, till he came to the foot of the mountain, whereupon stood the castle wherein the woful king of Thrace, in company of his sorrowful subjects, still lamented the unhappy destinies of his six daughters, turned into swans, having crowns of gold about their necks. When the valiant champion St Andrew beheld the lofty situation of the castle, and the invincible strength it seemed to possess, he expected some strange adventure to befall him, so preparing his sword, and buckling close his armour, which, for lightness in travel, was a shirt of silver mail, he climbed the mountain, on which he espied the giant lying upon a craggy rock, with his limbs and members all rent and torn by the fury of hunger-starved fowls; which loathsome spectacle was no little wonder to the worthy champion, considering the mighty stature and bigness of the giant. Whereupon leaving his putrified body to the winds, he approached the gates; and, after he had read the superscription over the same, entered the castle without any interruption, expecting a fierce encounter with some knight that should have defended the same; but all things fell out contrary to his imagination; for after he had noticed many a strange novelty and hidden secret, he chanced at last to come where the Thracians were observing their ceremonious mourn-

ings, which were daily performed in this order: first, upon Sundays, which in that country is the first day in the week, all the Thracians attired themselves after the manner of Bacchus's priests, and burned perfumed incense, with sweet Arabian frankincense, upon a religious shrine, which they offered to the Sun as chief governor of that day, thinking thereby to appease the angry Destinies, and to recover the unhappy ladies to their former shapes; upon Mondays, clad in garments after the manner of Sylvans, a colour like the waves of the sea, they offered up their tears to the Moon, being the guider and mistress of that day; upon Tuesdays, like soldiers, trailing their banners in the dust, and drums sounding sad and doleful melody, in sign of discontent, they dedicated their proceedings to the worship of Mars, being ruler and guider of that day; upon Wednesdays, like scholars, unto Mercury; upon Thursdays, in like manner, with sweet-sounding music, to Apollo; upon Fridays, like lovers, to Venus; and upon Saturdays, like manual professors, to the angry and discontented Saturn.

Thus the woful Thracian king, and his sorrowful subjects, consumed seven months, at one time accusing Fortune of cruelty, at another the Heavens of injustice; the one for his children's transformation, the other for their long-continued punishment. But at last, when the Scottish champion heard the bitter moans the Thracians made about the river, he demanded the cause, and why they observed such ceremonies, contemning the majesty of Jehovah, and only worshipping outward and vain gods. When the king, after a few sad tears, strained from his aged eyes, replied in this manner:

“Most noble knight, for so you seem by your gesture and other outward appearance, if you desire to know the cause of our continual grief, prepare your ears to hear a tragical and woful tale, whereat methinks I see the elements begin to mourn, and cover their azure countenance with sable clouds. These milk-white swans you see, whose necks are beautified with golden crowns, are my six daughters, transformed into this swan-like shape by the appointment of the gods; for of late this castle was kept by a cruel giant, named Blanderon, who transformed their beautiful bodies to these milk-white swans. And now seven times the cheerful spring hath renewed the earth with her summer’s livery, and seven times the nipping winter frosts have bereaved the trees of leaf and bud, since my daughters lost their virgin shapes; seven summers have they swam upon this crystal stream.

“Thus have you heard, most worthy knight, the woful tragedy of my daughters, for whose sakes I will spend the remnant of my days about the banks of this unhappy river, heavily complaining of their long-continued punishment.” Which sad discourse was no sooner ended, than the Scottish knight thus replied, to the comfort and great rejoicing of the company :

“Most noble king,” said the champion, “your heavy and dolorous narrative hath excited in my heart a wonderful passion, and compelled my very soul to rue your daughter’s miseries; but yet a greater grief and deeper sorrow than that hath taken possession of my breast, at the spectacle whereof my eyes have been witnesses, and my ears unhappy hearers; I mean your unchris-

tian faith: for I have seen, since my first arrival into this castle, your profane and vain worship of strange and false gods, as of Phœbus, Luna, Mars, Mercury, and such-like poetical names, which the majesty of high Jehovah utterly contemns. But, magnificent governor of Thracia, if you seek to recover your daughters by humble prayer, and to obtain your soul's content by true tears, you must abandon all such vain ceremonies, and with true humility believe in the Christian's God, who is the God of wonders, and chief commander of the rolling elements, in whose quarrel this unconquered arm and this undaunted heart of mine shall fight: and now, be it known to thee, great king of Thrace, that I am a Christian champion, by birth a knight of Scotland, bearing my country's arms upon my breast, (for indeed thereon he bore a silver cross, set in blue silk;) and therefore, in the honour of Christendom, I challenge forth the proudest knight at arms, against whom I will maintain that our God is the true God, and the rest fantastical and vain ceremonies."

This sudden and unexpected challenge so daunted the Thracian champions, that they stood amazed for a time, gazing upon one another, like men dropped from the clouds: but at last, consulting together how the challenge of the strange knight was to the dishonour of their country, and utter scandal of all knightly dignity, they with a general consent craved leave of the king that the challenge might be taken, who willingly condescended to what they demanded.

So, by the king's command, time and place were appointed, viz., the next morning, upon a large and smooth meadow close by the river side, whereon the six

swans were swimming ; whereupon, after the Christian champion had cast down his gauntlet, and the Thracian knights accepted thereof, every one departed for that night, the challenger to the east side of the castle to his lodging, and the defendants to the west, where they slept quietly till the next morning, when, by the break of day, they were awakened by the herald at arms. But all the night our Scottish champion never entertained one notion of rest, but busied himself in trimming his horse, buckling on his armour, lacing on his bur-gonet, and making prayers to the divine majesty of God, for conquest and victory, till the morning's beauty chased away the darkness of the night ; and no sooner were the windows of the day fully opened than the valiant champion of Christendom entered the lists, where the king, in company of the Thracian lords, was present to behold the combat ; and after St Andrew had twice or thrice traced his horse up and down the lists, bravely flourishing his lance, at the top whereof hung a pendant of gold, with poesy thus written in silver letters, " This day a martyr or a conqueror," there entered a knight in exceeding bright armour, mounted upon a courser as white as the northern snow, whose caparison was of the colour of the elements ; and then a fierce encounter ensued, but the Thracian had the foil, and with disgrace left the list. Then secondly entered another knight in armour, varnished with green varnish, his steed of the colour of an iron grey ; who likewise was repulsed by the worthy Christian. Thirdly entered a knight in a black corslet, mounted upon a big-boned palfrey, covered with a veil of sable silk ; in his hand he bore a lance nailed

round about with plates of steel; which knight among the Thracians was accounted the strongest in the world; but no sooner encountered these hardy champions, than their lances shivered asunder and flew so violently into the air, that it much amazed the beholders; then they alighted from their steeds, and so valiantly bestirred them with their keen falchions, that the fiery sparks flew as fiercely from these noble champions' steel helmets, as from an iron anvil; but the combat had not endured very long, before the hardy Scottish knight espied an advantage wherein he might show his matchless fortitude; whereupon he struck such a mighty blow upon the Thracian's burgonet, that it cleaved his head just down to his shoulders; at which the king suddenly started from his seat, and with a wrathful countenance, in this manner threatened the champion's death:

“Proud Christian,” said the king, “thou shalt repent this death, and curse the time that ever thou camest to Thracia: his blood we will revenge upon thy head, and punish thy cruelty with a sudden death;” and so, in company of a hundred armed knights, he encompassed the Scottish champion, intending by multitudes to murder him. But when the valiant knight, St Andrew, saw how he was oppressed by treachery, and environed with mighty troops, he called to Heaven for succour, and animated himself by these words of encouragement—“Now for the honour of Christendom, this day a martyr or a conqueror;” and then he so valiantly behaved himself with his battle-axe, that he made lanes of murdered men, and felled them down by multitudes, as the harvest men mow down ears of

ripened corn, whereby they fell before his face like leaves from trees, when the summer's pride declines in glory. So at last, after much bloodshed, the Thracian king was compelled to yield to the Scottish champion's mercy, who obliged him, for the safety of his life, to forsake his profane religion, and become a Christian, whose living true God the Thracian king vowed for evermore to worship, and thereupon he kissed the champion's sword.

This conversion of the pagan king so pleased the majesty of God, that he presently gave end to his daughters' punishment, and turned the ladies to their former shapes. When the king beheld their smooth feathers, which were as white as lilies, re-changed to natural fairness, and their black bills and slender necks converted to their first created beauty, he bade adieu to his grief and long-continued sorrow, protesting ever after to continue a true Christian for the Scottish champion's sake, by whose divine orisons his daughters obtained their former features. So taking the Christian knight, in company of the six ladies, to a rich chamber, prepared with all things according to their wishes, the champion was unarmed, his wounds washed with white wine, new milk, and rose-water, and so, after some dainty repast, conveyed to his night's repose. The ladies being the joyfulest creatures under heaven, never entertained one thought of sleep, but passed the night in their father's company, till the morning messengers bade them good-morrow.

Then, all things being prepared, they departed the castle in a triumphant manner, marching back to the Thracian palace with banners streaming in the wind,

drums and trumpets sounding joyful melody, and with sweet inspiring music causing the air to resound with harmony. But no sooner were they entered the palace, which was in distance from the giant's castle about ten miles, than their triumph turned to exceeding sorrow, for Rosalinde, with the champion of Italy, as you have heard before, had left the court; which unexpected news so daunted the whole company, but especially the king, that the rejoicings for that time were deferred, and messengers were despatched in pursuit of the adventurous Italian and lovely Rosalinde.

When St Andrew of Scotland had intelligence that it was one of those knights who was imprisoned with him under the wicked enchantress Kalyb, as you heard in the beginning of the history, his heart thirsted for his most honourable company, and his eyes seldom closed quietly, nor took any rest until he had likewise departed in the pursuit of his sworn friend, which he did the following night, without making any acquainted with his intent. And when the six ladies understood the secret departure of the Scottish champion, whom they loved dearer than any knight in the world, they stored themselves with sufficient treasure, and by stealth left their father's palace, intending either to find out the victorious and approved knight of Scotland, or to end their lives in some foreign region.

The rumour of their departure no sooner came to the king's ears, but he also resolved to travel, either to obtain sight of his daughters again, or to make his tomb beyond the circuit of the sun: so attiring himself in homely russet like a pilgrim, with an ebon staff in his hand, tipped with silver, he took his journey all

unknown from his palace. These sudden and secret departures struck such an intolerable heaviness in the court that the palace gates were sealed up with sable mourning cloth, the Thracian lords forsook all pleasure, but strayed up and down like flocks of sheep without shepherds, and ladies and courtly dames sat sighing in their private chambers; where we leave them for the present and speak of the success of the other champions.

CHAPTER VII.

How St Patrick, the champion of Ireland, redeemed the six Thracian ladies out of the hands of thirty bloody-minded Satyrs, and of their purposed travel in a pursuit after the champion of Scotland.

BUT now of that valiant knight at arms, St Patrick, the champion of Ireland, must I speak, whose adventurous deeds were so nobly performed, that if my pen were made of steel, I should wear it out in declaring his prowess and worthy adventures. When he departed at the brazen pillar, from the other champions, the heavens smiled with a kind aspect, and sent him such a star to be his guide, that it led him to no courtly pleasures, nor to vain delights, but to the throne of Fame, where Honour sits installed upon a seat of gold. Thither travelled the warlike champion of Ireland, whose illustrious battles the northern isles have chronicled on leaves of brass. Therefore, Ireland, be proud, for from thee did spring a champion, whose prowess made the enemies of Christ tremble, and watered the earth with streams of pagans' blood; the isle of Rhodes,

the key and strength of Christendom, was recovered from the Turks by his martial and invincible prowess; and his dangerous battles, fierce encounters, bloody skirmishes, and long assaults, would serve to fill a mighty volume; but all these I pass over, and discourse of things appertaining to this history. For after the wars of Rhodes were fully ended, St Patrick (accounting idle ease the nurse of cowardice) bade Rhodes farewell, as it was then strongly fortified by Christian soldiers, and took his journey through many an unknown country, when at last it pleased the queen of chance to direct his steps to a solitary wilderness, inhabited only by wild Satyrs, and a people of inhuman disposition, giving their wicked minds only to murder and rapine. Here the noble champion travelled up and down many a weary step, not knowing how to satisfy his hunger, but by killing venison, and after pressing out the blood between two flat stones, roasting it by the sun; his lodging was in the hollow trunk of a blasted tree, which nightly preserved him from the dropping showers of heaven; his chief companions were the resounding echoes, which commonly answered the champion's words.

In this manner lived St Patrick, the Irish knight, in the woods, not knowing how to set himself at liberty, but wandering up and down, as it were in a maze, wrought by the curious workmanship of some excellent gardener. It was his chance, at last, to come into a dismal shady thicket, beset about with baleful misletoe, a place of horror, wherein he heard the cries of some distressed ladies, whose bitter lamentations seemed to pierce the clouds, and to crave succour at the hands of



St. Patrick of Ireland.

God; which unexpected cries not a little daunted the Irish knight, so that he prepared his weapon for some sudden encounter; and crouching himself under the root of an old withered oak, he espied afar off a crew of bloody-minded Satyrs, hauling, by the hair of the head, six unhappy ladies through many a thorny brake and briar; which woful spectacle forced such horror into the heart of the Irish knight, that he presently rushed to the rescue of the ladies, to redeem them from the fury of the merciless Satyrs, which were in number about thirty, every one having a club upon his neck, which they had made of the roots of young oaks and pine trees; yet this adventurous champion, being nothing discouraged, with a bold and resolute mind let drive at the sturdiest Satyr, whose armour of defence was made of a bull's hide, which was dried so hard against the sun, that the champion's battle-axe prevailed not; after which the fell Satyrs encompassed the Christian knight round about, and so mightily oppressed him with downright blows, that had he not by good fortune leaped under the boughs of a spreading tree, he had been forced to give the world a speedy farewell. But such was his nimbleness and activity, that ere long he sheathed his sharp pointed falchion in the breast of one of the Satyrs; which woful sight caused all the rest to fly from his presence, and leave the six ladies to the pleasure and disposal of the most noble and courageous Christian champion; who after he had sufficiently rested and cooled himself in the chill air, (being almost breathless from the long encounter and bloody skirmish,) demanded the cause of the ladies' travels, and by what means they happened to pass into

the hands of those merciless Satyrs, who cruelly and tyrannically attempted their destruction. To which courteous demand, one of the ladies, after a deep-fetched sigh, on behalf of herself and the other distressed ladies, thus replied :

“Know, brave-minded knight, that we are the unfortunate daughters of the king of Thrace, whose lives have been unhappy ever since our births ; for first we endured a long imprisonment under the hands of a cruel giant, and afterwards, the heavens, to preserve us from the wickedness of the giant, transformed us into the shape of swans, in which likeness we remained seven years, but were at last recovered by a worthy Christian knight, named St Andrew, the champion of Scotland ; after whom we have travelled many a weary step, never crossed by any violence, until it was our unlucky fate to arrive in this unhappy wilderness, where your eyes have been the witnesses of our misfortunes.”

Which discourse was no sooner finished, than the worthy champion thus began to comfort the distressed ladies :

“The Christian champion after whom you take in hand this weary travel,” said the Irish champion, “is my approved friend, for whose company and wished-for sight I will go more weary miles than there are trees in this vast wilderness ; therefore, most excellent ladies, true ornaments of beauty, be my companions in my travels ; for I will never cease till I have found our honourable friend, the champion of Scotland, or some of those brave knights, whom I have not seen these seven summers.”

So after they had refreshed themselves, and cured

their wounds, by the secret virtues of certain herbs growing in the woods, they took their journey anew, under the conduct of this worthy champion, St Patrick; and after some few days' travel, they obtained the sight of a broad beaten way, where, committing their fortunes to the fatal sisters, and setting their faces towards the east, they merrily journeyed together. Here we will now leave them, and speak of the seventh Christian champion, whose adventurous exploits, and knightly honours, deserve a golden pen dipped in ink of true fame for their description.

CHAPTER VIII.

How St David, the champion of Wales, slew the Count Palatine in the Court of Tartary; and, after, how he was sent to the enchanted garden of Ormandine, wherein by magic art he slept seven years.

ST DAVID, the most noble champion of Wales, after his departure from the brazen pillar, where the other champions of Christendom separated to seek their foreign adventures, achieved many memorable things, as well in Christendom as in those nations that acknowledge no true God; which at present I omit, and only relate what happened unto him among the Tartars; for being in the emperor of Tartary's court, (a place very much honoured by valiant knights, and highly graced by a train of beautiful ladies,) the emperor upon a time ordained a solemn joust and tournament to be held in honour of his birth-day. Hither resorted, at the time appointed, from all the

borders of Tartary, the best and hardiest knights in the country. In this honourable and princely exercise, the noble knight St David was appointed champion for the emperor, and was mounted upon a Morocco steed, richly caparisoned by the curious work of Indian women, and upon his shield was set a golden griffin rampant in a field of blue.

Against him came the Count Palatine, son and heir-apparent to the emperor, brought in by twelve knights, richly furnished with the habiliments of honour, who paced three times about the lists before the emperor and many ladies that were present to behold the honourable tournament; then the twelve knights left the lists, and the Count Palatine prepared himself to encounter the Christian knight, (being appointed chief champion for the day,) who likewise prepared himself, and at the trumpet sound, by the herald's appointment, they ran so fiercely against each other, that the ground seemed to shake under them, and the skies to resound the echoes of their mighty strokes.

At the second bout the champions had, St David had the worst, and was constrained, through the forcible strength of the Count Palatine, to lean backward almost beside his saddle, whereat the trumpets began to sound in sign of victory. But yet the valiant Christian, nothing dismayed, with courage ran the third time against the Count Palatine, and by the violence of his strength, overthrew both horse and man, when the Count's body was so extremely bruised by the fall of his horse, that his heart's blood issued forth by his mouth, and his vital spirit was pressed from the mansion of his breast, so that he was forced to give the world farewell.

This fatal overthrow of the Count Palatine abashed the whole company, but especially the emperor, who having no more sons but him, caused the lists to be broken up, the knights to be disarmed, and the Count to be brought, by four esquires, into his palace; and after many sad sighs, he breathed forth this woful lamentation:—

“Now are my triumphs turned into everlasting woes, from a pleasant pastime to a direful and bloody tragedy. O most unkind Fortune, never constant but in change; why is my life prolonged to see the downfall of my dear son, the noble Count Palatine? Why rends not this accursed earth whereon I stand, and presently swallow up my body into her hungry bowels? Is this the use of Christians, for true honour to repay dishonour? Could not base blood serve to stain his deadly hands withal, but the royal blood of my dear son, for whose revenge the face of the heavens is stained with blood, and cries for vengeance to the majesty of mighty Jove. The dreadful Furies, the direful daughters of dark Night, and all the baleful company of burning Acheron, whose loins shall be girt with serpents, and hair be hanged with wreaths of snakes, shall haunt, pursue, and follow this cursed Christian champion, that hath bereaved my country Tartary of so precious a jewel as my dear son the Count Palatine, whose magnanimous prowess surpassed all the knights of our realm.”

There was, adjoining upon the borders of Tartary, an enchanted garden, kept by magic art, whence no one returned that attempted to enter; the governor of this garden was a famous necromancer, named Ormandine, to whom the emperor intended to send the

adventurous champion St David, thereby to revenge the Count Palatine's death. So the emperor after some days had passed, and the obsequies of his son had been performed, caused the Christian knight to be brought into his presence, and committed to him this heavy task and weary labour.

"Proud knight," said the angry emperor, "thou knowest since thy arrival in our territories, how highly I have honoured thee, not only in granting thee liberty to live, but making thee chief champion of Tartary, which high honour thou hast repaid with great ingratitude, and blemished true nobility, in slaying my dear son, for which unhappy deed thou rightly deservedst death; but yet know, accursed Christian, that mercy harboureth in princely minds, and where honour sits enthroned there justice is not too severe; although thou hast deserved death, yet if thou wilt venture to the enchanted garden, and bring hither the magician's head, I grant thee not only life, but the crown of Tartary after my decease, because I see thou hast a mind furnished with all princely thoughts, and adorned with true magnanimity."

This heavy task and strange adventure not a little pleased the noble champion of Wales; who, after some considerate thought, replied:

"Most high and magnificent emperor," said the champion, "were this task, which you enjoin me, as wonderful as the labours of Hercules, or as fearful as the enterprise of Jason for the golden fleece, yet would I attempt to finish it and return with triumph to Tartary, as the Macedonian monarch did to Babylon, when he had conquered half of the wide world." Which words

were no sooner ended, than the emperor bound him by his oath of knighthood, and by the love he bore unto his native country, never to follow other adventure till he had performed his promise, which was to bring the magician Ormandine's head into Tartary; whereupon the emperor departed from the noble knight St David, hoping never to see him return, but rather to hear of his utter confusion, or everlasting imprisonment.

Thus the valiant Christian champion, being bound by his promise, within three days prepared all necessaries for his departure, and travelled westward, until he approached the enchanted garden, the situation whereof somewhat daunted his valiant courage, for it was encompassed with a hedge of withered thorns and briars, which seemed continually to burn; upon the top thereof sat a number of strange and deformed things, some in the likeness of night owls, which wondered at the presence of St David; some in the shape of Progne's transformation, foretelling his unfortunate doom; and some like ravens, that with their harsh throats ring forth hateful knells of woful tragedies. The skies which covered the enchanted garden seemed to be overspread with misty clouds, whence continually shot flames of fire, as though the air had been filled with blazing comets; which fearful spectacle struck such terror into the champion's heart, that twice he was disposed to return without performing the adventure, but for his oath and honour of knighthood, which he had pawned for its accomplishment. So laying his body on the cold earth, he made his humble petition to God, that his mind might never be oppressed with cowardice, nor his heart daunted with

faint fears, till he had performed what the emperor had bound him to do; with this he rose from the ground, and with cheerful looks beheld the elements, which seemed in his conceit to smile at the enterprise, and to foreshow success.

So the noble knight, St David, with a valiant courage, went to the garden gate, by which stood a rock of stone, overspread with moss; in which rock by magic art was enclosed a sword, nothing outwardly appearing but the hilt, which was the richest, in his judgment, that ever his eyes beheld, for the steel-work, beset with jaspers and sapphire-stones, was engraven very curiously; the pommel was in the fashion of a globe, of the purest silver that the mines of rich America brought forth. About the pommel was engraven with letters of gold this verse following:

My magic spells remain most firmly bound,
The world's strange wonder unknown to any one,
Till that a knight within the north be found,
To pull this sword from out this rock of stone:
Then ends my charms, my magic arts and all,
By whose strong hand wise Ormandine must fall.

This inscription drove such a conceited imagination into the champion's mind, that he supposed himself to be the northern knight by whom the necromancer should be conquered; therefore, without any further delay he put his hand into the hilt of the rich sword, thinking presently to pull it out from the enchanted rock of Ormandine; but no sooner did he attempt that vain enterprise, than his senses were overtaken with a sudden and heavy sleep, whereby he was forced to let go his hold, and to fall flat upon the ground, where his senses were drowned in such a dead slumber



St. David of Wales.

that it was as impossible to recover himself from sleep as to pull the sun out of the firmament. The necromancer, by his magic skill, had intelligence of the champion's misfortune, and sent from the enchanted garden four spirits, in the similitude and likeness of four beautiful damsels, who wrapped the drowsy champion in a sheet of fine Arabian silk, and conveyed him into a cave, directly placed in the middle of the garden, where they laid him upon a bed, which was softer than down of culvers; where those beautiful ladies, through the art of wicked Ormandine, continually kept him sleeping for the term of seven years.

Thus was St David's adventure unsuccessful. His day's travels turned into a night's repose, his night's repose into a heavy sleep, which endured until seven years were fully finished; and where we will leave him at the mercy of the necromancer Ormandine, and return to the most noble and magnanimous champion, St George, whom we left imprisoned in the Soldan's court.

CHAPTER IX.

How St George escaped out of prison in Persia, and of his fierce battle with a giant; also, how he redeemed the champion of Wales from his enchantment; with the tragical tale of the necromancer, Ormandine.

Now seven times had frosty-bearded Winter covered both herbs and flowers with snow, and hung the trees with crystal icicles, since the unfortunate St George

beheld the cheerful light of heaven, but lived obscure in a dismal dungeon, by the Soldan of Persia's command, as you heard before in the beginning of this history. His unhappy fortune so excited his restless thoughts, that a thousand times a year he wished an end of his life, and a thousand times he cursed the day of his creation.

But at last, when seven years were ended, it was the champion's lucky fortune to find, in a secret corner of the dungeon, a certain iron implement, which time had almost consumed with rust, with which, by long labour, he dug himself a passage through the ground, till he ascended just in the middle of the Soldan's court, at that time of the night when all things were silent. Now, the noble knight, being as fearful as the bird newly escaped from the fowler's net, gazed about, and listened where he might hear the voice of people; at last, he heard the grooms of the Soldan's stable, furnishing forth horses for the next morning for some great achievement. Whereupon the noble champion, St George, taking the iron implement wherewith he redeemed himself from prison, burst open the doors, slew all the grooms in the Soldan's stable; then he took the strongest palfrey, and the richest furniture, with other necessaries appertaining to a knight-at-arms, and so rode in great comfort to one of the city gates, where he saluted the porter in this manner:

“Porter, open the gates, for St George of England has escaped, and murdered the grooms, and in his pursuit the city is in arms.” Which words the simple Persian believed, and so with all speed opened the

gates; and so the champion of England departed, and left the Soldan in a dead sleep, little dreaming of his sudden escape.

But by the time the purple-spotted morning had parted with her grey, and the sun's bright countenance appeared on the mountain tops; St George had ridden twenty miles from the Persian court, and before his departure was known in the Soldan's palace, the English champion had arrived in sight of Greece, beyond all danger from the Persian knights who swiftly followed him.

By this time the extremity of hunger so sharply tormented him, that he could travel no further, but was constrained to sustain himself with certain wild chestnuts instead of bread, and sour oranges instead of drink, and such poor food as grew by the way as he travelled.

Journeying onwards, he at length espied a tower standing upon a chalky cliff, distant from him about three miles, whither the champion intended to go, not to seek for adventures, but to rest himself after his weary journey, and get such victuals as he could find to supply his wants.

The way he found so well, and the journey so easy, that in half an hour he approached the tower; upon the wall of which stood a most beautiful woman, attired after the manner of a distressed lady, and her looks heavy like the queen of Troy, when she beheld her palace on fire. The valiant knight St George, after he had alighted from his horse, gave her this courteous salutation:—

“Lady,” said he, “for so you seem by your outward

appearance, if ever you pitied a traveller, or granted succour to a Christian knight, give to me some food, for I am now almost famished."

The lady, with a sad frown, answered thus: "Sir knight," quoth she, "I advise thee with all speed to depart, for here thou'lt get but a cold dinner: my lord is a mighty giant, and believeth in Mohammed; and if he do but understand that thou art a Christian knight, not all the gold of Higher India, nor the riches of wealthy Babylon, can preserve thy life." "Now, by the honour of my knighthood," replied St George, "assisted by the God that Christendom adores, were thy lord stronger than mighty Hercules that bore mountains on his back, here will I either obtain my dinner, or die by his accursed hand."

These words so abashed the lady, that she went with all speed from the tower, and told the giant, that a Christian knight remained at the gate, and had sworn to suffice his hunger in despite of his will. Whereupon the furious giant suddenly started up, having been in a sound sleep, for it was the middle of the day, and taking a bar of iron in his hand, he came down to the tower-gate. His stature was in height five yards, his head bristled like a boar, a foot there was betwixt each brow, his eyes were hollow, his mouth wide, his lips were like to flaps of steel, and in all his proportions he was more like a demon than a man. This deformed monster so daunted the courage of St George, that he prepared himself for death, not through fear of the monstrous giant, but from hunger and febleness of body. But here God provided for him, and so restored to him his decayed strength, that he endured battle until

the close of the evening, by which time the giant grew almost blind, through the sweat that ran down from his monstrous brows; whereupon St George got the advantage, and wounded the giant so cruelly under the short ribs, that he was compelled to fall to the ground, and give up his life.

After this happy event St George first gave the honour of his victory unto God, in whose power all his fortune consisted; then entered the tower, where the lady presented him with all manner of delicacies and pure wines; but the English knight suspecting treachery to be hidden under her proffered courtesy, caused her to taste of every dish, likewise of the wine, lest some violent poison should be therein mixed; but finding all things pure and wholesome, as nature required, he satisfied his hunger, rested his weary body, and refreshed his horse.

And so leaving the tower in keeping of the lady, he committed his fortune to new travel, as his revived spirits never required longer rest than for the refreshing himself and his horse; so he travelled through part of Greece, the confines of Phrygia, and into the borders of Tartary, within which territories he had not long journeyed than he approached in sight of the enchanted garden of Ormandine, where St David the champion of Wales had so long slept by magic art. But no sooner did he behold the wonderful situation thereof, than he espied Ormandine's sword enclosed in the enchanted rock; and, after he had read the superscription written about the pommel, he essayed to pull it out by strength; and he no sooner put his hand upon the hilt, than he drew it forth with as much ease

as though it had been hung by a thread of untwisted silk: and when he beheld the glittering brightness of the blade, and the wonderful richness of the pommel, he accounted the prize more worth than the armour of Achilles, which caused Ajax to run mad, and much richer than Medea's golden fleece. But by the time St George had circumspectly looked into every secret of the sword, he heard a strange and dismal voice thunder in the skies; a terrible and mighty lumbering in the earth, by which both hills and mountains were shaken, rocks were removed, and oaks were rent in pieces.

After this, the gates of the enchanted garden flew open; whence came forth Ormandine the magician, with his hair standing on his head, his eyes sparkling, his cheeks blushing, his hands quivering, his legs trembling, and all the rest of his body distempered, as though legions of spirits had encompassed him about; he came directly to the worthy knight, who remained still by the enchanted rock, whence he had pulled the magician's sword, and took the most valiant and magnanimous champion St George of England by the gauntlet, and with great humility kissed it; then proffering him the courtesy due to strangers, which was performed very graciously, he afterwards conducted him into the enchanted garden, to the cave where the champion of Wales was kept sleeping by four virgins singing delightful songs, and after seating him in a chair of ebony, Ormandine thus began to relate of wonderful things:

“Renowned knight at arms,” said the necromancer, “Fame's worthiest champion, whose strange adventures

all Christendom in time to come shall applaud; be silent till I have told my tale, for never after this must my tongue speak again. The knight whom thou seest here wrapped in this sheet of gold, is a Christian champion, as thou art, sprung from the ancient seed of Trojan warriors, who likewise attempted to draw this enchanted sword, but my magic spells so prevailed, that he was intercepted in the enterprise, and forced ever since to remain sleeping in this cave. But now the hour is almost come for his recovery, which by thee must be accomplished. Thou art that adventurous champion whose invincible hand must finish up my detested life, and send my fleeting soul to draw thy fatal chariot on the banks of burning Acheron; for my time to remain in this enchanted garden was limited, till from the north should come a knight who should pull this sword from the enchanted rock, which thou happily hast now performed; therefore I know my time is short, and my hour of destiny at hand. What I report, write in brazen lines, for the time will come when this discourse shall highly benefit thee. Take heed thou observest three things; first, That thou take to wife a virtuous maid; next, That thou erect a monument over thy father's grave; and lastly, That thou continue a professed enemy to the foes of Christ Jesus, bearing arms in the honour and praise of thy country. These things being truly and justly observed, thou shalt attain such honour, that all kingdoms of Christendom shall admire thy dignity. What I speak is from no vain imagination, sprung from a frantic brain, but pronounced by the mystical and deep art of necromancy."

These words were no sooner ended, than the most honourable fortunate champion of England requested the magician to describe his past fortunes, and by what means he came to be governor of the enchanted garden.

“To tell the discourse of my own life,” replied Ormandine, “will breed a new sorrow in my heart, the remembrance of which will rend my very soul. But yet, most noble knight, to fulfil thy request, I will force my tongue to declare what my heart denies to utter; therefore prepare thine ear to listen to the most woful tale that ever tongue delivered.”

THE WOFUL AND TRAGICAL DISCOURSE, PRONOUNCED
BY THE NECROMANCER ORMANDINE, OF THE MISERY
OF HIS CHILDREN.

“I WAS in former times king of Scythia, my name Ormandine, graced in my youth with two fair daughters, whom nature had not only made beautiful, but replenished with all gifts that art could devise. The elder, whose name was Castria, was the fairest maid that ever Scythia brought forth. Among the number of knights ensnared by her love, there was one Floridon, son to the king of Armenia, equal to her in every ornament of nature; a lovelier couple never trod on earth, or graced any prince's court in the whole world.

“This Floridon so seemingly burned in affection for the admired Castria, that he offered her his love, and was accepted, but he afterwards betrothed himself to my younger daughter, whose name was Marcilla, no less beautified with nature's gifts than her elder sister; and when the inconstant Floridon perceived that the

unhappy Castria upbraided him with many ignominious words, he with a wrathful countenance replied—‘I tell thee, Castria, my love was ever yet to follow arms, to hear the sound of drums, to ride upon a nimble steed, and not to trace a carpet dance, like Priam’s son, before the eyes of Menelaus’s wife. Therefore begone, disturbing creature; go sing thy harsh melody in company of night birds.’

“After which reproachful speeches, Floridon departed from her presence, not leaving behind him so much as a kind look. Whereat the distressed lady, being oppressed with intolerable grief, sunk down, not able to speak for a time; but at last, recovering her senses, she began anew to complain.

“‘I,’ quoth she, ‘must now abandon and utterly forsake all company, and seek some cave, wherein I may sit for evermore and bewail myself. My Floridon, oh! he denieth me, and accounts my sight as ominous as the baleful crocodile’s. O inconstant Floridon! thou didst promise me marriage; but now thy vows I see are false. Thou hast forsaken me, and tied thy faith unto my sister Marcilla, who must enjoy thy love.’

“Thus complained the woful Castria, roving up and down the court of Scythia, for five months. At the end of which time, the appointed marriage of Floridon and Marcilla drew nigh, and the prince and potentates of Scythia were present to celebrate Hymen’s holy rites; in which honourable assemblies none were more busy than Castria to beautify her sister’s wedding. The ceremonies being performed, and the day spent in pleasures fitting so great and mighty an occasion, Castria requested the privilege of the country,

which was this: that on the first night of any maiden's marriage her sister should sleep with the bride; which honourable task was committed to Castria, who provided herself with a silver bodkin, wherewith she intended to prosecute revenge, and hid it in the ringlets of her hair. The bride's sleeping chamber was appointed far from the hearing of any one, lest the noise of people should hinder her quiet sleep.

“But at last, when the hour approached that the bride should take leave of her ladies and maidens that attended her to her chamber, the new-married Floridon, in company of many Scythian knights, committed Marcilla to her quiet rest, little suspecting the bloody purpose of her sister's mind.

“And now behold how every thing fell out according to her desires. The ladies and gentlemen had no sooner departed, and silence taken possession of the whole court, than Castria locked the chamber-door, and secretly conveyed the keys under the bed's head, unperceived by the betrayed Marcilla, who, poor lady, after some speeches, went to bed; wherein she was no sooner laid, than a heavy sleep over-mastered her senses, whereby her tongue was forced to bid her sister good night, who sat discontented by her bed-side, watching the time when she might conveniently act her bloody tragedy. Upon a court cupboard stood two burning tapers, that gave light to the whole chamber, which in her conceit seemed to burn blue. After this, she took the silver bodkin, that she had secretly hidden in her hair, and came to her new-married sister, then overcome with a heavy slumber, and with her bodkin pierced her tender

breast; who immediately, on receiving the stroke, started from her sleep, and gave such a pitiful shriek, that it would have awakened the whole court, but that the chamber stood far from the hearing of company, except her bloody-minded sister, whose hand was ready in her fury with a second stroke.

“But when Marcilla beheld the sheets and ornaments of her bed bestained with purple gore, and from her breast run streams of crimson blood, which like a fountain trickled down her bosom, she breathed forth this exclamation against the cruelty of Castria :

“‘O sister,’ said she, ‘hath nature harboured in thy breast a horrid soul? What fury hath incensed thee to commit this tragedy? What have I done, or wherein hath my tongue offended thee? What has caused thy remorseless hand to convert against nature my joyful nuptials to a woful funeral?’ ‘This is the cause,’ replied Castria, declaring how Floridon had deserted her, ‘that I have bathed my hands in thy blood.’”

“Which words were no sooner finished, than she violently pierced her own breast, whereby the blood of the two sisters was mingled together.

“Now when the morning sun had chased away the dark night, Floridon, who little suspected the fate of the two sisters, repaired to the chamber door, with a concert of skilful musicians, but their harmony sounded only to the walls, and his morning salutations were made in vain; he burst open the door, and having entered, he found the two ladies weltering in their own gore; which woful spectacle so bereaved him of his wits, that like a frantic man he raged up and down, and thus bitterly complained :

“ ‘Oh, immortal powers! open the vengeful gates of heaven, and in your justice punish me, for my inconstant love hath murdered two of the bravest ladies that ever nature framed. Revive, sweet dames of Scythia, and hear me speak, I that am the most woful wretch that ever spoke; if spirit may here be given for spirit, dear ladies, take my life and live; or if my heart might dwell within your breasts, this hand shall equally divide it.’

“ Which woful lamentation was no sooner breathed from his sorrowful breast, than he finished his days by the stroke of the same accursed bodkin which was the instrument of the two sisters’ death, and which he found still remaining in the hand of remorseless Castria.

“ When the report of Floridon’s unhappy death was bruited to his father’s ears, his grief so exceeded the bounds of reason, that with all convenient speed he gathered the greatest strength Armenia could make, and, in revenge for his son’s fate, entered my territories, and with his well-approved warriors, subdued my provinces, slaughtered my soldiers, conquered my captains, slew my subjects, burnt my cities, and left my country villages desolate; and when I beheld my country overspread with famine, fire, and sword, three intestine plagues wherewith Heaven scourgeth the sins of the wicked, I was forced, for the safeguard of my life, to forsake my native habitation and kingly government, committing my fortune (like a banished exile) to wander in unknown countries, where Care was my chief companion, and Discontent my only solicitor. At last it was my destiny to

arrive in this unhappy place, which I supposed to be the abode of Despair; where I had not remained many days in my melancholy passion, when methought the jaws of deep Avernus opened, and there ascended a most fearful demon, who promised if I placed my fortune at his disposal, he would defend me from the fury of the whole world. To which I having at once consented, upon some assurance, he placed before my face this enchanted sword, so surely closed in stone, that it could never be pulled out but by the hands of a Christian knight, and till that task was performed, I should live exempt from all danger, although all the kingdoms of the earth assailed me; which task, most adventurous champion, thou hast now performed, whereby I know the hour of my death approacheth, and my time of confusion is at hand."

This discourse pronounced by the necromancer Ormandine, was no sooner finished, than the worthy champion, St George, heard such a rattling in the skies, and such a lumbering in the earth, that he expected some strange event to follow; then, casting his eyes aside, he saw the enchanted garden vanish, and the champion of Wales awake from his long sleep, wherein he had remained seven years; who, like one risen from a swoon, for a time stood speechless, not able to utter one word, till he beheld the noble champion of England steadfastly gazing upon the necromancer, who, at the vanishing of the enchantment, gave a terrible groan and died.

The two champions, after many embracings and kind greetings, revealed to each other the strange adventures they had met. St David told how he was

bound by the oath of knighthood to undertake the capture of Ormandine: whereupon St George delivered the enchanted sword, with the necromancer's head, which he severed from his body, into the hands of St David. But here must my weary Muse leave St David travelling with Ormandine's head to the Tartar emperor, and speak of the adventures that happened to St George after his departure from the enchanted garden.

CHAPTER X.

How St George arrived at Tripoli, in Barbary, where he stole away Sabra, the king's daughter of Egypt, from the Blackmoor king; and how her fidelity was known by the means of two lions; and what happened to him in the same adventure.

ST GEORGE, after the recovery of St David, as you heard in the former chapter, hastened his journey towards Christendom, whose pleasant plains he long desired to behold, and thought every day a year, till his eyes enjoyed the sweet sight of his native country of England, upon whose chalky cliffs he had not ridden for many a weary summer's day. Therefore committing his journey to a fortunate issue, he travelled through many a dangerous country, where the people were not only of a bloody disposition, and given to all manner of wickedness, but the soil was greatly infested by wild beasts.

Thus in extreme danger travelled the noble champion, St George, till he arrived in the territories of Barbary, in which country he purposed for a time to remain,

and to seek for some noble achievement, whereby his fame might be increased; and being encouraged by this chivalric thought, the noble champion of England climbed to the top of a high mountain, where he unlocked his beaver, which before had not been lifted up for many a day, and beheld the wide and spacious country, how it was beautified with lofty pines, and adorned with many goodly palaces. But amongst the number of the towers and cities which the English champion beheld, there was one which seemed to exceed the rest both in situation and fine buildings, which he supposed to be the chief city of the country, and the place where the king usually held his court; to which St George intended to travel, not to furnish himself with any needful article, but to accomplish some honourable adventure, whereby his deeds might be immortalised in the books of memory. So after he had descended from the top of the steep mountain, and had travelled into a low valley about two or three miles, he approached an old and almost ruined hermitage, over-grown with moss and other weeds. Before the entry of this hermitage sat an ancient father upon a round stone, enjoying the heat of the warm sun, which cast such a comfortable brightness upon the hermit's face, that his white beard seemed to glitter like silver, and his head to exceed the whiteness of the northern icicles: from whom, after St George had paid the reverence that belongs to age, he demanded the name of the country, and the city he travelled to, and by what king the country was governed. The courteous hermit thus replied:

“Most noble knight, for so I guess you are by your

furniture and outward appearance, you are now in the territory of Barbary; yonder city opposite your eyes is called Tripoli, remaining under the government of Almidor, the black king of Morocco, in which city he now keepeth his court, attended by as many gallant knights as any king under the cope of heaven."

At which words the noble champion of England suddenly started, as though he had intelligence of some baneful news which deeply discontented his princely mind: his heart was presently incensed with a speedy vengeance, and his mind so extremely thirsted for Almidor's chastisement, that he could scarcely answer the hermit's words. But bridling his fury, the angry champion spoke in this manner :

"Grave father," said he, "through the treachery of that accursed king I endured seven years' imprisonment in Persia, where I suffered both hunger, cold, and extreme misery. But if I had my good sword Ascalon, and my trusty palfrey, which I left in the Egyptian court, where remains my betrothed love, the king of Egypt's daughter, I would be avenged on the head of Almidor, were his guard more strong than the army of Xerxes, whose multitudes drank the rivers dry." "Why," said the hermit, "Sabra, the king's daughter of Egypt, is queen of Barbary; and since her nuptials were solemnly performed in Tripoli seven summers are fully finished."

"Now by the honour of my country, England, the place of my nativity," replied St George, "and as I am a Christian knight, these eyes of mine shall never close until I have obtained a sight of the sweet princess, for whose sake I have endured so long imprisonment.

Therefore, dear father, be so kind to a traveller, as to exchange thy clothing for my rich furniture and steed, which I brought from the Soldan of Persia, for in the habit of a palmer I may enjoy the happiness of her sight without suspicion; therefore courteously deliver me thy hermit's gown, and I will give, with my horse and armour, this box of costly jewels." The grave hermit humbly thanked the noble champion, and so with all the speed they could possibly make, they exchanged apparel, and in this manner he departed.

The palmer being glad, repaired to his hermitage with St George's furniture, and St George in the palmer's apparel towards the city of Tripoli; and he no sooner came to the sumptuous buildings of the court than he espied a hundred poor palmers kneeling at the gate, to whom he spake after this manner:

"My dear brethren," said the champion, "for what intent remain you here, or what expect you from this honourable court?"

"We abide here," answered the palmers, "for an alms, which the queen once a day hath given these seven years, for the sake of an English knight, named St George, whom she loved above all the knights in the world." "But when will this be given?" said St George.

"In the afternoon," replied the palmers: "until which time, upon our bended knees, we hourly pray for the good fortune of the most noble English knight." Which speeches so pleased the valiant-minded champion St George, that he thought every minute a year, till the golden sun had passed the middle part of heaven; for it had then but newly risen from Aurora's bed, whose

light, as yet, with a shame-faced radiant blush stained the eastern sky.

During this time, the most valiant and magnanimous champion St George of England, now remembering the extreme misery he endured in Persia for her sake, now thinking upon the terrible battle he had with the burning dragon in Egypt, where he redeemed her from the fatal jaws of death, walked about the court, beholding the sumptuous buildings, and the curious engraven works executed by the achievement of man upon the glittering windows; when he heard, to his exceeding pleasure, the heavenly voice of his beloved Sabra, proceeding from a window upon the west side of the palace, where she warbled forth this sorrowful ditty to her lute:—

Die, all desires of joy and courtly pleasures;
 Die, all desires of princely royalty;
 Die, all desires of worldly treasures;
 Die, all desires of stately majesty;
 Since he is gone that pleased most my eye,
 For whom I wish ten thousand times to die.

O that mine eyes might never cease to weep,
 O that my tongue might evermore complain,
 O that my soul might in his bosom sleep,
 For whose sweet sake my heart doth live in pain;
 In woe I sing, my life with sorrow spent,
 Outworn with grief, consumed with discontent.

In time the sighs will dim the heavens' fair light,
 Which hourly fly from my tormented breast,
 Except St George, that noble English knight,
 With safe return shall make me truly blest;
 Then bitter cries shall end without alloy,
 Exchanging weeping tears for smiling joy.

Her song being ended, she left the window, away

from the hearing of the English champion, who stood gazing up at the casement, preparing his ears to listen to her sweet-tuned melody a second time. But it was in vain; whereat he grew more perplexed in passion than Æneas, when he had lost his beloved Creusa amongst the army of the Grecians; sometimes wishing the day to vanish in a moment, that the hour of her benevolence might approach; at other times comforting his sad cogitations with the remembrance of her long-continued constancy for his sake.

Thus he passed the time away, till the glorious sun began to decline in the western parts of the earth, when the palmers should receive her wonted benevolence. The English champion placed himself in the midst of those that expected the welcome hour of her coming, and at the time appointed she came to the palace gate, attired in mourning vesture, like Polixena, king Priam's daughter, when she went to sacrifice; her hair after a careless manner hung waving in the wind, almost changed from yellow burnished brightness to the colour of silver, through her long continued sorrow and grief of heart; her eyes seemed to have wept seas of tears, and her wonted beauty was now stained with the pearly dew that trickled down her cheeks; and after the sorrowful queen had justly numbered the palmers, and with vigilant eyes beheld the princely countenance of St George, her colour began to change from red to white, and from white to red, as though the lily and rose strove for superiority. But yet concealing her agitation under a smooth brow, she first delivered her alms to the palmers, then taking St George aside, with him she thus kindly began to confer:

“Palmer,” said she, “thou resemblest both in princely countenance and courteous behaviour that thrice honoured champion of England, for whose sake I have daily bestowed my benevolence for these seven years; his name is St George; his fame I know thou hast heard reported in many a country to be the bravest knight that ever buckled on steel helmet. Therefore for his sake will I grace thee with the chiefest honour in this court: instead of thy russet gabardine, I will clothe thee in purple silk, and instead of the ebon staff, thy hand shall wield the richest sword that ever princely eye beheld.”

To which the noble champion St George replied in this courteous manner:

“I have heard,” said he, “the princely achievements and magnanimous adventures of that honoured English knight, whom you so dearly esteem, bruited through many princes’ courts, and how for the love of a lady he hath endured a long imprisonment, whence he never looked to return, but to spend the remnant of his days in lasting misery.”

At which, the queen let fall from her eyes such a shower of pearly tears, and sent such numbers of strained sighs from her grieved heart, that her sorrow seemed to exceed that of the queen of Carthage, when she had for ever lost the sight of her beloved lord. But the brave-minded champion purposed no longer to continue secret, but with his discovery to convert her sorrowful moans to smiling joy. And so casting off his palmer’s weeds, acknowledged himself to the queen, and showed the half-ring. Which ring in former time (as you have read before) they had equally divided

betwixt them, to be kept in remembrance of their plighted faith.

This unexpected sight highly pleased the beauteous Sabra, and her joy so exceeded the bounds of reason, that she could not speak one word, but was constrained through her new born pleasure to breathe a sad sigh into the champion's bosom, who, like a true and noble knight, embraced her with a loving kiss; and after these two lovers had fully discoursed to each other the secrets of their souls, Sabra took him gently by the hand, and ied him into her husband's stables, where stood his faithful palfrey, who no sooner espied the return of his master, than he was more proud of his presence than Bucephalus of the Macedonian monarch, when he most joyfully returned in triumph from any victorious conquest.

"Now is the time," said the excellent princess Sabra, "that thou mayest seal the remembrance of our former loves; therefore, with all convenient speed take thy faithful palfrey and thy trusty sword Ascalon, which I will presently deliver into thy hands, and with all celerity convey me from this unhappy country; for the king, my husband, with all his adventurous knights, being now forth hunting, their absence will assist our flight; but if you stay till his return, it is not a hundred of the hardiest knights in the world could bear me from this accursed palace."

At which words St George, having a mind graced with all excellent virtues, replied in this manner:

"Thou knowest, my divine lady, that for thy love I would endure as many dangers as Jason suffered in the isle of Colchis. But how is it possible thou canst fly

with me, when thou hast been crowned queen these seven years, and lived so long with the king?"

"He," quoth she, "is my foe, whose touch I count more loathsome than a den of snakes, and his sight more ominous than the crocodile. As for the crown of Morocco, which by force of friends was set upon my head, I wish that it might be turned into a blaze of quenchless fire, if it might not endanger my body, and for the name of queen, I account it a vain title; for I had rather be an English lady, than the greatest empress in the world."

Upon these speeches St George willingly consented, and with all speed purposed to go into England. So losing no time, Sabra furnished herself with sufficient treasure, and obtained the consent of an eunuch, who was appointed her guard in the king's absence, to accompany them in their travel, and to serve as a trusty guide, if occasion required.

So these three worthy personages committed their travels to the guidance of Fortune, who preserved them from dangers of pursuing enemies, who on the king's return from hunting followed them to every port and haven that divided the kingdom of Barbary from the confines of Christendom. But kind Destiny so guided their steps, that they travelled another way, and, contrary to their expectations, when they looked to arrive upon the territories of Europe, they were cast upon the fruitful plains of Greece: in which country we must tell what happened to the three travellers.

And now, Melpomene, thou tragic sister of the Muses, report what unlucky crosses happened to these three travellers on the confines of Greece, and how

their smiling comedy was by ill-luck turned into a weeping tragedy; for when they had journeyed about three or four leagues, over many a lofty hill, they came nigh unto a vast wilderness, through which the way seemed so long, and the sun-beams so exceedingly powerful, that Sabra, from weariness of travel, and the extreme heat of the day, was constrained to rest under the shelter of a mighty oak, whose branches had not been lopped for many a year. She had not long remained there when her heart began to faint from hunger, and her colour, which was but a little before as fair as any lady's in the world, began to change for want of a little drink; whereupon the most famous champion St George, half dead with grief, comforted her as well as he could after this manner :

“Faint not, my dear lady,” said he, “here is that good sword that once preserved thee from the burning dragon, and before thou shalt die for want of sustenance it shall make way to every corner of the wilderness; where I will either kill some venison to refresh thy hungry stomach, or make my tomb in the bowels of some monstrous beast. Therefore abide thou here under this tree, in company of thy faithful eunuch, till I return either with the flesh of some wild deer, or else some flying bird, to refresh thy spirit for new travel.”

Thus left he his beloved lady with the eunuch in the woods, and travelled up and down the wilderness, till he espied a herd of fatted deer, from which company he singled out the fairest, and like a tripping satyr, coursed her to death; then with his keen-edged sword cut out the goodliest haunch of venison that ever hunter's eye beheld; which gift he supposed to be most welcome to

his beloved lady. But mark what happened in his absence to the two weary travellers under the tree: where, after St George's departure, they had not long sat, discoursing about their long journeys and safe delivery from the hated Blackmoor king, stealing the time away with many an ancient story, when there appeared out of a thicket two huge and monstrous lions, which came directly pacing towards the two travellers. When Sabra beheld this fearful spectacle, having a heart overcharged with extreme fear of death, she committed her soul into the hands of God, and her body, almost famished for food, to satisfy the hunger of the furious lions, but who, by the appointment of heaven, did not so much as lay their wrathful paws upon the smallest part of her garment, but with eager desire assailed the eunuch, until they had buried his body in the empty vaults of their hungry bowels; then with their teeth lately imbrued in blood, rent the eunuch's steed into small pieces: after which they came to the lady, who sat quaking half dead with fear, and, like two lambs, couched their heads upon her lap, and she with her hand stroked down their bristled hairs, not daring almost to breathe, till a heavy sleep had over-powered their furious senses. By this time the princely minded champion St George returned with a piece of venison upon the point of his sword: and at that unexpected sight stood amazed, doubting whether it was best to fly for safety of his life, or to venture his fortune against the furious lions. But at last, when he beheld his lady quaking before the dismal gates of death, his love encouraged him to such boldness, that, laying down his venison, he sheathed his fal-

chion in the bowels of one of the lions. Sabra kept the other sleeping in her lap till his prosperous hand had likewise despatched him: which adventure being performed he first thanked heaven for his victory, and then in this kind manner saluted his lady :

“Now Sabra,” said he, “I have by this sufficiently proved thy fideity; for it is the nature of a lion, be he ever so furious, not to harm but humbly to lay his bristled head upon a maiden’s lap. Therefore, divine paragon, thou art the world’s chief wonder for love and chastity, thy honoured virtues shall ring as far as Phœbus sends his lights, and thy constancy I will maintain in every land to which I come, to be the truest under the circuit of the sun.” At which words he cast his eyes aside, and beheld the bloody spectacle of the eunuch’s tragic end, which Sabra wofully related to the grief of St George, when sad sighs served for a doleful knell to bewail his untimely death: but having a strong mind, not subject to vain sorrow when all hope of life is past, he ceased his grief, and prepared the venison for his lady’s repast.

After which joyful feast, these two princely persons set forward on their travels, on which the happy guide of heaven so conducted their steps, that before many days passed, they arrived in the Grecian court, upon the very day when the marriage of the Grecian emperor was to be solemnly held: whose nuptials, in former times had been bruited throughout every nation in the world, as well in Europe, as in Africa and Asia. At which honourable marriage the bravest knights then living on the earth were present; for golden Fame had spread the report thereof to the ears of the Seven

Champions; in Thessaly, to St Denis, the champion of France, there remaining with his beauteous Eglantine; in Seville, to St James, the champion of Spain, where he remained with his lovely Celestine; to St Anthony, the champion of Italy, then travelling on the borders of Scythia, with his lady Rosalinde; likewise to St Andrew, the champion of Scotland; to St Patrick, the champion of Ireland; and to St David the champion of Wales.

But now Fame and smiling Fortune consented to make their knightly achievements shine in the eyes of the whole world, therefore by the conduct of heaven they all arrived in the Grecian emperor's court.

CHAPTER XI.

How the seven champions arrived in Greece at the emperor's nuptials, where they perform many noble achievements; and how, afterwards, open war was proclaimed against Christendom by many knights, and how every champion departed into his own country.

To speak of the number of knights that assembled in the Grecian court together, were too tedious a labour, requiring the pen of Homer; therefore I will omit the honourable train of knights and ladies that attended them to the church; their costly garments and glittering ornaments, exceeding the royalty of Hecuba, the beauteous queen of Troy. After some few days the emperor proclaimed a solemn jousting to be held for the space of seven days, in honour of his marriage, and appointed for his chief champions the seven Christian knights,

Before the day appointed for the tournament to begin, the emperor caused a large frame of timberwork to be erected, whereon the empress and her ladies might stand, for the better view of the tilters, and at pleasure behold the champions' encounters; likewise in the compass of the lists were pitched seven tents of seven different colours, wherein the seven champions might remain till the sound of the silver trumpets summoned them to appear.

The first day, St Denis of France was appointed chief champion against all comers, being called by the title of the Golden knight, and at the sound of the trumpet entered the lists. His tent was of the colour of the marigold; upon the top an artificial sun flamed, that seemed to beautify the whole assembly; his horse an iron grey, graced with a plume of spangled feathers; before him rode a page in purple silk, bearing upon his crest three golden fleurs-de-lis, which signified his arms. Thus in this royal manner entered St Denis the lists; and after he had paced twice or thrice up and down, in the open view of the whole company, he prepared himself to begin the tournament. Against him ran many Grecian knights, who were foiled by the French champion, to the admiration of all beholders; who, to be brief, behaved himself so worthily, and with such fortitude, that the emperor applauded him as the bravest knight in the world.

Thus in great royalty, to the exceeding pleasure of the emperor, was the first day spent, till the dark evening caused the knights to break off company, and repair to their night's repose. And the next morning, no sooner did Phœbus show his splendid brightness,

than the herald, by command of the emperor, with a noise of trumpets, awakened the champions from their silent sleep, and they with all speed prepared for the second day's exercise. The chief champion appointed for that day, was the victorious knight, St James of Spain; who, after the emperor and empress had seated themselves with a stately train of beautiful ladies, entered the lists upon a Spanish jennet; directly opposite the emperor's throne, his tent was pitched, which was of the colour of quicksilver, and whereon were portrayed many fine devices; before the tent attended four esquires, bearing four several escutcheons in their hands, whereon were curiously painted the four elements; he likewise had the title of the Silver knight; and behaved himself no less worthy of all princely commendations than the French champion had done the day before.

The third day St Anthony of Italy was chief challenger in the tournament. His tent was the colour of the skies, his steed furnished with costly habiliments, his armour after the fashion of Barbary, his shield plated round about with steel, whereon was painted a golden eagle in a field of blue, which signified the ancient arms of Rome; he had likewise the title of the Azure knight, and his matchless chivalry for that day, won the prize from all the Grecian knights.

The fourth day, by the emperor's appointment, the worthy knight St Andrew of Scotland obtained the honour to be the chief challenger for the tournament; his tent was framed to represent a ship swimming upon the waves of the sea, environed by dolphins, tritons, and many strangely contrived mermaids; upon the top

stood the picture of Neptune, the god of the sea, bearing in his hand a streamer, whereon was wrought, in crimson silk, a corner cross, which seemed to be his country's arms; he was called the Red knight, because his horse was covered with a bloody veil; his worthy achievements obtained such favour in the emperor's eyes, that he threw him his silver gauntlet, which was prized at a thousand sequins; and after his noble encounters, he enjoyed a sweet repose.

The fifth day St Patrick of Ireland, as chief champion, entered the lists upon an Irish palfrey, covered with a veil of green, attended by six sylvan knights, every one bearing upon his shoulder a blooming tree; his tent resembled a summer bower, at the entry whereof stood the picture of Flora, beautified with a wreath of sweet-smelling roses; he was named the Green knight; and his worthy prowess so daunted the defendants, that before the tournament began, they gave him the honour of the day.

Upon the sixth day the heroic and noble-minded champion of Wales entered the lists upon a Tartar palfrey, covered with a veil of black to signify that a black and tragical day should befall those Grecian knights that durst test his fortitude: his tent was pitched in the form of a castle, in the west side of the lists; before the entry thereof hung a golden shield, whereon was portrayed a silver griffin rampant upon a golden helmet, which signified the ancient arms of Britain. His princely achievements not only obtained due commendation at the emperor's hands, but from the whole assembly of the Grecian ladies, who applauded him as the most noble knight that ever

shivered lance, and the most fortunate champion that ever entered the Grecian court.

Upon the seventh and last day of this honourable tournament, the famous and valiant knight at arms, St George of England, as chief challenger entered the lists upon a sable-coloured steed, betrapped with bars of burnished gold, his forehead beautified with a gorgeous plume of purple feathers, from which hung many pendants of gold; his armour was of the purest Lydian steel, nailed fast together with silver plates, his helmet engraven very curiously, beset with Indian pearl and jasper stones; before his breast-plate hung a silver tablet in a damask scarf, whereon was pictured a lion rampant in a bloody field, bearing three crowns upon its head: before his tent stood an ivory chariot, guarded by twelve coal-black negroes; in which his beloved lady and mistress, Sabra, sat upon a silver globe to behold the heroic encounters of her most noble and magnanimous champion, St George of England; his tent was as white as the swan's feathers, glittering against the sun, supported by four elephants formed of the purest brass; from his helmet hung his lady's glove, which he wore to maintain her excellent gifts of nature to exceed those of all ladies on the earth. These costly habiliments ravished the beholders with such unspeakable pleasure, that they stood gazing at him, not able to withdraw their eyes from so heavenly a sight. But when they beheld his victorious encounter against the Grecian knights, they supposed him to be the invincible tamer of that seven headed monster which climbed to the elements, offering to pull Jupiter from his throne. His steed never gave encounter to any

knight, but he tumbled horse and man to the ground, where they lay for a time bereft of sense. The tournament lasted that day from the rising of the sun till the shining evening star appeared; in which time he conquered five hundred of the hardiest knights then living in Asia, and shivered a thousand lances, to the wonderful admiration of the beholders.

Thus were the seven days brought to an end by the seven worthy champions of Christendom; in reward of whose noble achievements, the Grecian emperor, being a man that highly favoured knightly proceedings, gave them a golden tree with seven branches, to be divided equally amongst them. This honourable prize they conveyed to St George's pavilion, where, in dividing the branches, the seven champions discovered themselves to each other, and related by what good fortune they had arrived at the Grecian court; and this long-wished meeting so rejoiced their hearts, that they all accounted this happy day the most joyful that ever they beheld. And now, after the tournament was fully ended, and the knights had rested themselves some few days, recovering their wonted agility of body, they fell into a new exercise of pleasure, not appearing in glittering armour before the tilt, nor following the loud sounding drums and silver trumpets, but spending the time in courtly dances amongst their beloved ladies in more royalty than the Phrygian knights when they presented the autocrat of Asia with an enchanted mask. But their courtly pleasures did not long continue; for they were suddenly dashed with certain news of open war proclaimed against all Christendom: which happened contrary to the expectation of the Christian

knights. There arrived in the Grecian emperor's palace a hundred heralds, from a hundred different provinces, who proclaimed utter defiance to all Christian kingdoms in these words :

“ We, the high and mighty emperors of Asia and Africa, great commanders both by land and sea, proclaim, by general consent of all the eastern potentates, utter ruin and destruction to the kingdoms of Christendom, and to all those nations where any Christian knights are harboured : first, The Soldan of Persia, in revenge of a bloody slaughter done in his palace, by an English champion ; Ptolemy, the Egyptian king, in revenge of his daughter violently taken away by the same knight ; Almidor, the black king of Morocco, in revenge of his queen, likewise taken away by the said English champion ; the great governor of Thessaly, in revenge of his daughters, taken away by a French knight ; the king of Jerusalem, in revenge of his daughter, taken away by a Spanish knight ; the Emperor of Tartary, in revenge of his son, Count Palatine, slain by the unhappy hand of the champion of Wales ; the Thracian monarch, in revenge of his vain travel after his seven daughters, now in custody of certain Christian knights : and in revenge of all which injuries, the kingdoms from the furthest parts of Prester John's dominions to the borders of the Red Sea, have set down their hands and seals to assist in this war.”

This proclamation was no sooner ended, than the Grecian emperor gave command to muster the greatest strength that Greece could afford, to join with the pagans, to the utter ruin and confusion of Christendom ; which bloody edict, or rather inhuman judg-

ment, pronounced by the accursed infidels, compelled the Christian champions to a speedy departure, and every one to hasten to his own country, there to provide for the discomfiture of the pagans. So after due consideration, the champions departed, in company of their betrothed ladies, who chose rather to live in their husbands' bosoms, than with their unbelieving parents. After some few days they arrived in the spacious bay of Portugal, in which haven they vowed, by the honour of true knighthood, to meet again within six months, there to join all their Christian armies into one legion. Upon which plighted resolution, the worthy champions departed one from another: St George into England, St Denis into France, St James into Spain, St Anthony into Italy, St Andrew into Scotland, St Patrick into Ireland, St David into Wales. Whose pleasant plains they had not beheld for many years, and where their reception was as honourable as their hearts desired.

CHAPTER XII.

How the seven champions of Christendom arrived with all their troops in the bay of Portugal. The number of the Christian host. And how St George made an oration to the soldiers.

AFTER the seven champions of Christendom arrived in their native countries, and by true reports had blazed abroad to every prince's ear the bloody resolutions of the pagans, and how the provinces of Africa and Asia had mustered their forces for the invasion of Europe; all Christian kings, at the entreaty of the champions,

appointed mighty armies of well-approved soldiers, both by sea and land, to defeat the infidels' wicked intention. By the consent of Christendom, the noble and fortunate champion of England, St George, was appointed general-in-chief and principal leader of the armies, and the other six champions were elected as his council, and chief assistants in all matters that appertained either to the benefit of Christendom, or the furtherance of their proceedings.

This war so fired the hearts of many youthful gentlemen, and so encouraged the minds of every common soldier, that some mortgaged their lands, and at their own charges furnished themselves: some sold their patrimonies to serve in these honourable wars; and others forsook parents, kindred, wife, children, friends, and acquaintances, and without constraint, offered themselves to follow so noble a general as the renowned champion of England, and to spend their blood in the just quarrel of their native country.

To be brief, one might behold the streets of every town and city throughout Europe, enlivened with troops of soldiers, who thirsted after fame and honour. Then the joyful sound of thundering drums, and the echoes of silver trumpets, summoned them to arms; and they followed with as much willingness as the Grecians followed Agamemnon to the overthrow of Troy. The spring, which had now covered the earth with a new livery, was the time appointed for the Christian armies to meet in Portugal, there to join their several troops into one legion; the champions therefore bade adieu to their native countries, and with all speed buckled on their armour, hoisted their sails, and after a short

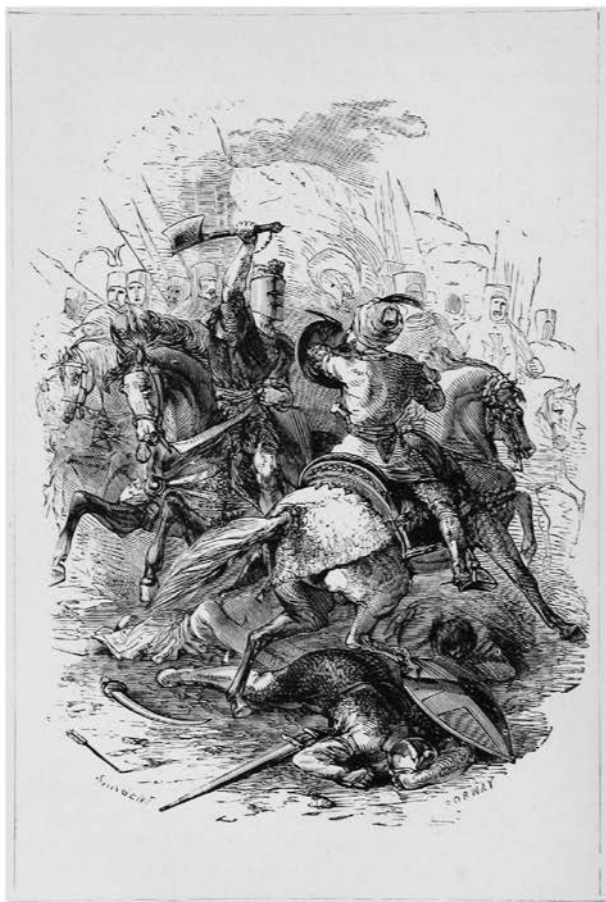
time, a calm and prosperous gale cast them happily in the bay of Portugal.

The first who arrived in that spacious haven was the noble champion St George, with one hundred thousand courageous English soldiers, whose forwardness betokened success, and their willing minds a joyful victory. His army set in battle array seemed to outrival the number of the Macedonian soldiers, wherewith valiant Alexander conquered the western world; his horsemen being in number twenty thousand, were armed in black corselets; their lances bound about with plates of steel, their steeds covered with mail, three times doubled; their colours were the blood-red cross, supported by a golden lion: his sturdy bowmen, whose conquering gray goose wing in former times had terrified the earth, being in number likewise twenty thousand, clad all in red mandilions, with caps of the same colour, bearing thereon likewise a silver cross, being the badge of honour of England; their bows of the strongest yew, and their arrows of the soundest ash, with forked heads of steel, and their feathers bound on with green wax and twisted silk: his musqueteers, being in number ten thousand, their muskets of the widest bore, with firelocks wrought by curious workmanship, yet of such wonderful lightness, that they required no rest at all to ease their arms: his cavaliers were ten thousand of the smaller-sized men, but yet of as courageous minds as the tallest soldiers in his army: his pike and bill men to guard the ensigns, thirty thousand, clad all in glittering armour: likewise followed ten thousand labouring pioneers, to undermine any town or castle, to entrench forts or camps, or to make a passage

through hills and mountains like worthy Hannibal, when he made a way for his soldiers through the lofty Alps, that divide the countries of Italy and Spain.

The next that arrived in the bay of Portugal was the princely-minded champion, St David of Wales, with an army of fifty thousand true-born Britons, furnished with all habiliments of war for so noble and valiant a service, to the high renown of his country, and true honour of his race: their armour in richness was nothing inferior to the Englishmen; their colours were a golden cross, supported by a silver griffin; which escutcheon signified the ancient arms of Wales: and no sooner had St George a sight of the valiant Britons, than he caused his musqueteers to salute them with a volley of shot, to express their joyful welcome on shore. And no sooner were the skies cleared from the smoke of the reeking powder, and St George discerned the magnanimous champion of Wales, who rode upon a milk-white palfrey in silver armour, guarded by a train of knights in purple vestures, than he greeted St David with kind courtesies, and accompanied him to the English tent, which had been erected close by the port, where for that night these two champions remained, spending the time in unspeakable pleasure: and upon the next day, St David departed to his own tent, which he had caused to be pitched a quarter of a league from the English army.

The next that arrived on the fruitful shores of Portugal was St Patrick, the noble champion of Ireland, with an army likewise of fifty thousand, attired after a strange and wonderful manner: their furniture was of the skins of wild beasts, but yet more unpierceable



St. Andrew of Scotland.

than the strongest armour of proof. They bore in their hands mighty darts, tipped at the end with prickling steel, which the courageous and valiant Irish soldiers, by the agility of their arms, could throw a full flight shot, and with forcible strength would strike three or four inches into an oak.

These hardy soldiers no sooner arrived on shore, than the English musqueteers gave them a princely welcome, and conducted the noble-minded St Patrick to the English tent, where the three champions of England, Wales, and Ireland, passed the time laying down plans how to pitch their camps to the greatest disadvantage of the unbelieving enemy, and resolving which way they should march, and such-like devices, for their own safety, and the benefit of Christendom.

The next that landed on the shores of Portugal was St Andrew, the worthy champion of Scotland, with threescore thousand well-approved soldiers; his horsemen, the old adventurous Galloways, clad in quilted jackets, with lances of the Turkish fashion, thick and short, bearing upon their beavers the arms of Scotland, which was a corner cross, supported by a young girl; his pikemen, the bold and hardy men of Orcaady, who continually lie upon freezing mountains, icy rocks, and snowy valleys; together with the light-footed Caledonians, who, if occasion be, can climb the highest hills, and for nimbleness in running, outdo the swift-footed stag. These bold adventurous Scottish men, deserved as much honour at the English champion's hands as any other nation; therefore he commanded his men, on their landing, to give them a noble reception, which they did, and conducted St Andrew to the English tent,

who, after he had given St George the courtesy of his country, departed to his tent, which was distant from the English tent a mile.

The next that arrived was St Anthony, the champion of Italy, with a band of fourscore thousand brave Italian soldiers, mounted on warlike coursers; every horseman attended by a negro, bearing in his hand a streamer of azure silk, with the arms of Italy thereon set in gold; every footman furnished with approved furniture in as stately a manner as the Englishmen; and they at their landing received as royal a reception as the other nations, and St Anthony was as highly honoured by the English champion as any of the other Christian knights.

The next that arrived was St Denis, the victorious champion of France, with a band of fourscore thousand. With him marched dukes of twelve several provinces, then under the government of the French king, every one at his own cost maintaining two thousand soldiers in these Christian wars; their reception was as glorious as the rest.

The last of the Christian champions that arrived upon the fruitful shores of Portugal was the magnanimous knight St James of Spain, with a band likewise of fourscore thousand; to maintain soldiers in defence of Christendom, he brought with him from the Spanish mines ten tons of refined gold; and he no sooner landed his troops, than the six champions gave him the honourable welcome of a soldier, and ordained a solemn banquet for the general armies, whose number exceeded five hundred thousand; these legions they conjoined into one royal camp, and placed their wings and squadrons in order of battle, chiefly by direction of St

George, the general-in-chief, by the consent of the Christian kings; whose countenance, after he had reviewed the Christian armies, seemed to prognosticate a glorious victory, and to foretell a fatal overthrow to the unbelieving potentates; and, still more to encourage his valiant followers to persevere in their determination, he pronounced this princely oration:

“You men of Europe,” said he, “and my countrymen, whose conquering fortunes never yet have feared the enemies of Christ, you see we have forsaken our native lands, and committed our destinies to the queen of heaven, not to fight in any unjust quarrel, but in the true cause of Israel’s Anointed; not against nature to climb to the heavens, like Nimrod and the giants in former times, but to prevent the invasion of Christendom, the ruin of Europe, and the intended overthrow of the Christian provinces. The bloody-minded infidels have mustered legions, in numbers like blades of grass that grow upon the flourishing downs of Italy, or the stars of heaven in the coldest winter’s night, threatening to deluge our countries with seas of blood, scatter our streets with mangled limbs, and convert our glorious cities into flames of quenchless fire; therefore, dear countrymen, live not to see our Christian maidens dragged along our streets like guiltless lambs to a bloody slaughter; nor our harmless babes, with bruised brains dashed against flinty stones; nor our feeble age, whose hair resembles silver mines, lie bleeding on the marble pavement; but like true Christian soldiers fight in the quarrel of your countries. † What though the Pagans be in number ten to one, yet heaven I know will fight for Christen-

dom, and cast them down before our faces, like drops of April showers. Be not dismayed to see their martial array, nor fear when you behold their streamers hovering in the wind, that their steeled pikes, like to a thorny forest, will overspread whole countries: thousands of them I know will have no heart to fight, but fly with cowardly fear, like flocks of sheep before the greedy wolf. I, who am the leader of your noble minds, never fought in vain, nor ever entered battle but to return with conquest. Let every one with me join in this princely resolution: 'For Christendom we fight; for Christendom we live and die.'

This soldier-like oration was no sooner finished, than the whole army, with a general voice, cried, "To arms, to arms, with victorious George of England!" which noble resolution of the soldiers so rejoiced the English champion, and so encouraged the other Christian knights, that they gave speedy command to remove their tents, and to march with easy journeys towards Tripoli in Barbary, where Almidor, the black king of Morocco, had residence; in which travel we must leave for a while the Christian army, and speak of the innumerable troops of Pagan knights that arrived in the kingdom of Hungary, and how they fell at variance in the election of a general; which civil mutiny caused much effusion of blood, to the great hurt both of Africa and of Asia.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of the dissension and discord that happened amongst the army of the Pagans in Hungary. The battle between the Christians and the Moors, in Barbary; and how Almidor, the black king of Morocco, was scalded to death in a caldron of boiling lead and brimstone.

THE ireful Pagans, after they had levied their martial forces both by sea and land, repaired to their general place of meeting, there to resolve upon the utter ruin of Christendom: for no sooner had winter withdrawn his chill frost from the earth, and Flora taken possession of his place, than the kingdom of Hungary suffered excessive penury, from the numberless armies of accursed infidels, having there appointed their place of meeting: for though Hungary, of all other countries, then was the richest and most plenty in victuals to maintain a camp, yet it was mightily overpressed, and greatly burdened with multitudes, and not only in want of necessaries to relieve soldiers, but those bloody miscreants, through a civil discord about the election of a general, converted their union into a most inhuman slaughter, and their hope of victory to a dismal tragedy: and their legions had no sooner arrived on the plains of Algernos, than the king of Hungary caused their muster rolls to be publicly read and numbered, in the hearing of the Pagan knights, and in this manner proclaimed through the camp.

First, Be it known unto all nations that fight in the quarrels of Africa and Asia, under the conduct of our three great gods Mohammed, Tarmagant, and Apollo, what invincible forces have now arrived in this renowned kingdom of Hungary, a land honoured through

the world, not only for arms, but curious buildings, and endowed with all manner of riches.

Second, We have from the emperor of Constantinople, two hundred thousand. From the emperor of Greece, two hundred and fifty thousand. From the emperor of Tartary, a hundred three score and three thousand. From the Soldan of Persia, two hundred thousand. From the king of Jerusalem, four hundred thousand. Of Moors, one hundred and twenty thousand. Of coal-black Negroes, one hundred and forty thousand. Of Arabians, one hundred and sixty thousand. Of Babylonians, one hundred and thirty thousand and odd. Of Armenians, one hundred and fifty thousand. Of Macedonians, two hundred and ten thousand. Of Syracusians, fifteen thousand six hundred. Of Hungarians, three hundred and six thousand. Of Sicilians, seven thousand three hundred. Of Scythians, one hundred and five thousand. Of Parthians, ten thousand three hundred. Of Phrygians, seven thousand three hundred. Of Ethiopians, sixty thousand. Of Thracians, fourscore thousand. Likewise from the provinces of Prester John, three thousand unconquered knights, with many more from other petty dominions and dukedoms, whose numbers I omit, lest I should seem over-tedious to the reader.

But to conclude, such a camp of armed soldiers arrived in Hungary, as might in one month have destroyed Christendom, had not God defended it from those barbarous nations, and by his invincible power confounded the pagans in their own practices: for no sooner had the heralds proclaimed through the camp what a number of nations had joined in arms together

than the soldiers fell into dissension about the election of a general: some vowed to follow none but the king of Jerusalem; some Ptolemy the Egyptian king; and some the Soldan of Persia, and all resolved either to persevere in their own choice, or to lose their lives in the quarrel.

Thus parts were taken on all sides, not only by the meaner sorts, but by leaders and commanders of bands; whereby the kings and potentates were forced to commit their wills to their soldiers' pleasure. This civil broil so discouraged the whole army, that many withdrew their forces and marched homewards, as the king of Morocco, and his tawny Moors, and coal-black Negroes: the Soldan of Persia, Ptolemy the Egyptian king, the kings of Arabia and Jerusalem, also departed to their own countries, cursing that they had attempted so vain an enterprise. The rest, not minding to put up with abuse, fell from brawling boasts to downright blows; which continued without ceasing for the space of three days, in which encounters the murdered infidels, like scattered corn, overspread the fields of Hungary; the fruitful valleys lay drowned in purple gore; the fields of corn were consumed with flames of fire; and the towns and cities ruined with wasting war; wherein fathers were sad witnesses of their children's slaughter, and sons beheld their parents' reverend hairs, more white than tried silver, besmeared with clotted blood.

Meanwhile the seven worthy champions of Christendom had entered Barbary, before Almidor, the black king of Morocco, with his scattered troops of Moors and Negroes returned from Hungary, and by fire and

sword had wasted many of the chief towns and forts, whereby the country was much weakened, and the people compelled to sue for mercy at the champions' hands, who, having true Christian minds, and within their hearts continually harbouring pity, vouchsafed to grant mercy to those that yielded their lives to the pleasure of the Christian knights; but when St George had intelligence of Almidor's approach with his weakened troops, he prepared his soldiers to give the Moors a bloody banquet, which was the next morning performed by break of day, to the high honour of Christendom. The night before, however, the Moors, knowing the country better than the Christians, got the advantage both of wind and sun; whereat St George being something dismayed yet not discouraged, emboldened his soldiers with many heroic speeches, proffering them frankly the enemy's spoils, and so at the sun's rising they entered battle, when the Moors fell before the Christians' swords as ears of corn before the reaper's sickle.

During this conflict, the seven champions, still in the very front of the battle, so adventurously behaved themselves that they slew more negroes than a hundred of the bravest knights in the Christian armies. At last, Fortune intending to make St George's prowess shine brighter than the rest, singled out the Morocco king, betwixt whom and the English champion was a long and dangerous fight; but St George behaved himself so courageously with his trusty sword, that Almidor was constrained to yield to his mercy. The army of the Moors, seeing their king taken prisoner, would have fled, but the Christians, being lighter of foot,

overtook them, and made the greatest slaughter of them that ever happened in Barbary.

Thus after the battle ended, and the joyful sound of victory rang through the Christian army, the soldiers enriched themselves with the enemy's spoils, and marched, by St George's direction, to the city of Tripoli, then almost depopulated through the late slaughter there made: where after having rested some days, and refreshed themselves with wholesome food, the English champion, in revenge of his former injuries from the king of Morocco, determined to put him to death.

First, he commanded a brazen caldron to be filled with boiling lead and brimstone, then Almidor to be brought to the place of death by twelve of the noblest peers in Barbary, and therein to be consumed, within seven days following. The brazen caldron was erected, by the appointment of St George, in the middle of the chief market-place, under which a mighty fire continually burned for the space of eight-and-forty hours.

Now all things being thus in readiness, and the Christian champions present to behold the woful spectacle, the condemned Blackmoor king came to the place of execution in a shirt of fine Indian silk, his hands pinioned together with a chain of gold, and his face covered with a damask scarf; his attendants and chief conductors, twelve Moorish peers, clad in sable gowns of taffeta, carrying before him the wheel of Fortune, with a picture of a monarch vaunting, and this motto on his breast, "I will be king in spite of Fortune;" upon the top of the wheel the picture of a deposed potentate, falling with his head downwards, with this motto on

his breast, "I have been king while it pleased Fortune:" which plainly signified the chances of war, and of inconstant destiny. His guard was a hundred Christian soldiers, holding Fortune in disdain: after them attended a hundred Morocco virgins in black ornaments, their hair bound up with silver wires, and covered with veils of black silk, signifying the sorrow of their country for the loss of their sovereign. In this mournful manner came the unfortunate Almidor to the boiling caldron; which, when he approached, his heart waxed cold, and his tongue was devoid of utterance for a time; at last he broke forth into earnest protestations, proffering more for his life than the whole kingdom of Barbary could afford.

"Most mighty and invincible champion of Christendom," quoth he, "let my life be ransomed, and thou shalt yearly receive ten tons of tried gold, five hundred webs of woven silk, and a hundred ships of spices and refined sugar shall be yearly paid thee by our Barbary merchants; a hundred waggons, likewise, laden with pearl and jasper stones, which by our cunning lapidaries shall be yearly chosen, shall be sent thee to England, to make that blessed country the richest within the dominions of Europe; I will likewise deliver up my diadem, with all my princely dignities, and in company of the Morocco lords, like bridled horses, draw thee daily in a silver chariot up and down the circled earth, till death put an end to our lives' pilgrimage; therefore, most admired knight at arms, let these salt tears, that trickle from the conduits of my eyes, obtain one grant of comfort at thy hands, for on my bended knees I beg for my life, that never before this time did kneel to mortal man."

“Thou speakest in vain,” replied St George: “not all the treasures hidden in the deepest seas, nor all the golden mines of rich America, shall redeem thy life: thou knowest, accursed villain, thy wicked practices in the Egyptian court, where thou attemptedst wrongfully to deprive me of my life. Through thy treachery I endured a long imprisonment in Persia, where for seven years I drank foul channel water, and satisfied my hunger with bread of bran-meal; my food was loathsome flesh of rats and mice, and my resting-place a dismal dungeon, where neither sun nor the cheerful light of heaven lent me comfort during my long-continued misery: for which inhuman dealing, and cruel injuries, the heavens enforce me to a speedy revenge, which shall be thus accomplished.

“Thou seest the torments prepared for thee, this brazen caldron filled with boiling lead and brimstone, wherein thy accursed body shall be speedily cast, and boiled till thy detested limbs be consumed to a watery substance in the sparkling liquor: therefore prepare thyself for death, and willingly bid all thy kingly dignities farewell: but yet I let thee understand that mercy harbours in a Christian’s heart, and where mercy dwells, there faults are forgiven, upon showing humble penitence: and though thy trespasses deserve no pity, but severe punishment, yet upon these conditions I will grant thee life and liberty:

“First, That thou wilt forsake thy gods, Tarmagant and Apollo, which are the vain imagination of men, and believe in our true and ever-living God, under whose banner we Christians have undertaken this long war. Secondly, thou shalt give commandment that all

thy barbarous nations be christened in the faith of Christ. Thirdly and lastly, that thy three kingdoms of Barbary, Morocco, and India, swear true allegiance to all Christian kings, and never to bear arms, but in the true quarrel of Christ and his anointed nations. These things duly observed, thy life shall be preserved, and thy liberty obtained, otherwise look for no mercy, but a speedy and most terrible death."

These words displeased the unchristian king of Morocco more than the sentence of his condemnation; whereupon he thus briefly expressed his resolution :

"Great potentate of Europe," replied Almidor, "by whose mightiness Fortune sits fettered in the chains of power, my golden diadem and regal sceptre by constraint I must deliver up. But before I will forsake my country's gods, I will endure a hundred deaths; and before my conscience be reconciled to a new faith, the earth shall be no earth, the sea no sea, the heaven no heaven. Thinkest thou now, proud Christian, by thy threatened torments, to make me forget my Creator, and believe in thy God, the supposed king of the Jews, basely born under an ox's stall? No, no, accursed Christians, you offspring of Cain, you generation of Ishmael, you seed of vipers, and accursed through the world, look for a speedy shower of vengeance to rain from heaven upon your wicked nations. Your bloody practices have pierced the battlements of Jove, and your tyrannies beaten open the gate of mighty Mohammed, who has provided whips of burning wire to scourge you for your cruelties to his blessed worshippers. Now with this deadly curse I bid you all farewell: the plagues of Egypt

light upon your kingdom, the curse of Cain upon your children, the famine of Jerusalem upon your friends, and the misery of *Œdipus* upon yourselves."

This resolution and wicked curse were no sooner ended by the desperately-minded *Almidor*, than the impatience of *St George* was so highly moved, that he gave command to the appointed executioners to cast him into the boiling caldron; which they did immediately, to the terror of all the beholders. To see this woful spectacle, the battlements of the temple were thronged with people, the houses covered with women and children, and the streets filled with armed soldiers. Amongst the multitude there were some particular persons, who, at the sight of *Almidor's* death, fell down and broke their necks; but the greater number, of pagans as well as Christians, cried with cheerful voices, "Honour and victory follow *St George* of England, for he hath redeemed *Barbary* from a miserable servitude!" Which joyful cry so delighted the seven champions of Christendom, that they caused the conduits to run with wine, the streets to be beautified with bonfires, and a sumptuous banquet to be proclaimed through the city, which continued for seven days, in more magnificent royalty than the banquet of *Babylon*, when the *Macedonian* monarch returned from the world's conquest.

The champions' liberality inspired such faithful love in the hearts of the peers of *Morocco*, that with general consent they chose *St George* for their lawful king; and after they had invested him in the princely seat of the deceased potentate, they set the crown upon his head, and presented him with an imperial pall, which the kings of *Barbary* usually wore upon their corona-

tion day; protesting to forsake their profane religion, and requesting to be christened in the faith of Christ.

This promised conversion of the infidels more highly delighted the English champion than if he had the whole world's honour at command; for it was the chief point of his knightly oath to advance the faith of Christ, and to enlarge the bounds of Christendom. After his coronation was solemnly performed, the other six champions conducted him to a princely palace, where he took the allegiance of the Morocco lords, by plighted oaths to be true to his crown. After this, he established Christian laws for the benefit of the whole country; then he commanded all the ceremonious rites of Mohammed to be trodden under foot, and the true gospel of Christ to be preached: he likewise caused all who remained in Barbary to be christened in the new faith. But these observances continued but for a time, as shall be shown hereafter. For Fame, not intending to let the worthy champions remain long in the idle bowers of peace, summoned them to persevere in their noble achievements, and to muster anew their soldiers, whose armour cankered ease had almost stained with rust; therefore St George committed the government of the country to four of the principal peers of Morocco, and marched towards the country of Egypt, where lived the treacherous Ptolemy, father of his beloved lady Sabra, whom he had left in the kingdom of England. On which journey and happy arrival in Egypt, we will leave the seven champions for a time, and speak of the faithless infidels in Barbary, after the departure of the Christians, whose former leniency they slightly regarded: for no sooner had St George, with

his martial troops, bidden their country adieu, than the faithless Moors reconciled themselves to their former gods, and purposed a speedy revenge for the death of Almidor, against all Christians who remained within the limits of their heathen nation : for there were many soldiers wounded in the late battle, and a number oppressed with sickness, whom the Christian champions had left behind for their better recovery ; upon these the barbarous Moors committed their first tyranny ; for they caused the distressed soldiers to be drawn upon sledges to the uppermost parts of the city, and there, having put them into a large old monastery, they set it on fire, and inhumanly burned the Christian soldiers, converting the place into a filthy laystall : many women and helpless children they dragged up and down the streets, till their brains were dashed against the stones, and the blood had covered the earth with a purple hue. Many other cruelties were committed by the wicked infidels against the distressed Christians, which I purpose to pass over, and intend to discourse of the proceedings of the Christian champions, who by this time had arrived in the kingdom of Egypt.

CHAPTER XIV.

How the Christians arrived in Egypt, and what happened to them there. The tragedy of the Earl of Coventry. How Sabra was bound to a stake to be burnt; and how St George released her. Lastly, how the Egyptian king cast himself from the top of a tower and broke his neck from grief for Sabra.

THE champions of Christendom no sooner arrived in the territories of Egypt, where they intended to have

ventured their lives on the chances of war, than all things happened contrary to their expectation; they found the gates of every village and town depopulated; for the people, at the report of the Christians' arrival, secretly hid their treasure in the caves of the earth, in deep wells and such like obscure places, and a general fear and extreme terror assailed the Egyptians, the peers of the land as well as the simple country people: many fled into woods and wildernesses, and closely hid themselves in hollow trees: many digged caves in the ground, where they thought best to remain in safety; and many fled to high mountains, where they lived a long time in great extremity, feeding upon the grass of the ground: so greatly the Egyptians feared the army of the Christians, that they expected nothing but the ruin of their country, with the loss of their own lives, and the murder of their wives and children.

But to speak of the Christian champions, who, finding the country desolate of people, suspected some deep policy of the Egyptians: therefore St George gave command through the whole camp that not a man, upon pain of death, should break his rank, but march advisedly, with his weapons ready to encounter battle, as though the enemies had directly placed themselves against them: which special charge the Christian soldiers duly observed, looking neither after the wealth of cities, nor the spoil of villages, but circumspectly marching, according to their leaders' directions, across the country of Egypt, till they approached king Ptolemy's court; when the noble champion of England in this manner encouraged his followers :

“Behold,” said he, “you invincible captains of

Christendom, those cursed towers yonder, where wicked Ptolemy keeps his court; those battlements, I say, were they as richly built as the great pyramids of Greece, yet should they be subverted and laid as level to the ground as the city of Carthage; there hath that accursed Ptolemy his residence, who for preserving his daughter from the burning dragon, treacherously sent me into Persia, where for seven years I lived in great extremity in a dismal dungeon, where the sun never gave me light, nor the company of people comfort; in revenge whereof, my heart shall never rest in quiet, till I see the buildings of his palace set on fire, and converted into a place of desolation, like to the glorious city in Phrygia, now overspread with stinking weeds and loathsome puddles; therefore let all Christian soldiers, who fight under the banner of Christendom, and all who love George of England, your chosen general, draw forth their warlike weapons, and like the angry Greeks overturn those glittering battlements; leave not one stone upon another, but lay it as level with the ground, as the harvest reapers do fields of ripened corn; let your wrathful fury fall upon these towers like drops of April showers, or like storms of Winter's hail, that it may be bruited through the whole world what just vengeance did light upon the pride of Egypt; leave not, as you love your general, when you have destroyed the palace, one man alive, no, not a sucking babe, but let them suffer vengeance for the wickedness of their king; this is my decree, brave knights of Christendom, therefore march forward; heaven and fortune be your good speed!"

At which words the soldiers gave a general shout

to shew their willing minds. Then began the silken streamers to flourish in the air, the drums cheerfully to sound forward, the silver trumpets to record echoes of victory; the barbed steeds grew proud of this attempt, and would stand upon no ground, but leaped and danced with as much courage as did Bucephalus, the horse of the Macedonian Alexander, before any notable victory; yea, everything gave an evident sign of success, senseless things as well as living creatures.

With this resolution marched the Christians, purposing the utter confusion of the Egyptians, and the ruin and destruction of Ptolemy's sumptuous palace. But when the soldiers approached the gates, there came pacing out thereat the Egyptian king, with the chief of his nobles, attired in black and mournful ornaments, bearing in their hands olive branches; next them the bravest soldiers in Egypt, bearing in their hands broken weapons, shivered lances, and torn standards; likewise followed thousands of women and children, with cypress wreaths about their heads, and in their hands olive branches, crying for mercy to the Christians, that they should not utterly destroy their declining country, but show mercy to unhappy Egypt. This unexpected sight, or rather astonishing wonder, caused St George to sound a retreat, and give command through the Christian army, to withhold their vowed vengeance from the Egyptians, till he understood what they required; which charge being given, and duly observed, St George with the other six champions came together, and admitted the Egyptian king with his nobles to their presence, who in this manner began to speak for his country.

“You unconquered knights of Christendom, whose worthy victories and noble achievements the whole world admires, let him who never knelt to any man till now, and in former times disdained to humble himself to any potentate on earth; let him, I say, the most unfortunate wretch alive, crave mercy, not for himself, but for his country; my peoples’ blood will be required at my hands; our murdered infants will call to heaven for revenge, and so will the vengeance of heaven light upon my soul.

“Renowned champion of England, under whose custody my dear daughter is kept, even for the love of her be merciful to Egypt.

“The former wrongs I offered thee, when I sent thee like a guiltless lamb into Persia, were contrary to my will; for I was incensed by the insinuations of that accursed Blackmoor king, whose soul for ever be scourged with whips of wire, and plagued with the punishment of Tantalus. If my life will serve for a just revenge, here is my naked breast, let my heart’s blood stain some Christian’s sword, that you may bear the bloody witness of my death into Christendom, or let me be torn into a thousand pieces by untamed steeds as was Hyppolytus, son of Theseus, in his armed chariot.

“Most mighty controllers of the world, command the dearest things in Egypt, they are at your pleasure. We will forsake our gods, and believe in that God whom you commonly adore, for we see that he is the true and living God, ours false and hateful in the sight of Heaven.”

This penitent lamentation of the Egyptian king

caused the Christian champions to relent, but especially St George, who, having a heart beautified with a well-spring of pity, not only granted mercy to the whole country, but vouchsafed Ptolemy liberty of life, upon condition that he would perform what he had promised; which was to forsake his false gods, and believe in our true God, Christ Jesus.

This kindness of St George almost overcome Ptolemy with joy: and the whole land, both peers and commons, more rejoiced at the friendship of the Christians, than if they had been made lords of the western world. The news of this happy union was bruited in all parts of Egypt; and the people, who had fled for fear into woods and wildernesses, dens and caves, hills and mountains, returned joyfully to their own dwellings, and caused bonfires to be made in every city, town, and village; the bells of Egypt rang day and night, for the space of a week; in every place were seen banqueting, dancing, and masking; sorrow was banished, wars forgotten, and peace proclaimed.

The king at his own charge ordered a sumptuous and costly banquet for the Christian champions, which for bounty exceeded that which the Trojans made, when Paris returned from Greece with the conquest of Menelaus' queen. These pleasures so delighted the Christian champions, that they forgot the sound of warlike drums, which were wont to call them forth to bloody battles. But these rejoicings continued only a short time, for there arrived a knight from England, who brought unexpected news to St George, that changed his joy into extreme sorrow; for thus began the messenger to tell his woful tale:

“Fair England’s champion,” said he, “instead of arms, get swallow’s wings and fly to England, if thou wouldst see thy beloved lady, for she is judged to be burned at a stake for murdering the Earl of Coventry; who would have stained her honour with infamy, and made her the scorn of virtuous women: yet this mercy is granted by the king of England, that if within twelve months a champion be found, who for her sake will venture his life, if it be his fortune to overcome the challenger of her death, she shall live: but if it be his fatal destiny to be conquered, then must she suffer the heavy judgment before pronounced; therefore, as you love the life of your chaste and beloved lady, hasten into England, delay not, for delay is dangerous, and her life is in hazard.”

This ill news struck such terror to St George’s heart, and to the Egyptian king her father, that for a time they stood gazing in each other’s faces, as though they had been bereaved of their wits, and unable to speak one word; but at last St George recovered his senses, and breathed forth this sorrowful lamentation:

“O England! O unkind England! have I ventured my life in thy cause, and for thy defence have lain in the field of Mars, buckled on my armour on many a parching summer’s day, and many a freezing winter’s night, when you have taken your quiet sleep on bed of down; and will you repay me with this discourtesy, to adjudge her spotless body to consuming fire? whose blood, if it be spilt before I come, I vow never to draw my trusty sword in England’s quarrel more, nor ever account myself her champion; but I will wander in unknown countries, hiding myself from any Christian

eye. Is it possible that England can be so ungrateful to her friend? Can that renowned country harbour such a monster, as to seek to dishonour her, within whose heart the fountain of virtue springs? or can that noble city, the nurse and mother of my life, entertain so vile a homicide, as will offer violence to her, whose chastity and true honour have caused tameless lions to sleep in her lap?"

In this sorrowful manner St George passed the time away, until the Egyptian king, whose sorrow was as great as his, put him from his complaints, and requested the English knight to tell the true story of Sabra's proffered violence, and how she murdered the wicked Earl of Coventry; when after a bitter sigh the messenger thus replied:

"Most noble princes and potentates of the earth, prepare your ears to hear the wofullest tale that ever English knight discoursed, and your eyes to weep seas of brackish tears. I would I had no tongue to tell it; nor heart to remember it; but seeing I am compelled, through the love and duty I owe the noble champions of Christendom, to express it, then thus it was:

"It was the fortune, nay I may say, unhappy destiny of your beloved lady, upon an evening when the sun had almost lodged in the west, to walk beyond the walls of Coventry, to take pleasure in the sweet fields and flourishing meadows, which Flora had beautified in a summer's livery; where she walked up and down, now taking pleasure to hear the chirping birds how they strained their silver notes; now taking delight to see how nature had covered both hill and dale with sundry sorts of flowers; then walking to see the

crystal running rivers, the murmuring music of whose streams exceeded the rest for pleasure; and as she, kind lady, delighted herself by the river side, a sudden and strange alteration troubled her mind: for the chain of gold that she wore about her neck presently changed colour, from a yellow burnished brightness to a dim paleness; her rings fell from her fingers, and from her nose fell drops of blood, whereat her heart began to throb, her ears to glow, and every joint to tremble with fear. This strange accident caused her speedily to hasten homewards: but by the way she met the Earl of Coventry, walking at that time to take the pleasure of the evening air, with such a train of worthy gentlemen, as though he had been the greatest peer in England: at which sight, when she beheld them afar off, her heart began to misgive her, thinking that fortune had allotted those gentlemen to proffer her some injury; so that upon her cheeks fear set a vermilion dye, making her beauty admirable; and, when the Earl beheld her, he was delighted, and deemed her the most excellent creature that ever nature framed. Their meeting was silent; she showed the humility of a virtuous lady, and he the courtesy of a kind gentleman: she departed homewards, and he into the fields; she thinking all danger was past, but he practising in his mind her utter ruin and downfall. For such extreme passion bewitched his mind, that he caused his servants every one to depart, and then, like a discontented man, he wandered up and down the fields, resolving in his mind a thousand ways to obtain his desire: for without her love, he was likely to live in endless languishment.

“At length he returned home, and sending for his steward, ordered him to provide a sumptuous banquet, to entertain all the principal ladies in Coventry; who repaired to his entertainment, at the time and hour appointed: the banquet was brought in by the Earl's servants, and placed upon the table by the Earl himself; who, after many welcomes given, began thus to move the ladies to delight:

“‘I think my house most highly honoured,’ said he, ‘that you have vouchsafed to grace it with your presence, for methinks you beautify my hall, as the twinkling stars beautify the veil of heaven; but amongst all your number you have a Cynthia, a glittering silver moon, that for brightness exceedeth all the rest; for she is fairer than the queen of Cyprus, lovelier than Dido, and of more majesty than the queen of love.’

“This commendation caused a general smile amongst the ladies, and made them look upon one another, to discover whom it should be. Many other court-like discourses the Earl pronounced, to move the ladies' delight, till the banquet was ended, after which, there came in certain gentlemen, by the Earl's appointment, with most excellent music; and some who danced most curiously, with as much majesty as Paris in the Grecian court. At last the Earl requested one of them to choose out his beloved mistress, and lead her some stately dances: requesting that none should be offended what lady soever he did affect to grace with that courtly pastime; at which request all present were silent, and silence is commonly a sign of consent; therefore he emboldened himself the more to make his desires known to the be-

holders. Then with exceeding courtesy and great humility, he kissed the beauteous hand of Sabra, who, with a blushing countenance and bashful look, accepted his courtesy, and like a kind lady, disdained not to dance with him. So when the musicians strained forth their inspiring melody, the base Earl led her a course about the hall, and she followed with as much grace as if the queen of pleasure had been present to behold their courtly delights; and when the first course was ended, he found fit opportunity to unfold his secret love, and reveal unto the lady his extreme passion, which was in these speeches thus expressed :

“‘Most divine and peerless paragon!’ said he, ‘thou only wonder of the world for beauty and excellent ornaments of nature! know that thy twinkling eyes, that shine more bright than the light of heaven, have pierced my heart, and that thy crimson cheeks have wounded me with love; therefore, except thou grant me kind comfort, I am like to spend the remnant of my life in sorrow and discontent. Admit thy lord and husband to be alive, yet hath he most unkindly left thee to spend thy young years in solitary widowhood: he is inconstant like Æneas, and thou more hapless than Dido. He marcheth up and down the world in glittering armour, and never doth intend to return: therefore, dear Sabra, live not to consume thy youth in singleness, for age will overtake thee too soon, and convert thy beauty to wrinkled frowns.’

“‘To which words, Sabra would have presently made answer, but that the music called them to dance the second course; which being ended, she thus replied:

“‘Most noble lord,’ said she, ‘for our bounteous

banquet and courteous entertainment, I give the humble thanks of a poor lady; but for your suit I do detest it as much as the sight of a crocodile, and your flattering words I esteem as much as doth the ocean a drivelling shower of rain: your syren songs shall never entice me to listen to your fond requests; but I will, like Ulysses, stop my ears, and bury all your flattering enticements in the lake of forgetfulness. Surely the gorgeous sun shall lose his light by day and the silver moon by night, the skies shall fall, the earth shall sink, and everything shall change from kind and nature, before I will falsify my faith, or prove disloyal to my beloved George. Attempt no more, my noble lord, to sap the fortress of my good name with your flattery, nor seek to stain my honour with your base proposals. What if my lord and husband prove disloyal and choose out other loves in foreign lands? yet will I prove as constant to him, as Penelope to her Ulysses; and if it be his pleasure never to return, but spend his days among strange ladies, yet will I live in single solitariness, like the turtle dove when she hath lost her mate, abandoning all company; or as the mournful swan, that swims upon Meander's silver streams, where she records her dying tunes to raging billows; so will I spend away my lingering days in grief, and die.'

“This resolution of the virtuous lady so daunted the Earl, that he stood like a senseless image gazing at the sun, not knowing how to reply; but when they had danced the third course, he began anew to assail her in these terms:

“‘Why, my dear mistress, have you a heart more hard than flint, that the tears of my true love can never

mollify? Can you behold him plead for grace, who hath been often sued by many worthy dames? I am a man that can command counties, yet can I not command thy stubborn heart. Divine Sabra, if thou wilt grant me thy love, I will have thee clad in silken robes, and damask vestures embossed with Indian pearls, and rich refined gold, perfumed with camphire and other Syrian sweet perfumes; by day a hundred virgins shall attend thy person; by night a hundred eunuchs, with their stringed instruments, shall bring thy senses into golden slumber; all this, my dear, divine, and lovely mistress, is at thy command, and more, so that I may enjoy thy love and favour; which if I have not, I will discontentedly end my life in woods and desert places, tigers and untamed beasts being my chief companions!’

“These base proposals caused Sabra hastily to depart, from which the rest of the ladies suspected the Earl had insulted her in secret conference, but they all assuredly knew that she was as far from yielding, as is the aged man to be young again, or as the azure firmament to be a place for sylvan swans to inhabit. In such-like speculations they spent the day, till the dark night caused them to break off company. The Earl smothered his grief under a smiling countenance, till the ladies, whom he courteously caused his servants to conduct homewards with torch-lights, because it began to be very dark, were every one departed. After their departure, he cursed his own fortune, and like a lion wanting food, raged up and down his chamber, filling every corner with bitter exclamations, rending his garments from his back, tearing his hair, beating his breast, and using all the violence he could against himself.

“His melancholy and extreme passion so discontented his mind, that he purposed to end his sorrows by some untimely death: and when the morning appeared, he repaired to an orchard, where Sabra once a day walked to take the air. The place was very melancholy and far from the noise of people; and after he had spent some time in exclaiming against the unkindness of Sabra, he pulled his poniard from his side, and prepared his breast for the stroke of death; but before the intended tragedy, with his dagger he engraved the following verses upon the bark of a walnut-tree.

“O heart more hard than bloody tigers fell!
 O ears more deaf than senseless troubled seas!
 O cruel foe! thy rigour doth excel:
 For thee I die, thy anger to appease:
 But time will come, when thou shalt find me slain,
 Then thy repentance will increase thy pain.

“I here engrave my will and testament,
 That my sad grief thou may'st behold and see,
 How that my woful heart is torn and rent,
 And gor'd with bloody blade, for love of thee;
 Whom thou disdainest, as now the end doth try,
 That thus distressed doth suffer me to die.

“Oh god of love, if so there any be,
 And you of love that feel the deadly pain,
 Oh Sabra, thou that thus afflictest me,
 Hear these my words, which from my heart I strain:
 Ere that my corpse be quite bereaved of breath,
 Here I'll declare the cause of this my death.

“You mountain nymphs, who in the deserts reign,
 Leave off your chase from savage beasts awhile,
 Prepare to see a heart opprest with pain,
 Address your ears to hear my doleful style:
 No strength nor art can work me any weal,
 Since she's unkind and tyrant-like doth deal.

“ You fairy nymphs, by lovers much adored,
 And gracious damsels, who in evenings fair,
 Your closets leave, with heavenly beauty stored,
 And on your shoulders spread your golden hair ;
 Record with me that Sabra is unkind,
 Within whose breast remains a double mind.

“ Ye savage bears, in caves and dens that lie,
 Remain in peace, if you may sorrows hear ;
 And be not moved at my misery,
 Though too extreme my passions do appear ;
 England farewell, and Coventry adieu,
 But Sabra, Heaven above still prosper you.’

“ These verses being finished, and engraven upon the bark of a walnut-tree, with a wrathful countenance he lifted up his hand, intending to strike the poniard up to the hilt in his breast ; but at the same instant he beheld Sabra entering the orchard to take her wonted walk of pleasure ; her sight hindered his purpose, and caused other bloody cogitations to enter in his mind. The Furies incensed him to a wicked deed, which my trembling tongue fains to report : for after she had walked to the farthest side of the orchard, he ran after her with his dagger drawn, and thus frightfully threatened her :

“ ‘ Now, stubborn dame,’ quoth he, ‘ be mine, or I will wrap this dagger in thy locks of hair, and nail it fast into the ground ; then will I cut thy tongue out of thy mouth, because thou shalt not reveal nor descry thy murderer ; with this poniard will I chop off both thy hands that thou shalt never write with pen his name. Therefore, except thou wilt submit, I will by force and violence inflict those horrid punishments upon thy delicate body. Be not too resolute in denial ;

for if thou art, the gorgeous sun shall not glide the compass of an hour before I fulfil my purpose.'

"And thereupon he stepped to the orchard-door, and with all expedition locked it, and put the key in his pocket; she thinking all hope of aid and succour to be gone, fell into a dead swoon, being unable to move for the space of an hour; but at last, having recovered her senses, she began in this pitiful manner to defend herself from the wicked Earl, who stood over her with his dagger, threatening most cruelly her final destruction.

"'My lord of Coventry,' said she, with weeping eyes, and kneeling upon the ground, 'is virtue banished from your breast? Have you a mind more tyrannous than the tigers in Hyconia, that nothing may suffice to satisfy you? If it be my beauty that hath enticed you, I am content to have it converted to a loathsome leprosy, that I may be odious in your eyes: if it be my rich and costly garments that make me beautiful, and so entangle you, henceforth I will attire my body in poor and simple array, and for the future dwell in country caves and cottages. If none of these suffice to abate your horrible desires, then will the heavens avenge my wrongs, to whom I will incessantly make my petitions.'

"To which expostulation the ireful Earl thus replied:

"'Prepare thyself either to suffer the sentence pronounced, or consent to be mine.'

"This resolution of the Earl added grief unto grief, and heaped mountains of sorrow upon her soul: but at last, when she saw that neither tears, prayers, nor wishes could prevail, she gave signs of consenting upon

this condition, 'that you suffer me to sit some hours upon this bed of violets, bewailing the loss of my good name, and I shall shortly consent to your wishes.'

"These words caused the Earl to convert his furious wrath to smiling joy, and casting down his dagger, he gave her a courteous kiss, which she, to his delight, graciously accepted. Then he caused Sabra to sit down upon a bed of violets, decked with divers sorts of flowers, whose lap he made his pillow, whereupon he laid his head: but women in extremity have the quickest wits; so Sabra busied herself by all possible means, either now or never to remove her cause of deep distress, by compassing his death, and so quit herself from her importunate suitor. She told him pleasant tales of love, in hopes to bring his senses to a slumber, the better to accomplish her desires; but at last, when neither tales nor discourses could send him asleep, she strained forth the organs of her voice, and over his head sung these woful words:

"Thou god of sleep and golden dreams, appear,
That bring'st all things to peace and quiet rest;
Close up the glasses of his eyes so clear,
Thereby to make my fortune ever blest;
His eyes, his heart, his senses, and his mind,
In peaceful sleep let them some comfort find.

"Sing sweet, you pretty birds on tops of trees,
With warbling tunes and many a pleasant note,
Till your sweet music close his watchful eyes,
That on my love with vain desires do dote:
Sleep on, my dear, sleep on, my love's delight,
And let this sleep be thy eternal night.'

"These words rocked his senses in such a careless slumber, that he slept as soundly upon her lap as on the

softest bed of down ; when she found a fit opportunity to deliver herself. So taking the poniard, which he had cast a little aside, in her hand, and gazing thereon with an ireful look, she made this sad complaint :

“ ‘Grant, you immortal powers of heaven,’ said she, ‘that of these two extremes I choose the best ; either must I submit to be dishonoured, or stain my hands with the trickling streams of his heart’s blood. If I yield unto the first, I shall be then accounted a vicious dame : but if I commit the last, I shall be guilty of a wilful murder, and for that the law will adjudge me a shameful death. What ! shall I fear to die, or lose my virtue and renown ? No, my heart shall be as tyrannous as Danaus’s daughters, that slew their fifty husbands in a night ; or as Medea’s cruelty, which scattered her brother’s bloody joints upon the sea-shore, to hinder the swift pursuit of her father, when Jason got the golden fleece from Colches’ Isle. Therefore stand still, you glittering lamps of heaven ; stay, wandering time, and let him sleep eternally.’

‘ These words were no sooner ended, than with a wrathful and pale countenance, she sheathed the poniard up to the hilt in the centre of his breast, on which he started, and would have got upon his feet, but the streams of blood so violently gushed from his wound, that he fell immediately to the earth, and his soul was forced to bid the world a doleful adieu.

“ When Sabra beheld the bed of violets stained with blood, and every flower converted to a crimson colour, she sighed grievously : but when she saw her garments sprinkled with her enemy’s blood, she ran speedily unto

a flowing fountain, that stood on the farther side of the orchard, and began to wash the blood out of her clothes; but the more she washed, the more it increased. At last, she tore her blood-stained garment from her back, and cast it into the fountain. Thus being unrobed unto her petticoat, she turned to the slaughtered Earl, whose face she found covered with moss, which added more grief unto her soul, for she greatly feared the murder was discovered; but it fell not out as she feared, for it is the nature of the robin red-breast and other birds, always to cover the face of any dead man, and they had bred this fear in the lady's heart. By this time the day began to shut up his bright windows, and sable night entered to take possession of the earth, yet durst not the distressed Sabra repair homewards, lest she should be descried without her upper garment.

“During this time, there was a general search made for the Earl by his servants, for they greatly suspected something had befallen him, considering that they heard him the night before so woefully complain in his chamber. At last, with torch-lights, they came to the orchard gate, which they presently burst open; and no sooner entered, than they found their murdered master lying by a bed of violets, covered with moss; and searching to find out the murderer, at last they espied Sabra in her bare petticoat, her hands and face besprinkled with blood, and her countenance as pale as ashes; by which signs they suspected her to be the bloody destroyer of their lord and master's life; therefore, because she was descended from a noble lineage, they brought her the same night before the king, who then kept his court in the city of Coventry, who immediately upon her con-

fession of the murder, gave this severe judgment against her :

“First, to be conveyed to prison, there to remain for the term of twelve months, and at the end thereof to be burned like a most wicked offender ; yet because she was the daughter to a king, and a loyal lady to so noble a knight, his majesty in mercy granted her this favour, that if she could get any knight at arms, before the time was expired, who would be her champion, and by combat redeem her from the fire, she should live : but if her champion was vanquished, then she should suffer the former punishment.’

“Thus have you heard an account of all things which happened till my departure from England, where I left her in prison, and since that time five months have fully expired : therefore, most renowned champion, as you love the life of your lady, and wish her delivery, make no delay, but with all speed post into England, for I greatly fear, before you arrive, the time will be finished, and Sabra suffer death for want of a champion to defend her cause.”

This doleful discourse drove St George, and the other knights and champions, to such a state of mind that all departed to their lodging chambers with dumb signs of sorrow, being unable to speak one word ; and all that night they lamented the misfortune of so virtuous a lady. The Egyptian king, her father, abandoned the sight of all company, that none might come within the hearing of his lamentation. Being in this extreme grief, he never expected to see his daughter’s countenance again ; and so about midnight he cast himself headlong from the top of the tower and broke his neck.

The woful news of this self-willed murder being told to certain Egyptian knights, they took his scattered limbs, and carried them to St George's chamber, where they found him arming himself for his departure to England; but at this dismal spectacle he was affected in such an extreme manner, that it had almost cost him his life, had not the Egyptian knights given him comfort, and by the consent of many dukes, earls, lords, and barons, with many others of the late king's privy-council, they elected him, by his marriage with Ptolemy's daughter, the new king of Egypt; which royal offer St George refused not, but took upon him the government of the whole country; so that for a short time his journey towards England was delayed. Upon the third day following, his coronation was solemnly performed, to the high honour of all the Christian champions: for the Egyptian peers caused St George to be appareled in royal vesture like a king: having on a suit of flaming green, like an emerald, and a mantle of scarlet very richly furred, and wrought curiously with gold. Then the other six champions led him up to the king's throne, and set him on a chair of ebony, ornamented with silver, and standing upon an alabaster elephant; then came three of the greatest lords in Egypt, and set a crown of gold upon his head; then followed the knights, with a sceptre and a naked sword, to signify that he was chief governor of the realm, and lord of all that appertained to the crown of Egypt. This being performed in a most sumptuous manner, the trumpets with other instruments began to sound, and the whole company with joyful voices cried altogether, "Long live St George, true champion

of England, and king of Egypt!" Then was he conducted to the royal palace, where for ten days he remained among his lords and knights, spending the time in great joy and pleasure, until, his lady's distress constraining him to a sudden departure, he left the guidance of the land to twelve Egyptian lords, binding them all by oath to deliver it at his return, and charging them to inter the body of Ptolemy in a sumptuous tomb, befitting the body of so royal a potentate. He also appointed the six champions to raise their tents, and muster up anew their soldiers, and with all speed march into Persia, and there, by din of bloody war, revenge his former injuries upon the accursed Soldan.

This charge being given, the next morning by break of day he buckled on his armour, mounted his swift-footed steed, and bade his friends in Egypt for a season adieu; and so, in company of the knight that brought him the unlucky news, he journeyed with all speed to England; in which travel we will leave him for a time; passing over also the speedy preparations made by the Christian champions in Egypt, for the invasion of Persia; and return to sorrowful Sabra, in prison, waiting each minute to receive the final stroke of her cruel death; for now had the rolling planets brought their year's journey to an end; yet Sabra had no intelligence of any champion that would defend her cause; therefore she prepared herself to yield her latest breath of life. The time being come, she was brought to the place of execution, whither she went as willingly, and with as much joy, as she had gone unto her marriage: she had made humble submission to the world, and unfeignedly committed her soul to God.

Placed at the stake, where the king was present with many thousands to behold this woful tragedy, the executioner, stripping off her garment, which was of black sarcenet, bound her, in her snow-white shift, with an iron chain unto the stake; then they placed round about her body, pitch, turpentine, and gunpowder, to make her death the more easy, and her pain the shorter; then, the king caused the herald to summon the challenger, who at the sound of the trumpet came in upon a roan-coloured steed, without any kind of mark, and trapped with rich ornaments of gold, and precious stones of great price. The champion was called the baron of Chester, a bolder and hardier knight they thought lived not then upon the face of the whole earth; he so careered up and down, as though he had been able to encounter a hundred knights. Then the king caused the herald to summon the defendant, if there were any to defend her cause; both drums and trumpets sounded three several times up and down the fields; betwixt every blast was a full quarter of an hour, but yet no defendant appeared, therefore the king commanded the executioner to set the pile on fire.

At this command Sabra began to grow pale as ashes, and her joints trembled like aspen leaves; her tongue, that before continued silent, began, swan-like, to record a dying tale, and in this manner uttered the passion of her heart:

“Be witness, Heaven, and all you bright celestial angels; be witness sun and moon, all true beholders of my fate; be witness thou clear firmament, and all the world be witness of my innocence: the blood I shed

was for the safeguard of my honour. Great God of heaven, if the prayers of my unstained heart may move thy mighty majesty, or my true innocence prevail with thy immortal power, command that either my lord may come to be my champion or sad beholder of my death. But if my hands were stained with blood about some wicked enterprise, then Heaven show present vengeance upon me, else by some noble champion save my body alive."

At this instant, she heard the sound of a shrill trumpet which St George ordered to be winded, (for as then he was near): which caused the execution awhile to be deferred. At last, they beheld a stately banner waving in the air, which a squire carried before St George; and they espied near the banner a most valiant armed knight, mounted upon a coal-black palfrey, with a warlike lance standing in his rest: and by his sudden approach they knew him to be the champion that would defend the distressed lady's life. Then the king commanded the drums and trumpets to sound: whereupon the people gave a general shout, and the poor lady, half dead with fear, began to revive, and her blushing cheeks became as beautiful as red roses dipped in milk, or as blood mingled with snow. But when St George approached his constant lady, whom he found chained to a stake, encompassed with many instruments of death, his heart was so filled with grief, that he almost fell beside his horse: yet remembering wherefore he came, he recalled his courage, and determined to try his fortune in the combat, before he would discover himself to his lady. And when the trumpets sounded death's alarm, the two knights set

spurs to their horses, and made them run so fiercely, that at the first encounter they shivered both their lances in their hands; then they rushed together so vigorously with their bodies and helmets, that they both fell down to the earth; St George nimbly leaped upon his feet without any hurt, but the baron of Chester lay still, with his head downward, casting from his mouth abundance of blood, for he was mightily bruised with the fall; but when he recovered from his faint, he took his shield, and drawing out a mighty falchion, with wrathful countenance, ran at St George. "Now, proud knight," quoth he, "I swear by all the saints of heaven, to revenge my blood which thou hast shed;" and he struck so violently upon St George's shield, that it cleaved asunder. Then St George began to wax angry, and took his sword in great wrath, and gave the baron of Chester such a stroke, that he cut away arm and shoulder, and all the flesh of his side to the bare ribs, and likewise cut his leg almost quite asunder, in the thickest part of his thigh; then fell the baron of Chester to the ground and breathed his last.

The whole company admired and applauded St George as the most fortunate knight in the world: then the king delivered Sabra with his own hands to St George, who most courteously received her, and, like a courteous knight, cast a scarlet mantle, which a lady standing by bestowed upon him, over her body: yet he did not discover himself, but set her upon his portly steed, and with his own hands led him by the bridle-reins. So great was the joy throughout the city, that the bells rang without ceasing that whole day; the

citizens, through every place St George should pass, hung forth at their windows and on their walls, cloths of gold and silk, with rich carpets; cushion-coverings of green velvet lay abroad in every window; the clergy in copes of gold and silk, met him in solemn procession; ladies and beautiful damsels strewed every street as he passed with roses and other pleasant flowers, and crowned him with a wreath of green bays, in sign of his triumphant victory and conquest.

In this manner he went to the king's palace, not known to any but that he was a knight of a strange country: yet Sabra, many times as they passed along, desired to see his face, and know his name, because he had ventured so much for her sake, and had vanquished the bravest knight in England for her delivery. Yet notwithstanding all her persuasions, he kept himself undiscovered, till a troop of ladies, in company of Sabra, got him into a chamber richly hung with arras cloth, and there unlaced his beaver; and when she beheld his countenance, and saw that it was her lord and husband who had redeemed her from death, she fell into a dead swoon for joy; but St George sprinkled a little cold water on her face, and she presently revived. After this he gave her many a kind and loving kiss, calling her the most true and the most loyal lady that ever nature framed, who to the very death would not lose one jot of her unspotted honour. She in turn accounted him the truest knight and loyalest husband that ever heavenly Hymen linked in bands of marriage with any woman. But when the king had notice that it was St George, his country's champion, who achieved the noble conquest of vanquishing the baron of Chester,

he was ravished with such joy, that he came running in all haste to the chamber, and most kindly embraced him; and after he was unarmed, and his wounds washed with white wine and new milk, the king conducted him with his lady to the banqueting-house, where they feasted for that evening, and afterwards kept open court for all comers so long as St George continued there, which was for the space of one month; at the end of which, he took his lady and one page with him, bade England adieu, and then travelled towards Persia, to the other Christian champions, of which dangerous journey, and the strange adventures he met with, you may read in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

How St George, in his journey towards Persia, arrived in a country inhabited only by Amazons, where he achieved many strange and wonderful adventures.

AFTER St George, with his virtuous lady, departed from England, and had travelled through many countries, taking their direct course towards Egypt and the confines of Persia, where the other six champions remained with the warlike legions, they at last arrived in the country of the Amazons, a land inhabited by none but women: in which region St George achieved many brave and princely adventures, which are most wonderful to relate; for travelling up and down the country, they found every town and city desolate of people, yet very sumptuously built, the earth likewise untilled, the pastures uncherished, and every field over-

grown with weeds, whence he deemed that some strange accident had befallen the country, either by war, or mortality of some grievous plague, for they could neither set eye on man, woman, nor child. They were forced to feed upon roots; instead of brave palaces, they were constrained to lie on broad pastures, or upon banks of moss: and instead of curtains of silk, they had black and dark clouds to cover them.

In this extremity they travelled up and down for thirty days; but at last it was their happy fortune to arrive before a rich pavilion, standing in the open fields, which seemed to be the most glorious sight they ever beheld, for it was wrought of the richest material in the world; all of green and crimson satin, bordered with gold and azure; the posts that bore it up were of ivory, the cords of green silk, on the top thereof there stood an eagle of gold, and at the two corners, shining against the sun, were two silver griffins, which seemed in richness to exceed the monument of Mausoleus, esteemed one of the world's twelve wonders. They had not remained long, admiring the beauty of the workmanship, when at the entry of the pavilion there appeared a maiden queen, crowned with an imperial diadem, who was the fairest creature they had ever seen. On her attended Amazonian dames, bearing in their hands silver bows of the Turkish fashion, and at their backs hung quivers full of golden arrows; upon their heads they wore silver coronets, set with pearls and precious stones; their attire being comely and gallant. The queen herself was clothed in a gown of green, strait girt unto her body with lace of gold, which became her wonderfully well; besides all this, she had

on a crimson kirtle, lined with violet-coloured velvet, and her wide sleeves were likewise of green silk, embroidered with flowers of gold, and with rich pearls. When St George had sufficiently admired the beauty of this maiden queen, he alighted from his horse and humbled himself unto her excellency; and thus courteously began to question her:

“Most divine and fairest of all, queen of sweet beauty,” said he, “let a travelling knight obtain this favour at your hands, that both himself and his lady, whom you behold here wearied with travel, may take their rest within thy pavilion for a night: for we have wandered up and down this country many a day, neither seeing any one to give us lodging, or finding food to nourish us, which made us wonder that so brave a country, so beautified with nature’s ornaments as this, should be left desolate of people, the cause whereof appears strange and full of wonder.”

This question being courteously demanded by St George, caused the Amazonian queen as kindly to reply.

“Sir knight,” quoth she, “what favour my pavilion may afford, be assured of; but the remembrance of my country’s desolation, which you speak of, raises a sea of sorrow in my soul, and makes me sigh when I remember it; but because you are a knight of a strange land, I will relate it, though to my grief. About twelve years since it was a necromancer’s chance to arrive within this country; his name is Osmond, the most cunning artist this day living on the earth, for he can at his call raise up spirits, and with his charms make heaven rain continually showers of blood: my

beauty tempted him to love, and drowned his senses so that he assailed me by every persuasion that either wit or art could devise, to win me to his will; but I, having vowed myself to Diana's chastity, to live in singleness among these Amazonian maids, contemned his love, despised his person, and accounted his solicitations as ominous as snakes; for which he wrought the destruction of this my realm and kingdom; for by his magic art and cursed charms, he raised from the earth a mighty tower, the mortar whereof he mingled with virgins' blood, wherein are such enchantments wrought, that the light of the sun and the brightness of the skies are quenched, and the earth blasted with a terrible vapour and black mist that ascend from the tower, so that a general darkness overspreads our land for the space of twenty-four leagues, whereby this country is wasted and destroyed, and my people forced to fly. His tower is haunted day and night by ghastly fiends; and at his departure into Persia, where he now by enchantment aids the Soldan in his wars against the Christians, he left the guarding of the same to a mighty and terrible giant, in shape the ugliest monster that ever eye beheld, or ever ear heard tell of, for he is thirty feet in length; his head is three times larger than the head of an ox; his eyes are bigger than two pewter dishes, and his teeth stand out of his mouth more than a foot, wherewith he can break both iron and steel; his arms big and long without measure; and his body as black as any coal and as hard as brass: he is also of such strength, that he is able to carry away at once three knights armed; and he never eateth any other meat but raw human flesh; he is

so light and swift that a horse cannot run from him, and oftentimes he hath been assailed by great troops of armed men, but none of them could ever do him any harm, either with sword, spear, cross-bow, or any other weapon."

"Now as I am a true English knight," replied St George, "no sooner shall the morning sun appear, than I will take my journey to that enchanted tower, in which I'll enter in spite of the giant, and break the enchantment, or make my grave within the monster's bowels; and if I succeed, then will I travel into Persia, and fetter up that most wicked necromancer, and like a bloodhound lead him up and down the world in chains."

"Most dangerous is the adventure," quoth the Amazonian queen, "whence as yet did never knight return; but if you be so resolute and noble-minded as to attempt the enterprise, then happy be your fortune, and know, brave knight, that this tower lieth westward hence about thirteen miles."

And thereupon she took him by the hand, and caused Sabra likewise to alight from her palfrey, and led them both into her pavilion, where they were feasted most royally, and for that night slept securely. But when the morning sun began to glitter, in all haste St George arose, and armed himself; and after he had taken his leave of the queen and given her thanks for his courteous entertainment, he also took leave of Sabra, whom he left in company of the queen's maidens till his return from conquest, and so rode forth till it was noon, and then, entering into a deep valley, he rode lower and lower. It was then a fair day, and the

sun shone clearly: but by the time he had ridden ten miles and a half, he had lost both the light and the sun, and also the sight of heaven, for it was there as dark as night, and more dismal than the deepest dungeon.

In this dangerous manner he rode on, till he came to the gates of the enchanted tower, where the giant sat in his iron coat upon a block, with a mace of steel in his hand, and at the first sight of St George, beat his teeth so mightily together, that they rang like the stroke of an anvil, and raging like a fiend, he ran, thinking to have taken the champion, horse and all, in his long teeth, which were as sharp as steel, and to have borne them presently into the tower; but when St George perceived his mouth open, he took his sword, and thrust it therein so far, that it made the giant roar so loud, that the elements seemed to thunder, and the earth to tremble; his mouth smoked like a fiery furnace, and his eyes rolled in his head like brands of flaming fire; the wound was so great, and the blood issued so fast from the giant's mouth, that his courage began to fail, and against his will he was forced to yield to the champion's mercy, and to beg for life; to which St George agreed, but upon condition that the giant would discover all the secrets of the tower, and ever after be his sworn, true servant, and attend on him with all diligence: to which the giant swore by his own soul never to leave him in extremity, and to answer him truly to all questions whatsoever. Then St George demanded the cause of the darkness, and how it might be removed. To which the giant answered in this manner:

“There was in this country, about twelve years since, a cunning necromancer, who by enchantment built this tower, which you now behold, and caused a terrible fire to spring from the earth, which cast such a smoke over the whole land, that the people who were wont to dwell therein fled and were famished for hunger: this enchanter by his art made the river that you have passed, which never man did before this time without death: also, within this tower, near unto the fire, there stands a fair and pleasant fountain, which if any knight be able to attain and cast the water thereof into the fire, then shall the darkness ever after cease, and the enchantment end; for which reason I was bound to guard and keep the tower from the achievement of any knight.”

When the giant had ended his discourse, St George commanded him to remain at the gate, for he would endeavour to end the enchantment, and deliver the country from so grievous a plague. Then went he close by the windows of the tower, which were sixteen yards in length and breadth, till he came to a little wicket, through which he must enter: this was set as thick with pikes of steel as the prickles of an urchin's skin, so that no knight should approach near the door, nor attempt to enter the tower; yet with great danger he opened the wicket, whence came such an abundance of smoke, that the darkness of the country doubled, so that neither torch nor candle would burn in that place; still St George entered, and went down a flight of stairs, where he could see nothing, but yet felt so many great blows upon his burgonet, that he was constrained to go upon his knees, and with his shield to defend

himself, or else he had been bruised to pieces. At last he came to the bottom, and there he found a great vault, where he felt so terrible a heat that he perspired exceedingly; as he felt about him, he perceived that he approached the fire; and going a little further, he espied the fountain, whereat he greatly rejoiced: and so taking his shield, he carried therein as much water as he could, and cast it into the fire. In conclusion, he laboured till the fire was quenched: when the skies began to recover their perfect brightness, and the golden sun to shine most clearly about him, then he plainly perceived that there stood upon the stairs many great images of brass, holding in their hands mighty maces of steel, which had done him such injury when coming down; but now their power was ended, the fire quenched, and the enchantment finished.

He then returned to the wicket, at which the deformed giant still remained: who, when he beheld the champion return both safe and sound, fell upon his knees before him, and said:

“Sir knight, you are most welcome, and happily returned, for you are the flower of Christendom, and the bravest champion in the world. Command my service, duty, and obedience; for whilst I live, I do profess, by the burning banks of Acheron, never to follow any other knight but you, and hereupon I kiss your golden spur, which is the noble badge of knight-hood.”

This humble submission of the giant caused the champion to rejoice; but he set him at once at liberty, and bade him go wheresoever he pleased. Then he unlaced his helmet, and lay down after his weary

encounter, and after he had sufficiently rested himself, he returned to the Amazonian queen, where he left his lady in company of her virgins; she, like a kind, modest, and virtuous wife, during all the time of her husband's absence, prayed to the immortal powers of heaven, for his success and happy return, resolving, if the lowering destinies should cross his purpose, and unluckily end his days before the adventure was accomplished, to spend the remainder of her life among those happy virgins. But on a sudden, before the queen and her virgins were aware, St George arrived before the pavilion; when the queen knew that his prowess had redeemed her country from darkness, and delivered her from her sorrow, care, and trouble; so in company of her maids, very gorgeously attired, she conducted the champion to a bower of roses, intermingled with creeping vines, which in his absence they planted for his lady's delight. There he found Sabra at her prayers, like a solitary widow, clad in mourning habiliments; but when she beheld her lord return in safety, she banished her grief, ran in haste to him, and on his bosom wept tears of joy.

But how the Amazonian queen feasted them, and in what manner she and her maids devised pastimes for their amusement, were too tedious to repeat; and when night put an end to their pleasures, and sleep summoned all things to silence, the queen brought them to a very sumptuous lodging, where stood a bed framed with ebony-wood, overhung with many pendants of gold, the tick was stuffed with down of turtle-doves, the sheets of Median silk, on which lay a rich quilt wrought with cotton, covered with damask, and

stitched with threads of gold. At last the night withdrew her black curtains, and gave the morning leave to appear, whose pleasant light caused St George to forsake his bed, and to walk some few miles to view the country; in which journey he took such exceeding pleasure, that he thought it the goodliest realm that he ever saw, for he noticed how full it was of worldly wealth.

At last, he climbed up to the top of a high mountain, about two miles from the queen's pavilion, whereon he stood and beheld many stately towns and towers, high and mighty castles, many large woods and meadows, and very pleasant rivers; and about the towns, fair vines, goodly pastures, and fields. At last, he beheld the city of Argenta shining in the sun, where the queen in former time was wont to keep her court. This city was environed with deep ditches, the wall strongly built, with more than five hundred towers made of lime and stone; he also saw many fair churches covered with lead, having roofs and spires of gold, shining most gorgeously; with weathercocks of silver, glittering in the sun. He also saw the burgesses' houses stand like palaces, enclosed with high and strong walls, barred with chains of iron from house to house, and in his heart he praised much the nobleness and richness of the city, and said to himself, that it might well be called Argenta, for it seemed to be of argent, that is to say, of silver.

On his return to the pavilion St George and his lady took leave of the Amazonian queen, thanking her for her courtesy, and journeyed towards Egypt and Persia,

CHAPTER XVI.

How St George and his lady arrived in Egypt; of their royal entertainment in the city of Grand Cairo; and also how Sabra was crowned queen of Egypt.

MANY strange accidents and dangerous adventures St George passed with his lady before they arrived within the territories of Egypt, which I want memory to repeat, and art to describe. But at last when Fortune, which had long crossed their wishes with her inconstant chances, smiled and cast them happily upon the Egyptian shore, the nurse and mother of Sabra's first creation, the twelve peers unto whom St George had committed the guiding of the land and keeping of his crown, as you heard before, now met him and his lady at the sea-side, most richly mounted upon their costly trapped steeds, and willingly surrendered the sceptre, crown, and government; and in company of many princely persons, dukes, earls, lords, knights, and royal gentlemen, they attended them to the city of Grand Cairo, then under the subjection of the Egyptian monarchy, and the greatest city in the world; for it was in breadth full threescore miles, and had by just account within its walls twelve thousand churches, besides abbeys, priories, and houses of religion. When St George with his stately attendants entered the gates, they were presently entertained with such a joyful sound of bells, trumpets, and drums, that it seemed like the inspiring music of heavenly angels, and to exceed the royalty of Cæsar in Rome, when he returned from the world's conquest: the streets were beautified with stately pageants, contrived by scholars of ingenious

capacity, the pavement strewed with all manner of odoriferous flowers, and the walls hung with Indian coverlets, and curious tapestry.

The coronation of Sabra, which was royally performed, requires a golden pen to describe and a tongue dipped in the conserves of the Muses' honey to declare: Egypt was honoured with triumphs, and Grand Cairo with tilts and tournaments. Through every town was proclaimed a solemn festival day in remembrance of the new-crowned queen; no tradesman nor artificer was suffered to work that day, but was charged, upon pain of death, to hold it as a day of triumph, a day of joy, and a day of pleasure. In these festivities St George was a principal performer, till thirst of honour summoned him to arms: the remembrance of the Christian champions in Persia caused him to cut short his pastimes, and to buckle on his corslet of steel, which had not glittered in the field of Mars for four-and-twenty days; but of his noble deeds and adventurous proceedings, I will at large discourse, and leave all other pastimes to the newly invested queen and her ladies.

CHAPTER XVII.

The bloody battle betwixt the Christians and Persians: and how the necromancer, Osmond, raised up, by his magic art, an army of spirits to fight against the Christians; how the six champions were enchanted, and recovered by St George; the misery and death of the conjurer; and how the Soldan dashed out his brains against a marble pillar.

Now must we return to the Christian champions, and speak of their battles in Persia, and what happened to

them in St George's absence : for if you remember when he had news of his lady's condemnation in England, for the murder of the Earl of Coventry, he caused them to march into Persia, and encouraged them to revenge his unjust imprisonment, upon the Soldan's provinces ; and after they had marched about fifty miles, burning and spoiling his territories, they were intercepted by the Soldan's forces, which numbered about three hundred thousand fighting men. But when the muster-rolls of the Christians were numbered, they amounted only to about one hundred thousand able-bodied men ; and betwixt the Christians and pagans ensued a long and dangerous battle, the like of which in any age was seldom fought ; for it continued without ceasing for the space of five days, to the great effusion of blood on both sides, but at last the pagans had the worst ; and when they beheld their fields strewed with mangled bodies, and that the rivers for twenty miles' compass flowed with crimson blood, their hearts began to fail, and they fled like sheep before the wolf. Then the valiant Christians, thirsting for revenge, speedily pursued them, sparing neither young nor old, till the ways were strewed with lifeless bodies, like heaps of scattered sand ; in which pursuit and honourable conquest they burned two hundred forts and towns, battering their towers of stone as level with the ground as harvest-reapers do fields of ripened corn. But the Soldan himself, with many of his approved soldiers, escaped alive, and fortified the city of Grand Belgor, being the strongest town of war in all the kingdom of Persia, before whose walls we will leave the Christian champions planting their puissant forces, and speak of

the diabolical practices of Osmond within the town, where he accomplished many wonderful feats by magic art: for when the Christians, who had long assaulted the walls, sending their fiery bullets to the lofty battlements like storms of winter's hail, forced the Persian soldiers, unable any longer to resist, unwillingly to yield, and commit their lives to the mercy of the Christian champions, the Soldan, perceiving the cowardice of his soldiers, and how they would willingly resign his happy government for foreign rule, encouraged them still to resist the Christians' desperate encounters, and promised to yield within thirty days if they had not the honour of the war; which princely resolution encouraged the soldiers to obey, determining not to yield up their city till death had made triumph on their bodies. Then he departed to a sacred tower, where he found Osmond sitting in a chair, studying by magic how long Persia should remain unconquered, and at his entrance drove him from his charms with these words:

“Thou wondrous man of art,” said the Soldan, “whom for necromancy the world hath made famous! now is the time to express the love and loyalty thou bearest thy sovereign; now is the time thy charmed spells must work for Persia's good; thou seest my fortunes are depressed, my soldiers dead, my captains slaughtered, my cities burned, my fields of corn consumed, and my country almost conquered. I that was wont to cover the seas with fleets of ships, now stand amazed to hear the Christians' drums, that sound forth doleful funerals for my soldiers. I that was wont with armed legions to drink up rivers as we marched,

and make the earth groan with bearing our multitudes ; I that was wont to make whole kingdoms tremble at my frowns, and force imperious potentates to kneel at my feet ; I that have made the streets of many a city run with blood, and stood rejoicing when I saw their buildings burned ; I that have made the mothers' wombs the infants' tombs, and caused cradles to swim in streams of blood ; must now behold my country's ruin, my kingdom's fall, and mine own fatal overthrow. Awake, great Osmond, from thy dreaming trance ; awake, I say, and raise a troop of black infernal fiends, to fight against the cursed Christians, that like swarms of bees do flock about our walls ; prevent, I say, my land's invasion, and, as I am the monarch of Asia, I'll make thee king over twenty provinces, and sole commander of the ocean ; raise up, I say, thy charmed spirits, and force them to leave burning Acheron empty for a time, to aid us in this bloody battle."

These words were no sooner ended, than there rattled such a peal of cannon against the city walls, that they made the very earth shake : whereupon the necromancer started from his chair, and in this manner encouraged the Soldan.

"It is not Europe," quoth he, "nor all the petty bands of armed knights, nor all the princes in the world, that shall abate your princely dignity : am not I the great magician of the age, that can both loose and bind the fiends, and call the blackfaced furies from low Cocytus ? Am not I that skilful artist, who framed the charmed tower amongst the Amazonian dames, which all the witches in the world could never spoil ? Therefore let learning, art, and all the secrets

of the deep assist me in this enterprise, and then let frowning Europe do her worst; my charms shall cause the heavens to rain such rattling showers of stones upon their heads, that the earth shall be over-laden with their dead bodies—indeed, senseless trees shall rise in human shapes, and fight for Persia. If wise Medea was ever famous for arts, which did the like for safeguard of her father's state, then why should not Osmond practise wonders for his sovereign's happiness? I'll raise a troop of spirits from the lowest earth more black than dismal night, who in ugly shapes shall haunt them up and down, and when they sleep within their rich pavilions, legions of fiery spirits will I raise up, that like to dragons spitting flames of fire, shall blast and burn the Christians in their tents of war: down from the crystal firmament I will conjure troops of airy spirits to descend, which, like to virgins clad in princely ornaments, shall link those Christian champions in the charms of love: their eyes shall resemble the twinkling lamps of heaven, and so dazzle their warlike thoughts, that their lively countenances, more bright than fairies, shall lead them captive to a tent of love, which shall be artificially erected by magic spells; their warlike weapons, that were wont to smoke in pagan's blood, shall, in my charmed tent, be hung upon the bowers of peace; their glittering armour, that was wont to shine upon the fields of Africa, shall henceforth for evermore be stained with rust; and themselves, surnamed for martial discipline the wondrous champions of the world, shall surfeit with delightful love, and sleep upon the laps of the airy spirits that descend from Hades in virgin shape;

terror and despair shall so mightily oppress their merciless soldiers, that they shall yield in honourable conquest to your excellency; such strange and wonderful performances by art shall be accomplished, that heaven shall frown at my enchantments, and the earth tremble to hear my conjurations; therefore, most mighty Persian, number up thy scattered bands, and to-morrow in the morning set open thy gates, and march thitherwards, with thy armed soldiers; leave not a man within the city, but let every one that is able to bear arms fight for the honour of Persia, and before the closing of the night I'll make thee conqueror, and yield up the bragging Christians as prisoners to thy mightiness."

"If this prove true, renowned Osmond, as thou hast promised," said the Soldan, "earth shall not harbour that too dear for thee; for thou shalt have myself, my kingdom, crown, and sceptre, at command. The wealthy river Ganges—the place where Midas washed her golden wish away—shall pay thee yearly with her treasure. All things that nature framed precious, shalt thou be lord and sole commander of, if thou prevent the invasion of my country."

And thereupon he took his leave, and left the necromancer in his study; and as he gave command, his captains made ready their soldiers, and furnished their warlike horses, and by the sun's uprising marched into the fields of Belgor, where, upon the north side of the enemy, they pitched their camp. On the other side, when the warlike Christians had intelligence, by their courts of guard, that the Persians had entered the field ready to give them battle, sudden alarums sounded in

their ears, and rumours of conquest so encouraged the soldiers, that presently they were in readiness to entertain the Persians to a bloody banquet. Both armies were in sight, with blood-red colours waving in the air; the Christian champions, richly mounted on their warlike coursers, placed themselves in the very front of the battle, like courageous captains, fearing neither death nor unconstant chance of fortune. But the Soldan with his petty princes, like cowards, were environed and compassed with a ring of armed knights, and instead of nimble steeds, they sat in iron chariots. Many heroic and princely encounters passed between the two armies before they entered battle: but when the drums began to sound alarm, and the silver trumpets gave dreadful echoes of death; when the cross of Christendom began to flourish, and the arms of Mohammed to be advanced; then began so terrible and bloody a battle, that the like was never found in any age; for before the sun had mounted to the top of heaven, the pagans received so great a defeat, and so fell before the Christians, that the champions were forced to wade up to their knees in blood, and their soldiers to fight upon heaps of slaughtered men: the fields were altered from a green colour to a purple hue, the dales were steeped in crimson gore, and the hills and mountains covered with dead men's rattling bones. But let us not forget the wicked necromancer Osmond, who during the time of this dangerous encounter knelt in a low valley, near the camp, with his black hair hanging down his shoulders, like a wreath of snakes, and with his silver wand encircling the earth: who, when he heard the sound of drums in the air, and

the brazen trumpets giving dreadful sounds of war, uttered these fatal and cursed words :

“Now is this battle,” quoth he, “furiously begun, for methinks I hear the Soldan cry for help; now is the time my charmed spells must work for Persia’s victory, and Europe’s fatal overthrow :” which being said, thrice did he kiss the earth, thrice beheld the elements, and thrice besprinkled the circle with his own blood, which, with a silver razor, he let from his left arm; and then began again to speak in this manner :

“Stand still, you wandering lamps of heaven, move not sweet stars, but linger on, till Osmond’s charms be brought to full effect. O thou great Dæmon, prince of ghosts; thou chief commander of those fearful shapes that nightly glide by unbelieving travellers; thou that holdest the snaky sceptre in thy right hand, sitting upon a throne of burning steel; thou that tосsest burning fire-brands everywhere abroad; thou whose eyes are like to unlucky comets; even thee I charge to let thy furies loose, open thy brazen gates and leave thy boiling caldron empty; send up such legions of infernal fiends that may in number counter-vail the blades of grass that beautify those bloody fields of Belgor.”

These fatal speeches were no sooner finished, than there appeared such a multitude of spirits, both from the earth, water, air, and fire, as it is almost incredible to report; these he caused to run into the Christian army; where their burning falchions not only annoyed the soldiers with fear and terror, but fired the horses’ manes, burned the trappings, consumed their banners, scorched trees and herbs, and dimmed the elements with

such an extreme darkness, as though the earth had been covered with eternal night. He caused the spirits likewise to raise such a tempest, that it tore up mighty oaks by the roots, removed hills and mountains, and blew up men, horses, and all into the air; yet neither his magic arts, nor all the furies and wicked spirits, could any whit daunt the most noble and magnanimous minds of the six champions of Christendom; but, like unconquered lions, they purchased honour where they went, colouring their swords in pagans' blood, making the earth, which they had attired in a blood-red livery, true witnesses of their victorious and heroic proceedings. And though St George was absent in that terrible fight, yet they merited as much honour and renown as though he had been present: for the accursed pagans fell before their warlike weapons, as leaves do from the trees when the blustering storms of winter enter on the earth. But when the wicked necromancer, Osmond, perceived that his magic spells took no effect, and that despite his enchantment, the Christians got the better of the day, he cursed his heart, and banned the hour and time wherein he attempted so wicked an enterprise, thinking them to be preserved by angels, or else by some celestial means; but yet not purposing to leave off at the first repulse, he attempted another way, by necromancy, to overthrow the Christians.

First he erected, by magic art, a stately tent, outwardly in show like the compass of earth; but furnished inwardly with all the delightful pleasures that art or reason could invent, and framed to enchant the Christian champions whom he purposed to keep as prisoners

therein with enticing delight. Then he fell again to his conjuration, and bound a hundred spirits by due obedience to transform themselves into the likeness of beautiful virgins: which in a moment they accomplished: and they were framed in form and beauty like the darlings of Venus; in comeliness comparable with Thetis, dancing on the silver sands; and in all proportion like Daphne, whose beauty caused Apollo to descend from the heavens: their limbs were like the lofty cedars, their cheeks to roses dipt in milk, and their eyes more bright than the stars of heaven: they also seemed to carry in their hands silver bows, while on their backs hung quivers of golden arrows; and upon their breasts they had pictured the god of love, dancing upon the knee of Mars.

Thus, in the shape of beauteous damsels, he caused these spirits to enter the Christians' army, and with the golden bait of their enticing smiles, to entangle the champions in the snares of love, and with their smiling beauty lead them from their soldiers, and bring them prisoners into his enchanted tent. Which command being no sooner given, than these virgins, more swift than the winds, glided into the Christians' army, where their glittering beauty so dazzled the eyes of the six champions, and their lively countenances so entrapped their hearts, that their princely valour was abated, and they stood gazing at their excellent proportions, as though Medusa's shadow had been pictured upon their faces. Then the enticing ladies spoke to them in this manner:

“Come, princely gallants, come, away with arms, forget the sounds of bloody war, and hang your angry

weapons on the bower of peace. Venus, you see, hath sent her messengers from Paphos, to lead you to the paradise of love: there heaven will rain down nectar and ambrosia, sweet for you to feed upon, and there the melody of angels will make you music."

These golden promises so ravished the champions, that they were enchanted with the ladies, and vowed to take their last farewell of knighthood and magnanimous chivalry.

Thus were they led from their warlike companies, to the necromancer's enchanted tent, leaving their soldiers without leaders, in danger of confusion. But the queen of Heaven so smiled upon the Christians that at the same time St George arrived in Persia, with a fresh supply of knights, of whose noble achievements I purpose now to speak; but no sooner had he entered the battle, and placed his squadrons, than he had intelligence of the champions' misadventures, and how they lay enchanted in a magic tent, sleeping in pleasure upon the laps of infernal furies, whom Osmond had transformed by his charms into the likeness of beautiful damsels; which unexpected news constrained St George to breathe from his sorrowful heart this woful lamentation:

"Inconstant fortune," quoth he, "why dost thou entertain me with such bitter news? Are my fellow-champions come from Christendom to win immortal honour with their swords, and lie they now bewitched with beauty? O shame and great dishonour to Christendom! O spot to knighthood and true chivalry! This news is far more bitter to my soul, than were the poisoned dregs that Antipater gave to Alexander in his drunkenness, and a deadlier pain unto my heart than was that

juice that Hannibal sucked from his fatal ring. Come, soldiers, come; you followers of those cowardly champions, unsheath your warlike weapons, and follow him whose soul hath vowed either to redeem them from the necromancer's charms, or die with honour in that enterprise. If ever mortal creatures warred with cursed furies, and made a passage to enchanted dales, where devils dance and warlike shadows rule the night: then, soldiers, let us march to that pavilion and chain the cursed charmer, that hath so highly dishonoured Christendom, to some blasted oak."

These resolute words were no sooner finished, than the whole army, before daunted with fear, grew so courageous, that they protested they would follow him through more dangers than did the Grecian knights under noble Jason in the isle of Colchos. Now the battle began again to be renewed, and the drums to sound fatal knells for the pagan soldiers, whose souls the Christians' swords by numbers sent to burning Acheron. St George with his sword made lanes of slaughtered men, and with his angry arm made a passage through the thickest of their troops, as though death had been commander of the battle: he caused crowns and sceptres to swim in blood, and headless steeds with jointless men to fall as fast before his sword, as drops of rain before thunder; and even in great danger he encouraged his soldiers in this manner: "Now, for the fame of Christendom, fight; captains, be now triumphant conquerors, or Christian martyrs."

These words so encouraged the soldiers' hearts, that they neither feared the necromancer's charms, nor all the flaming dragons, or fierce drakes, that filled the

air with burning lights, nor were daunted by the strange encounters of hellish legions, that like armed men with burning falchions haunted them. So fortunate were their proceedings, that they followed the invincible champion to the enchanted tent, where the other champions lay surfeiting in love, whilst thousands of their friends fought in coats of steel, and merited renown by their noble achievements; but no sooner had St George, with his warlike followers, arrived before the pavilion, than he heard, as it were, the melody of the Muses; his ears were almost ravished by the sweet songs of the enchanted virgins; indeed, so pleasant were the sights in the tent, and so delightful to his eyes, that he would have been enchanted with their charms, if he had not continually borne the honour of knight-hood in his thoughts, and that his dishonour would be Christendom's reproach; therefore with his sword he attacked the tent, and cut it into a thousand pieces. He then discovered the necromancer sitting upon a block of steel, feeding his spirits with drops of blood, when he immediately caused his soldiers to lay hold of him, and chain him to the root of an old blasted oak, from which neither art, nor help of all his charms, nor all the legions of his devils, could ever after loose him. There we will leave him to his lamentations, and tell how St George redeemed the champions from their enchantments.

First, when he beheld them disrobed of their warlike attire, their furniture hung up, and themselves secretly sleeping upon the laps of the ladies, he fell into these discontented reproaches:

“O heaven,” said he, “how my soul abhors this

spectacle! Champions of Christendom arise, brave knights stand up, I say, and look about like men. Are you the chosen captains of your countries, and yet will you bury all your honour in ladies' laps? For shame, arise, I say; they have the tears of crocodiles, the songs of syrens, to ruin you. To arms, brave knights; let honour be your loves; blush to behold your friends in arms, and blush to see your fellow countrymen steeping the fields of Mars with their blood. Champions, arise, St George calls, the victory will tarry till you come: arise, and tear off the womanish attire, surfeit not in silken robes; put on your corselets of steel, your glittering burgonets, and unsheath your conquering weapons, that the field of Mars may be converted into a purple ocean."

These heroic words were no sooner finished, than the champions, like men amazed, arose, and being ashamed of their folly, submissively craved pardon, and vowed by protestations never to sleep in beds of down, nor ever to unbuckle their shields from their weary arms, till they had regained their credit in the field, nor ever again be counted his deserving followers, till their triumphs were enrolled amongst the deeds of martial knights. So, arming themselves with approved corselets, and taking their trusty swords, they accompanied St George to the thickest of their enemies, and left the necromancer chained to the tree, who at their departure breathed forth these bitter curses:

"Let hell's horrors, and tormenting pains," said he, "be their eternal punishment; let flaming fire descend from the elements, and consume them in their

warlike triumphs, and let their ways be strewed with venomous thorns, so that their legs may rankle to the knees, before they march to their native country. But why exclaim I thus in vain, when heaven itself preserves their happiness? Now all my magic charms are ended, and all my spirits forsake me in my need, and here am I fast chained up to starve and die. Have I had power to rend the vale of earth, and shake the mighty mountains with my charms? Have I had power to raise up dead men's shapes from lonely tombs, and can I not unchain myself from this accursed tree? O no, for I am fettered up by the immortal power of the Christian's God: against whom because I did rebel, I am now condemned to everlasting fire. Come all ye necromancers in the world, come all ye sorcerers and charmers, come all ye scholars from the learned universities, come all you witches, beldames, and fortune-tellers, and all that practise devilish arts, come take example by the story of my fate."

This being said, he violently, with his own hands, tore his hair from his head, as a sufficient revenge, because under their baneful direction he was first trained to that cursed art. Then betwixt his teeth he bit in two his loathsome tongue, because it muttered forth so many charms: then into his thirsty bowels he thrust his hands because they had so often held the silver wand, wherewith he had made his charmed circles: and for every letter, mark, and character that belonged to his conjuration, he inflicted a several torment upon himself: and at last, with sightless eyes, speechless tongue, handless arms, and dismembered body, he was forced to give up his condemned spirit. After the

breath of life had vanished from his earthly trunk, the heavens seemed to smile at his sudden fall, and hell began to roar at its conquest by his death; the ground whereon he died was ever after that time unfortunate, and to this present time it is called in that country, "a vale of walking spirits."

Thus have you heard the diabolical life and miserable fall of this accursed necromancer Osmond, whom we will now leave to the punishment due to such a wicked offender, and speak of the noble and magnanimous Christian champions.

After St George had ended their enchantments, they never sheathed their swords, nor unlocked their armour, till the subversion of Persia was accomplished, and the Soldan and his petty kings were taken prisoners. Seven days the battle continued without ceasing: they slew two hundred thousand soldiers; besides a number that fled away and drowned themselves: some cast themselves headlong from the tops of high trees; some made slaughter of themselves or yielded to the mercy of the Christians; but the Soldan, with his princes, riding in their iron chariots, endured the Christian's encounters, till their whole army was discomfited, and then by force and violence they were compelled to yield. The Soldan fell into the hands of St George, and six viceroys to the other six champions; who, after they had sworn allegiance to the Christian knights, and had promised to forsake the false Mohammed, were not only set at liberty, but used most honourably; but the Soldan himself having a heart fraught with spite and tyranny, contemned the champions' courtesies, and utterly despised their Christian govern-

ment, protesting that the heavens should first lose their wonted brightness, and the seas forsake their swelling tides, before his heart should yield to their desires; whereupon St George, being resolved to revenge his injuries, commanded that the Soldan should be disrobed of his princely attire, and in base apparel sent to prison, even to the dungeon where he himself had endured so long imprisonment, as you heard in the beginning of this history; which strict command was forthwith performed: in which dungeon the Soldan had not long continued, satisfying his hungry stomach with bread of musty bran, and quenching his thirst with channel water, than he began to grow desperate and weary of his life, and at length ran his head against a marble pillar standing in the middle of the dungeon, and dashed out his brains. When the news of his death came to the champions' ears, they offered no violence to his lifeless body, but entombed him in a sumptuous sepulchre; and after that, St George took upon him the government of Persia, and there established good and Christian laws; he also gave to the other six champions six several kingdoms belonging to the crown of Persia, and ordained them viceroys, or petty kings. This being done he made truce with the world, and triumphantly marched towards Christendom with the conquest of three imperial diadems, that is to say, of Egypt, Persia, and Morocco; during which journey he erected many stately monuments in remembrance of his victories and heroic achievements; and through every country that they marched, there flocked to them an innumerable company of pagans, that desired to follow him into Christendom,

and to be christened in his faith; protesting to forsake their gods, whose worshippers were none but tyrants, and such as delighted in nothing but shedding blood: to whose requests St George acceded, not only granting them their desires, but also honouring them with the favour of his noble countenance.

In this princely manner St George marched with his warlike troops through the territories of Africa and Asia. But when the Christian champions approached the watery world, and began to go on board their ships, the earth seemed to mourn at their departure, and the seas to rejoice at their presence; the waves couched as smooth as crystal ice, and the winds blew such gentle gales, as though the sea-gods had been the directors of their fleet.

Thus in great pleasure they passed the time away, committing their fortunes to the mercy of the winds and the waters, which so favourably served them, that in a short time they arrived upon the banks of Christendom; where, being no sooner come on shore, and past the dangers of the seas, than St George in presence of thousands of his followers, kneeled down on the ground, and gave God praise for their happy arrival. After which he gave command that the army should be discharged, and every one rewarded according to his deserts; which was done within seven weeks, to the honour of Christendom.

After this, St George earnestly requested the other six champions, that they would honour him with their presence in his country of England, and there receive the comfort of joyful ease, after the bloody encounters of so many dangerous battles. This invita-

tion of St George not only obtained their consent, but added happiness to their willing minds; so they set forward towards England, upon whose chalky cliffs they in a short time arrived; and after this journeyed towards the city of London, where their entertainment was so honourable that I want the eloquence of Cicero, and the rhetoric of Caliope, to describe it.

Thus, gentle reader, hast thou heard so much of the princely achievements, noble adventures, and honourable lives of these renowned and worthy champions. What follows relates to the rest of their adventures; also the manner and place of their honourable deaths, and how they came to be called the Seven Saints of Christendom.

CHAPTER XVIII.

How St George and his companions were entertained in the famous city of London; and, afterwards, how Sabra was slain in a wood by the pricks of a thorny brake. St George's lamentation over her bleeding body; her solemn interment, and the costly monument erected by St George. And likewise of the journey the seven champions undertook to Jerusalem, to visit the sepulchre of Christ.

AFTER St George, with the other six champions of Christendom, had brought into subjection all the eastern world, as you heard in the former part of this history, they returned to England, where they sojourned in the famous city of London, a place not only beautified with sumptuous buildings, but graced by a number of valiant knights, and gallant gentlemen.

Here the Christian champions laid their arms aside, here they hung up their weapons in the bower of peace,

here their glittering corselets rusted in the armouries, here was unheard the warlike sound of drums and silver trumpets, here stood no sentinels or courts of guard, no barbed steeds prepared for battle, but all things tended to a lasting peace.

I omit what sumptuous pageants and delightful shows the citizens provided, and how the streets of London were beautified with tapestry, the solemn bells that rung them joyful welcomes, and the silver-toned instruments that gave them pleasant entertainment.

But when the morning sun appeared upon the mountain-tops, and the clear countenance of the elements foretold some coming pastime, St George commanded a solemn hunt. Then his knights began to arm themselves in troops, and to mount upon their jennets; and some, with well-armed boar-spears in their hands, prepared for the game on foot; but St George, like Adonis, with silver horns hanging at his back, in scarf of coloured silk, was still the foremost in this exercise. And Sabra caused a gentle palfrey to be provided, whereon she mounted, to be witness of these sylvan sports; she was armed with a curious breast-plate, wrought like the scales of a dolphin, and in her hand she bore a silver bow of the Turkish fashion, like an Amazonian queen, or Diana hunting in the groves of Arcadia.

Thus, in this gallant manner, rode forth these hunters to their princely pastime; but after they had ridden about six miles from the city of London, there fell from St George's nose three drops of blood; upon which he suddenly started, and then he heard the croaking of a flight of night ravens, that hovered by

the forest side, all which he judged to be the signs of some coming tragedy; but having a princely mind, he was nothing discouraged, and little foresaw the woful accident that afterwards happened, but with a noble resolution entered the forest, accounting such foretelling tokens as old wives' warnings: but they had not passed the compass of half a mile, than they started a swift stag, at which they uncoupled their hounds, and gave rein to their horses; but now behold how frowning fortune changed their pleasant pastime to a sad and bloody tragedy: for Sabra, endeavouring to keep pace with them, and being careless of herself, through the over-swiftness of her steed, slipped from her saddle, and fell upon a thorny brake of brambles, the pricks whereof (more sharp than spikes of iron) entered every part of her delicate body. And when she perceived that she must commit herself to the fury of imperious death, she breathed forth this dying exhortation:

“Dear lord,” said she, “in this unhappy hunting must you lose the truest wife that ever lay by any prince’s side; yet mourn not, nor grieve you my brave Christian knights; but let your warlike drums convey me royally to my tomb, that all the world may write in brazen books how I have followed my lord through many a bloody field, and for his sake have left my parents, friends, and country; but now the cruel Fates have wrought their last spite, and finished my life, because I was not able to return the love he hath deserved of me. Now I feel the chillness of pale death closing the portals of mine eyes. Farewell, vain world; dear lord, farewell; you famous followers of my George, and all true Christian knights, adieu.”

These words were no sooner ended, than with a heavy sigh she yielded up the ghost; and St George fell upon her lifeless body, tearing his hair, and rending his hunter's attire from his back into many pieces.

He protested never to neglect one day, but daily to weep some tears upon her grave, till from the earth did spring some mournful flower, to bear remembrance of her death, as did the violet that sprung from chaste Adonis's blood, where Venus wept to see him slain. The other six champions having recovered themselves, protested, by the honour of true knighthood, to accompany St George unto the Holy Land bare-footed, without either hose or shoe, clad in russet gaberdines, like the usual pilgrims of the world, and never to return till they had paid their vows at the blessed sepulchre.

Thus in this sorrowful manner they passed the time away, filling the woods with echoes of their lamentations, and recording their griefs to the whistling winds; but at last, when black night began to approach, and with her sable mantle overspread the crystal firmament, they retired with the dead body, to the city of London, where the report of this tragical accident drowned their friends in a sea of sorrow; for the news of Sabra's untimely death was no sooner bruited abroad, than it caused both old and young to lament the loss of so sweet a lady.

This general grief of the citizens continued for the space of thirty days; at the end whereof, St George and the other champions interred her body very honourably, and erected over it a rich and costly monument, (in sumptuous state, like the tomb of Mausoleus,

which was called one of the wonders of the world;) for thereon was pourtrayed the queen of chastity with her maidens, bathing themselves in a crystal fountain; and a turtle dove sitting upon a tree of gold, as a sign of the true love that she bore to her bereaved husband.

Her statue or picture was carved cunningly in alabaster, and laid as it were upon a pillow of green silk, like to Pygmalion's ivory image; and directly over it hung a silver tablet, whereon, in letters of gold, this epitaph was written:

Here lies the wonder of this present age,
 For beauty, wit, and princely majesty,
 Whom spiteful death, in his imperious rage,
 Ordained to fall through cursed cruelty:
 For as she sported in a fragrant wood,
 Upon a thorny brake she spilt her blood.

Let ladies fair, and princes of great might,
 With pearly silver tears bedew this tomb;
 Accuse the fatal sisters of despite,
 For blasting thus the pride of nature's bloom;
 For she sleeps here within this earthly grave,
 Whose worth deserves a golden tomb to have.

Ladies, come mourn with doleful melody,
 And make this monument your settled bower;
 Here shed your brackish tears eternally,
 Lament both year, month, week, day, and hour;
 For she rests here whose like can ne'er be found,
 Here beauty's pride lies buried in the ground.

Her wounded heart that yet doth freshly bleed,
 Hath caused seven knights a journey far to take
 To fair Jerusalem, in pilgrims' weeds,
 The fury of her angry ghost to slake;
 Because their sylvan sport was chiefest guilt,
 And why her blood was so untimely spilt.

Then, after the tomb was erected, and all things

executed according to St George's direction, in company of the other six champions, he took his journey towards Jerusalem.

They were attired as pilgrims, in russet gaberdines down to their feet; in their hands they bore staves of ebon-wood, tipped at the ends with silver; the pikes thereof were of the strongest Lydian steel, of such sharpness, that they were able to pierce a target of tortoiseshell; upon their breasts hung crosses of crimson silk, to signify they were Christian pilgrims, travelling to the sepulchre of Christ.

In this manner they set forward from England in the spring time of the year, when Flora had beautified the earth with nature's tapestry, and made their passage as pleasant as the gardens of Hesperides adorned at all times with oderiferous flowers. As they crossed the seas, the silver waves seemed to lie as smooth as crystal ice, and the dolphins to dance above the waters as a sign of a prosperous journey; while, in travelling by land, the way seemed so short and easy, and the chirping melody of birds made such music as they passed, that in a short season they arrived beyond the borders of Christendom, and entered Africa.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of the adventure of the golden fountain in Damasco. How six of the Christian champions were taken prisoners by a mighty giant; and how, afterwards, they were released by St George. And, also, how he redeemed fourteen Jews out of prison. With divers other strange accidents that happened.

AFTER the Christian champions had journeyed in their pilgrim's attire through many strange countries, they

at last arrived upon the confines of Damasco, which is a country not only beautified with sumptuous costly buildings, framed by the curious architecture of man's device, but also furnished with all the precious gifts that nature in her greatest liberality can bestow.

In this fruitful dominion the Christian champions rested their weary steps, and made their abode in the house of a rich and courteous Jew, a man that spent his wealth chiefly in the succour and comfort of travellers and wandering pilgrims; his house was not, as usual, framed curiously of carved timber work, but erected with blue stone, and supported upon many stately pillars of the purest marble. The gates and entry of his house were continually kept open, in sign of his bountiful mind; over the portal thereof hung a brazen table, whereon was most curiously engraven the picture of Ceres, the goddess of plenty, decked with garlands of wheat, wreaths of olives, bunches of vines, and all manner of fruitful things; the chamber wherein these champions took their nightly repose and golden sleep was garnished with as many windows of crystal glass as there were days in the year, and the walls painted with as many stories as were years since the world's creation. It was likewise built four square, after the manner of pyramids in Greece; on the north side were painted high mountains of snow, whose tops seemed to reach the clouds, and mighty woods overhung with silver icicles, which is the nature of the northern climate. Lastly, upon the west side of the chamber sat the god of the seas, riding upon a dolphin's back, a troop of mermaids following him, with their golden tresses floating upon the silver waves. Thus in

this chamber rested these weary champions a long season, where their food was not delicious, but wholesome, and their service not curious, but homely. The courteous Jew, their friendly host, whom nature had honoured with seven comely sons, daily kept them company, and not only showed them the curiosities of his habitation, but also described the pleasant situation of his country.

Some days were spent in this manner, to the exceeding great pleasure of the Christian knights; and when dark night approached, and the wonted time of sleep summoned them to their silent and quiet rest, the Jew's children, being seven as brave and comely boys as ever dame Nature framed, filled the seven champions' ears with such sweet and delicate melody, gently strained from their ivory lutes, that not Arion, who concentrated within himself all the powers of sweet music, and who, forsaken by man, won the favour of the dolphin, was comparable to them; so that the Christians were enchanted with such delight that their sleep seemed to be as pleasant as were the sweet joys of Elysium. But when the courteous Jew had intelligence that they were Christian knights, and such admired, martial champions, whom Fame had canonized to be the wonders of the world for martial discipline and knightly adventures: and finding a fit opportunity, as he walked in their company upon an evening, under an arbour of vine-branches, he revealed to them the secrets of his soul, and the cause of his dwelling so sad and solitary. Standing bare-headed in the middle of the champions, with his white hair hanging down to his shoulders, in colour like the silver

swan, and softer than the down of thistles, or Median silk untwisted, he began, with a sober countenance and gallant demeanour, to speak as follows:—

“I am sure,” quoth he, “you invincible knights, that you marvel at my solitary course of living, and that you greatly muse wherefore I withdraw myself from the company of the world, except my seven sons, whose sight is my chief comfort, and the only prolonger of my life; therefore prepare your ears to listen to the strangest discourse that ever tongue pronounced, or wearied old man in the height of his extremity delivered. I was, in my former years, whilst fortune smiled upon my happiness, the principal commander and chief owner of a certain fountain, of such wonderful and precious virtue, that it was valued to be worth the kingdom of India: the water thereof was so strange in its operation, that in four-and-twenty hours it would convert any metal, as brass, copper, iron, lead, or tin, into rich refined gold; stony flint into pure silver; and any kind of earth into excellent metal. By virtue thereof, I have made the leaves of trees a flourishing forest of riches, and the blades of grass valuable as the jewels that are found in the country of America. The virtue thereof was no sooner noised through the world, than it caused many foreign knights to try the adventure, by force of arms to bereave me of the honour of this fountain. But at that time nature graced me with one-and-twenty sons, of whom seven are yet living, and the only comfort of my age; but the other fourteen, whom frowning fortune hath bereaved me of, many a day, by their valiant prowess and matchless fortitude, defended the fountain from many great and

furious assailants; for there was no knight in all the world that was found so hardy, or of such invincible courage as to attempt to encounter with any of my valiant sons, who was not either taken prisoner, or slain in the combat. The fame of their valour, and the riches of the fountain, ran through many strange countries; and lastly, came to the ears of a furious giant, dwelling upon the borders of Arabia, who, at the report thereof, came in his coat of steel, armed with a mighty bar of iron on his neck, like furious Hercules, that burst the brazen gates of Cerberus, and bore the mighty mountain Atlas upon his shoulders; he was the conqueror of my sons, and the first cause of my sudden downfall. For when I had intelligence of the overthrow of fourteen of my sons, and that he had made conquest of my wealthy fountain, I with the rest of my children, thinking all hope of recovery to be past, betook myself to this solitary course of life; where, ever since, in this mansion or hermitage, we have made our abode and residence, spending our wealth in the relief of travelling knights and wandering pilgrims, hoping once again that smiling fortune would advance us to some better fate; and, to be plain, right worthy champions, since then, my hope was never at the height of full perfection till this present time, when your excellent presence almost assures me that the hideous monster shall be conquered, my fountain restored, and my sons' death (for dead they must be) revenged."

The champions with great attention gave ear to the strange discourse of this reverend Jew, and intended, in requital of his extraordinary kindness, to undertake

this adventure; and to encourage the others St George began in this manner to utter his mind, speaking both to the Jew, their host, and his valiant fellow-champions:

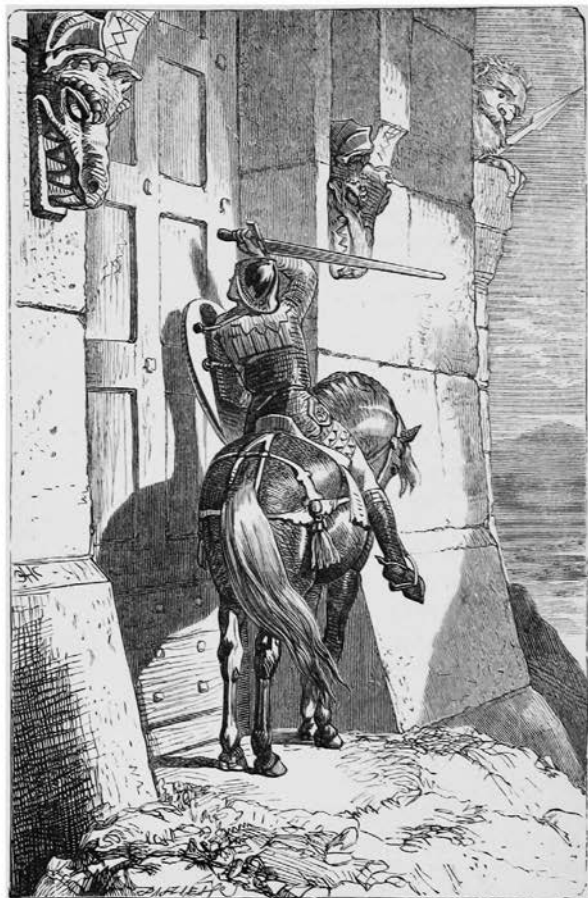
“I have not without great wonder, most reverend and courteous old man, heard the strange discourse of thy miraculous fountain, and do not a little lament, that one of so kind and liberal a disposition should be dispossessed of such exceeding riches; neither am I less sorry so inhuman a monster, and known enemy to all courtesy and kindness, should have the enjoyment of such exceeding great treasure; for to the wicked, wealth is the cause of their greater wickedness. But that which most grieveth me is, that having had so many valiant knights for thy sons, they were all so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of that relentless monster: but be comforted, kind old man, for I trust, by the power of my Maker, we were directed hither to punish that hateful giant; revenge the injuries offered to thine age; satisfy with his death the death of thy children, if they be dead; and restore to thy bounteous possession that admirable rich fountain again.

“And now to you, my valiant champions, I speak, who with me have striven through so many dangers; let us courageously attempt this rare adventure, wherein such honour to our names, such happiness to our friends, such glory to God consists, in recovering right to the wronged, and justly punishing the wrongers of the oppressed; and that there may be no contention among us, who shall begin this adventure, for I know you all thirst after honour, let lots be made, and to whomsoever the chief lot falleth, let him be foremost in assailing the giant, and so good fortune be our guide.”

The champions, without more words, unrobed themselves from their pilgrim's attire, and each selected an armour, fitting to their portly bodies, then ready in the Jew's house; instead of their ebon staves tipped with silver, they wielded in their hands steeled blades; and their feet, accustomed to endure a painful pilgrimage upon the bare ground, were now ready dressed to mount the lofty stirrup: but, as I said, they purposed not generally to assail the giant, but singly; every one to try his own fortune, thereby to obtain the greater honour, and their deeds to merit the higher fame. Therefore the lots being cast among themselves, which should begin the adventure, the lot fell first to St Denis, the noble champion of France, who greatly rejoiced at his fortune, and departed for the night, to get things in readiness: and the next morning, no sooner had the golden sun displayed his beauty in the east, than St Denis arose from his sluggish bed, and attiring himself in costly armour, mounted upon a steed of iron-grey, with a spangled plume of purple feathers on his burgonet, beset with stars of gold, resembling the azure firmament, beautified with glittering stars. After he had taken leave of the other champions, and had demanded of the Jew where the giant had his residence, he departed on his journey, and before the sun had mounted to the top of heaven, he approached the giant's presence, who was sitting upon a block of steel, directly before the golden fountain, satisfying his hunger with raw flesh, and quenching his thirst with the juice of ripe grapes.

The first sight of this ugly and deformed monster almost daunted the valour of the French champion, and

he stood amazed, doubting whether it were better to try the adventure, or return with dishonour to his fellow-knights; but having a heart furnished with true magnanimity, he choose rather to die in the encounter, than to return with infamy: so committing his trust to the inconstant queen of chance, he spurred forth his horse, and assailed the giant so furiously, that the strokes of his sword sounded like a weighty bolt hammering upon an anvil. But so little regarded the giant the puissant force of this single knight, that he would scarcely rise from the place where he sat; but remembering a strange dream that a little before he had in his sleep, which revealed to him that a knight would come from the northern parts of the earth, who should alone end the adventure of the fountain, and vanquish him by fortitude; and not willing to be taken at an advantage, he suddenly started up, and with a grim countenance he ran upon St Denis, and took him, horse, armour, furniture, and all, under his arm, as lightly as a strong man would take a sucking infant from his cradle, and bore him to a hollow rock of stone, bound about with bars of iron, standing near the fountain, in a valley betwixt two mighty mountains: in which prison he enclosed the French champion, with fourteen other knights, sons of the courteous Jew, as you heard before related; and being proud of this success, he returned to his block of steel: where we will leave him sitting, glorying in his own conceit, and speak of the other champions remaining in the Jew's house, expecting the French knight's fortunate return. But when night had taken possession of the elements, and no news was heard of the champion's success, they thought that he



St. James of Spain.

was either slain in the adventure, or else discomfited, and taken prisoner; and therefore they cast lots again, which of them the next morning should try his fortune, and revenge the French knight's quarrel: so the lot fell to St James, the noble champion of Spain, whereat his princely heart rejoiced more than if he had been made king of the western world. So, in like manner, the next morning by break of day, he attired himself in rich and costly armour like the other champion, and mounted upon a Spanish jennet, in pace most swift and speedy, and in portly state like Bucephalus, the proud steed of Macedonian Alexander; his caparison was in colour like the waves of the sea; his burgonet was beautified with a spangled plume of sable feathers, and upon his breast he bore the arms of Spain. Thus in this gallant manner he departed from the Jew's habitation, leaving the other champions at their divine supplications for his happy success; but his fortune chanced contrary to his wishes, for at the giant's first encounter he was likewise borne to the rock of stone, to accompany St Denis.

This giant was the strongest and hardiest man at arms that ever set foot upon the confines of Damasco; his strength was so invincible, that at one time he durst encounter with a hundred knights. But now we return again to the other champions, who when night approached, and St James missing, cast lots the third time, and it fell to the noble champion of Italy, St Anthony; who on the next morning attired himself in costly habiliments of war, and mounted upon a Barbary palfrey, as richly as did the valiant Jason, when he ventured into the Isle of Colchis for the golden

fleece and for Medea's love ; his helmet glittered like an icy mountain, decked with a plume of ginger-coloured feathers, and beautified with many silver pendants. But his glory was soon blemished by a cloud of mischance, for although he was as valiant a knight as ever brandished weapon in the field of Mars, yet he found the inability of his fortitude to withstand the furious blows of the giant, and he was forced to yield himself prisoner like the former champions.

The next lot that was cast fell to St Andrew of Scotland, a knight as highly honoured for martial discipline as any of the rest ; his steed was clad after the manner of the Grecians ; his armour varnished with green oils, like the colour of the summer fields ; upon his breast he bore a cross of purple silk, and on his burgonet a goodly plume of feathers ; but yet fortune so frowned upon his enterprise, that he nothing prevailed, but committed his life to the mercy of the giant, who likewise imprisoned him with the other knights. The fifth lot fell to St Patrick of Ireland, as brave a knight as ever nature created, and as adventurous in his achievements. If ever Hector upon his Phrygian steed pranced up and down the streets of Troy, and made that age admire his fortitude, this Irish knight might emulate his valour ; for no sooner had the moon forsook the azure firmament, and had committed her charge to the golden burnished sun, than St Patrick approached in sight of the giant, mounted upon his Irish steed, clad in a proof corselet, beautified with silver nails ; his plume of feathers of the colour of a virgin's hair ; his horse covered with a veil of orange-tawny silk, and his saddle bound about with plates of

steel, like an iron chair. The sight of this valiant champion so daunted the courage of the giant, that he thought him to be the knight the vision had revealed, by whom the adventure should be accomplished : therefore with no cowardly fortitude he assailed the Irish knight, who with as princely valour endured the encounter ; but the unkind destinies not intending to give him the honour of the victory, compelled the champion to yield to the giant's force, and as a captive to accompany the other imprisoned champions. The next lot fell to St David of Wales, who, nothing discouraged by the failure of the other Christian knights, at the rise of the morning sun into the azure firmament, glittered in his silver armour before the fountain, with a golden griffin shining on his breast, and endured a long and dangerous combat with the giant, making the skies resound with echoes of their strokes ; but at last, when the giant perceived that St David began to grow almost breathless in warding off the huge and mighty blows of his steeled bat, and chiefly through his long encounter, he renewed his strength, and so redoubled his strokes that St David was constrained, like the other Christian champions, to yield to the giant's mercy.

But now the heroic champion of England, St George, he that was fame's true knight and the world's wonder, remaining in the Jew's pavilion and pondering on the bad fortune of the other six champions, and that it was his turn to try his fortune the next morning in the adventure, fell into the following contemplation: "I who have fought for Christian knights in fields of purple blood, and made my enemies to swim in streams of

crimson gore, shall not I now confound this bloody and inhuman monster, that hath discomfited six of the bravest knights that ever nature framed? I slew the burning dragon in Egypt; I conquered the terrible giant that kept the enchanted castle amongst the Amazons: then, fortune, let me accomplish this dangerous adventure, that all Christians and Christian knights may applaud my name."

In this manner he spent the night, hoping for the happy success of the next day's enterprise, wherein he vowed, by the honour of his golden garter, either to return a worthy conqueror, or valiantly to die with honour. And when the day began to beautify the eastern elements with a fair purple colour, he repaired to the Jew's armoury, and clad himself in a black corselet, mounting himself upon a pitchy-coloured steed adorned with a blood-red caparison, in sign of a bloody and tragical adventure; his plume of feathers was like a flame of fire quenched in blood as a token of speedy revenge: he armed himself, not with a sturdy lance, bound about with plates of brass, but took a javelin made of steel, the one end sharpened like the point of a needle, at the other end a ball of iron, in fashion of a mace or club. Being thus armed, according to his desire, he took leave of the Jew and his seven sons, all attired in black and mournful garments, praying for his happy and fortunate success, and so departed speedily to the golden fountain, where he found the giant sleeping carelessly upon his block of steel, dreading no coming danger. But when the valiant champion St George alighted from his horse, and sufficiently beheld the deformed proportion of the giant, how the hair of

his head stood staring upright, like the bristles of a wild boar; his eyes gazing open like two blazing comets; his teeth long and sharp, like spikes of steel; the nails of his hands like the talons of an eagle, over which were drawn a pair of iron gloves; and every other limb huge and strongly proportioned, like the body of some mighty oak; the worthy champion awakened him thus: "Arise," said he, "unreasonable, deformed monster, and either make delivery of the captive knights, whom thou wrongfully detainest, or prepare thy horrid self to abide the uttermost force of my warlike arm and death-prepared weapon."

At which words the furious giant started up, as one suddenly amazed or affrighted from his sleep, and without making any reply, took his iron mace fast in both his hands, and with great terror struck at the most worthy English champion, who with exceeding cunning and nimbleness, defended himself from the danger, by avoiding the violent blows; and returned on his adversary a mighty thrust, with the sharp end of the javelin, which rebounded from the giant's body as if it had been run against an adamantine pillar. St George perceiving this, turned the heavy round ball end of his massive javelin, and so mightily assailed the giant, redoubling his heavy blows with such courageous fortitude, that at last he beat the brains out of his deformed head, and the giant was constrained to yield up the ghost, and to give such a hideous roar, as though the whole frame of the earth had been shaken by the violence of some clap of thunder. St George then cast the loathsome carcass as a prey to the fowls and ravenous beasts to feed upon; and diligently

searched up and down, till he found the rock wherein all the knights and champions were imprisoned; and with his sturdy javelin he burst it asunder, and delivered them from their bondage; and afterwards returned most triumphantly to the Jew's pavilion, in as great majesty and royalty as when Vespasian with his Roman nobles and peers returned into the confines of flourishing Italy, from the admired and glorious conquest of Jerusalem and Judea.

When the reverend Jew saw the English champion return with victory, together with his other six fellow-champions, and likewise beheld his fourteen sons safely released, his joy so mightily exceeded the bounds of reason, that he suddenly swooned, and lay for a time in a dead trance, from the exceeding pleasure he received. But having a little recovered his senses, he gladly conducted them to their several lodgings, and there they were at once unarmed, and their wounds washed in white wine and new milk, and afterwards he banqueted them in the best manner he could devise.

After St George, with the other six champions, had sojourned there for the space of thirty days, having replaced the Jew and his sons in their former dignity, that is, in the government of the golden fountain, they clothed themselves again in their pilgrim's attire, and departed on their intended journey to visit the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XX.

Of the champions' arrival at Jerusalem, and what befell them there; and afterwards, when they were almost famished in a wood, how St George obtained them food in a giant's house by his valour: with other matters of interest.

THE champions, after this battle of the golden fountain, never rested till they arrived at the holy hill of Sion, and had visited the sepulchre, which they found most richly built of the purest marble, garnished curiously by cunning architecture, with many carbuncles of jasper, and pillars of jet. The temple gates were of burnished gold, and the portals of refined silver: and in it burned a sweet-smelling taper, always maintained by twelve of the noblest virgins dwelling in Judea, clad in silken ornaments. These worthy champions offered up their ceremonious devotions at that sacred tomb, washing the marble pavement with their true and unfeigned tears, and testifying their real and hearty zeal by their continual sighs. But at last, upon an evening, when Titan's golden beams began to descend the western element, as these princely-minded champions, in company of the twelve admired maidens, knelt before the sepulchre, offering up their evening orisons, an unseen voice from a hollow vault in the temple uttered these words:

“You magnanimous knights of Christendom, whose true nobility circle the earth with reports of fame, whose bare feet for the love of our sweet Saviour have set more weary steps upon the parched earth than there be stars within the golden canopy of heaven, return: return into the bloody fields of war, and spend

not your valuable time in this ceremonious manner, for great things by you must be accomplished, such as in time to come shall fill large chronicles, and cause babes as yet unborn to speak of your achievements. And you, chaste maidens, that spend your time in the service of God, even by the plighted promise you have made to true virginity, I charge you to furnish forth these warlike champions with such approved furniture as hath been offered to this royal sepulchre by those travelling knights, who have fought under the banner of Christendom. This is the pleasure of high Fate, and this, for the redress of all wronged innocents on earth, must be with all immediate despatch accomplished."

This unexpected voice had no sooner ceased than the temple seemed strangely to resound, as with the melody of celestial angels, or the holy harmony of cherubims; whereupon the twelve virgins arose from their contemplations, and conducted the seven champions to the further side of Mount Sion, and there bestowed upon them seven of the bravest steeds that they ever beheld, with martial furniture answerable thereunto, befitting knights of such esteem. Thus the Christian champions, being proud of their good fortune, attired themselves in rich and sumptuous corselets, and after mounting their warlike coursers, and kindly bidding the ladies adieu, betook them to the world's wide field.

This journey commenced at the time of the year when the summer's queen begins to spread her beauteous mantle amongst the green and fresh boughs of the high and mighty cedars, when all kinds of small birds fly round about, recreating themselves in the beauty of the day,

and with their well-toned notes make a sweet and heavenly melody. At which time, I say, these mighty and well-esteemed knights, the seven champions of Christendom, took the way from Jerusalem which they thought to be most used; in which they had not travelled many days through the deserts, and over many a mountain top, till they grew feeble for lack of their accustomed victuals, and could not hide nor dissemble their great hunger. One evening, when they had spent the day in great extremity, and night grew on, they came into a thicket of mighty trees, where the silver moon with her bright beams glittered most clearly; yet to them it seemed to be as dark as pitch, for they were very sore troubled for lack of that which should sustain them, and their faces showed and declared the perplexities of their stomachs. So they sat down upon the green and fresh herbs, very pensive in their extreme necessity, preparing to take their rest that night; but all was in vain, for their corporal necessities would not consent thereto; and without sleeping any that night, the next day in the morning they turned to their accustomed travel and journey, thinking to find some food for the cherishing of their stomachs, and kept their eyes always gazing about to spy some village or house, where they might satisfy their hunger and take their rest. Thus in this helpless manner they spent the next day, till the closing of the evening light, by which time they grew so faint that they fell to the ground from feebleness.

The next morning, by the time the golden sun had almost mounted to the top of heaven, and the glorious prime of day began to approach, they travelled till they

came into a field in the midst of which was a little mountain, out of which there appeared a great smoke, which gave them to understand that there should be some habitation in that place. Then the princely-minded St George said to the other champions: "Take comfort, and by little and little come forward at an easy pace, and I will ride before to see who shall be our host this night; and of this, brave knights and champions, be assured, whether he be pleased or not, he shall give us lodging and entertainment like travelling knights." And thereupon he set spurs to his horse, and swiftly scoured away; his beast was so speedy, that in a short time he approached the mountain, when at the noise and rushing of his horse in running, there arose from the ground a terrible giant, of so great height, that he seemed to be a big grown tree, and for hugeness like a rock of stone; and when he cast his staring eyes upon the English knight, which resembled two great brazen plates, or two ever-flaming torches, he laid his hand upon a mighty club of iron which lay by him, and came with great speed to meet St George; and when he approached his presence, thinking him to be a knight of but small valour and fortitude, he threw away his iron bat, and came towards the champion, intending with his fists to buffet and beat out his brains; but the courage of the English champion was so great, that he forgot the extremity of hunger, and like a courageous knight raised himself in his stirrups, otherwise he could not reach the giant's head, and gave such a blow upon his forehead with his falchion, that he cut it half asunder, and his brains in great abundance ran down his deformed body, so that forthwith he fell

to the ground, and presently died; his fall seemed to make the ground shake, as though a stony tower had been overturned; and as he lay upon the earth he looked like a great oak blown up by the roots by a tempestuous whirlwind.

At that instant the rest of the champions came to the place, with as much joy as formerly they were sad and sorrowful.

When St Denis, with the other knights, saw the greatness of the giant, and the deformity of his body, they praised St George's valour beyond imagination; and after some few speeches passed, St George desired the rest of the champions to go and see what store of victuals the giant had prepared for him.

Whereupon they entered the giant's house, which was cut out of hard stone, and wrought out of a rock; they found therein a very large copper caldron, standing upon a trevet of steel; the feet and supporters thereof were as big as great iron pillars; under it burned a huge flaming fire, that sparkled like the fiery furnacę in burning Acheron. Within the caldron was boiling the flesh of two fat bullocks, prepared only for the giant's dinner.

The sight of this banquet gave them such comfort, that every one fell to work, hoping for their pains to eat part of the meat; one turned the beef in the caldron, another increased the fire, and others pulled out the coals, so that there was not any idle, in hopes of the benefit to come.

After they had satisfied their hunger, St George requested the champions to take horse, and mounted himself upon his palfrey; they travelled thence through

a narrow path, which seemed to be used by the giant, and with great delight they journeyed all the rest of that day, till night closed in the beauty of the heavens; at which time they had got to the top of a high mountain, whence, a little before night, they discovered marvellous plains, which were occupied by fair cities and towns, at which sight the Christian champions received great contentment and joy: and so without delay they made haste onward, till they came to a low valley lying betwixt two running rivers, where, in the midst of the way, they found an image of fine crystal, the picture and lively form of a beautiful virgin, all bespotted with blood, which seemed to be wrought by the hands of some most excellent workman.

It appeared by the wounds that were cunningly formed in the picture, that it was the image of some lady who had suffered torments, with terrible cutting of irons, and cruel whippings; the lady's legs and arms seemed as though they had been wrung with cords, and about the neck as though she had been forcibly strangled with a napkin. The crystal image lay upon a richly adorned bed of black cloth, under an arbour of purple roses; by this curiously-formed image sat a goodly aged man, in a chair of cypress wood; his attire was that of an Arcadian shepherd, not curious but comely, yet of a black and sable colour, as a sure sign of some deadly discontent: his hair hung down below his shoulders, like untwisted silk, in whiteness like down of thistles; his beard overgrown, dangled down as it were frozen icicles upon a hawthorn tree; his face was wrinkled and overworn with age, and his eyes almost blind, bewailing the griefs and sorrows of his heart.

When the Christian champions beheld this strange and woful spectacle, they could not refrain from shedding tears, in seeing before them the image of a woman of such excellent beauty, who had been oppressed with cruelty; but the merciful English knight had the greatest compassion when he beheld the counterfeit of this tormented creature; and taking truce with his sorrowful heart, he courteously desired the old father, who sat by this woful spectacle, to tell the cause of his sorrow, and the history of the lady's past fortunes, for whose sake he seemed to spend his days in that solitary manner; when the old man, with sighs, thus replied:

“Brave knights, to tell the story of my bitter woes, and the cause of my endless sorrows, will constrain a spring of tears to trickle from the conduits of my aged eyes, and make the mansion of my heart rive in twain, remembering my undeserved miseries; but now fortune, I see, hath smiled upon me, in sending you hither to work just revenge for the inhuman murder of my daughter, whose perfect image lieth here carved in fine crystal, as the continual object of my grief; and that you may understand the true history of her untimely tragedy, which my sorrowful tongue is unable to reveal, I have written it down in a book.”

And thereupon he pulled from his bosom a golden-covered book, with silver clasps, and requested St George to read it to the rest of the knights, to which he willingly consented; so sitting down amongst the other champions upon the green grass, he opened the book, and read out these sorrowful words.

CHAPTER XXI.

What happened to the champions after they had found an image of fine crystal in the form of a murdered maiden; when St George had a golden book given him, wherein was written the true tragedies of two sisters. And likewise how the champions purposed a speedy revenge upon the knight of the Black Castle for the death of the two ladies.

“IN former times, whilst fortune smiled upon me, I was a wealthy shepherd, dwelling in this unhappy country, and not only held in great estimation for my wealth, but also for two fair daughters, whom nature had made most excellent in beauty, and in whom I took such exceeding joy and delight, that I accounted them my chiefest happiness; but yet in the end, that which I thought should most content me was the occasion of these my endless sorrows.

“My two daughters were endowed with wonderful beauty, accompanied by no less modesty; the fame of their virtues was much blazed in many parts of the world; and consequently there repaired to my lowly cottage many strange and worthy knights, with great desire to marry with my daughters; but above them all, there was one named Leoger, knight of a Black Castle, (where he now remaineth,) two hundred leagues distant from this place, in an island encompassed by the sea.

“This Leoger, I say, was so entranced with the beauty of my daughters, that he desired me to give him one of them in marriage; and little foreseeing the treason and cruelty that followed, but rather considering the great honour that might redound therefrom, for he was a worthy knight, as I thought, and of much fortitude, I quickly fulfilled his desire, and granted him my eldest daughter in marriage. After Hymen's holy

rites were solemnized in great pomp and state, she was conducted, in company of her new wedded lord, to the Black Castle, more like a princess than a shepherd's daughter of such low degree.

“But still I retained in my company the youngest, of far more beauty than her elder sister; of which this traitorous and unnatural knight being informed, in a short time forgot his newly-married wife and sweet companion, and wholly gave himself over to love for my other daughter, without considering that he had married her sister. In the end he used policy and deceit to get her home into his castle; for when the time arrived that my eldest daughter, his wife, should be delivered, he came in great pomp, with a stately train of followers, to my cottage, and certified to me that his wife was delivered of a goodly boy, and requested me, with very fair and loving words, to let my daughter go to her sister, to give her that content which she desired, for she loved her more dearly than her own soul. Thus his crafty and subtle persuasion so prevailed, that I could not frame an excuse to the contrary, but consented to his demands; so when he had her in his power whom his soul so much desired, he departed, giving me to understand that he would carry her to his wife, who so longed to see her, and whose coming she would receive with so much joy and contentment. Her sudden departure bred such sorrow in my heart, (being the only stay and comfort of my declining age,) that the fountains of my eyes rained down a shower of salt tears upon my aged breast, so dear is the love of a father for his child; but to be brief, when this haughty-minded caitiff, with his pompous

train, came in sight of his castle, he commanded his followers to ride forward, so that he might have private conference with my daughter. And entering along with her the most private part of a thick wood, he began to open his thoughts to her, and when his fair words and enticing speeches could not prevail, his anger so increased, that he stared on her face with his accursed eyes, fixed so that he could not withdraw them. This being perceived by the distressed virgin, she, far more desirous of death than of life, with a furious voice said, ‘Oh traitor, thou wicked monster, thou utter enemy to all humanity, thou shameless creature, more cruel than the lion in the deserts of Hyrcania; thou stain of knighthood, and the bloodiest wretch that ever nature framed in the world! wherein dost thou contemplate thus thyself? Thou horrid butcher, thou unmerciful tiger, thou dishonour to thy race! make an end, I say, of these my torments, for now it is too late for thee to repent; gore my unspotted breast with thy bloody weapon, and send my soul into the bosom of Diana, whom I behold sitting in her celestial palace, accompanied with numberless troops of vestal virgins, ready to receive my bleeding spirit into her pleasant mansion.’

“This merciless knight, seeing her stedfastness in the defence of her honour, with a cruel and infernal heart took a silken scarf which the damsel had girded at her waist, and with brutal anger doubled it about her neck, and pulled it so strait that her soul quickly departed from her body. O you valiant knights, that by your prowess come to the reading of this dismal tragedy, and come to the hearing of these

bloody lines contained in this golden book, consider the great constancy and chastity of this unfortunate maiden, and let your grief move you to take vengeance for this cruelty shown without a cause!

“When this infernal knight saw that she was dead, he took his horse and rode after his fellows, and in a short time he overtook them and looked with so furious and ireful a countenance, that there was none durst be so hardy as to ask him where my daughter was; but one of his squires that bore me great affection for the kindness and courtesy I offered him at his lady’s and my daughter’s nuptials, having a suspicion from the great alteration that appeared in his master, and being very desirous to know what was become of the damsel because he came alone without bringing her with him, drew back and followed the footsteps of the horse, and ceased not until he came to the place where this cruelty had been wrought; there he found the maiden dead; and on seeing her he remained almost beside himself, so that he had well nigh fallen to the ground. The sorrowful squire remained thus a good while before he could speak; but at last, when he came again to himself, he began with a dolorous complaint to cry out against fortune because she had suffered so great a cruelty to be committed upon this damsel. And making this sorrowful lamentation, he unloosed her from the tree, and laid her upon part of her apparel which he found lying by all besmeared with blood. He afterwards cut down branches from the trees and gathered grass from the ground to cover the body, and left it so lying that it seemed to be a mountain of green grass, or a thicket of young trees, and then determined, in the best manner

that he could, to dissemble all knowledge of the bloody deed. So he took his horse, and rode the next day towards the castle, and proceeded so fast, that he overtook the knight and his company entering the gates, where the wicked tyrant alighted, and without speaking to any person, entered his closet; so that this kind and courteous squire had time to declare all he had seen, and the dolorous end of her sister, to the newly-married lady.

“ This sudden and unlooked-for sorrow, mixed with anger and wrath, was so great in the lady, that she caused the squire not to depart from the castle, until occasion served, and to keep all things secret that he had seen: she herself remained very sorrowful, making great lamentation in secret, that it might not be perceived, while with a soft voice she said :

“ ‘ Oh unfortunate lady, born in a sorrowful hour, when some blazing and unlucky comet reigned ! Oh unhappy destiny, that made me wife to so cruel a knight, whose foul misdeeds have made the very elements blush ! but yet I know that fortune will not be so far unkind, but that she will procure a strange revenge upon his purple-stained soul. Oh you immortal powers ! revenge me on this wicked homicide ; if not, I swear that I will, with mine own hands, put in practice such an enterprise, and so stain my unspotted heart with wilful murder, that all the Fates above, and all the bright celestial planets, shall sit, and looking from their immortal palaces, tremble at the terror of my hate.’ ”

“ This said, she took in her hand a dagger of the knight’s, and in her arms her young son, then of the age of forty days, saying, ‘ Now do I wish so much

evil to their race, that I will not leave a son of so wicked a father alive; for I will wash my hands in their accursed blood, were their number as many as king Priam's children.'

"And entering the chamber where the knight her husband was, and finding him tumbling upon his bed from one side to the other, without taking any rest, but in his fury rending and tearing the silken ornaments; with a sorrowful, weeping, and terrible voice, she called him traitor, and like a fierce tigress, with the dagger that she brought in her hand, before his face she cut the throat of the innocent babe, and threw it to him on the bed, and said, 'Take there, thou wicked traitor, the fruit of our most unhappy marriage;' and then she threw the dagger at him also, in hopes to have killed him; but fortune would not that it should take effect, for it struck against the tester of the bed, and rebounded to her hands; and when the lady saw that it had failed, she turned upon herself her outrageous fury, and taking the bloody dagger, she thrust it into her heart, so that it parted in two pieces, and she fell down dead betwixt the arms of him that was the occasion of all this bloody cruelty. The great sorrow that this false and unhappy knight felt was so strange, that he knew not what counsel to take; but thinking upon the severe vengeance that might succeed these cruel acts, he devised that the body of the lady should be secretly buried; which while doing by himself, in the saddest time of the night, in a solitary garden under his castle wall, he heard a hollow voice breathe from the deep vaults of the earth the following speech:

“‘For the bloody act which thou so lately hast committed, thy life draws near to a shameful end; and thy castle, with all the treasure therein, shall be destroyed, or fall into the hands of him whose daughter thou hast so cruelly murdered.’

“ Upon this, he determined to use a secret policy, which was, to set watch and ward in every passage near his castle, and to arrest all such travellers as landed upon the island, not suffering them to pass until they had promised by oath to aid and assist him, even unto death, against all his enemies.

“In the meantime the squire, who had seen and heard all these tragical dealings in the best way he could, returned to my cottage, and told me all that you have heard, which was to me very sorrowful and heavy news. Judge, then, gentle knights, and ye beholders of this woful tragedy, what sorrow I, unfortunate wretch, sustained, and what anguish I received; for on hearing the news I fell into a death-like swoon, and being come again to myself, I besmeared my milk-white hairs, that before were as clean as tried silver, with dust; and with my tears, the true signs of sorrow, I bathed the bosom of my mother earth. After some time, what with grief, and what with want of natural rest, my eyes closed, and my senses fell into a heavy sleep.

“As I lay slumbering in the green meadows, I dreamed that there was a great and fierce wild man, who stood before me with a sharp falchion in his hand, making as though he would kill me; whereat methought I was so frightened, that I gave many terrible shrieks, calling for succour to the empty air. Then, methought,

there appeared before my face a company of courteous knights, who said to me, 'Fear not, old man, for we are come from thy daughter to aid and succour thee;' but yet for all this the wild man vanished not away, but struck with his falchion upon my breast, which seemed to open, and then the wild Centaur put his hand into the gaping wound, and pulled out my bleeding heart; and at the same instant, methought that one of the knights likewise laid hold upon my heart, and they strove together with much contention, who should pull it from the other's hands; but in the end each of them remained with a piece in his hand, and my heart parted in two.

"Then the piece which remained in the wild man's keeping turned into a hard stone, and the piece which remained in the power of the knight was converted into red blood, and so they vanished away. Then straight after this, there appeared before mine eyes the image of my murdered daughter, in the self-same form as you behold here pourtrayed; who, with her naked body besmeared with blood, related to me her unhappy fortune, and told me where her body lay in the woods, dishonoured for want of burial; also desiring me not of myself to attempt to revenge her, for it was impossible; but to entomb her corpse by her mother, and cause a figure of her body to be most lively pourtrayed and wrought in fine crystal, in the same manner that I found it in the woods, and afterwards erect it near a common passage, where adventurous knights do usually travel: and assuring me that thither would come certain Christian champions who should revenge this injury and inhuman murder. These words

being finished, methought she vanished away with a grievous and heavy groan, leaving behind her certain drops of blood sprinkled upon the grass; whereat, with great perplexity and sorrow, I awakened out of my dream, bearing it in my grieved mind, not telling it to any one, not so much as to the air, but with all expedition performing her bleeding soul's request. Ever since, most courteous and noble knights, I have here lamented her untimely death and my unhappy fortune, spending the time in writing her doleful tragedy in blood-red lines, which I see, with great grief you have read in this book of gold. Therefore, most curious knights, if ever honour encouraged you to fight in noble adventures, I now most earnestly entreat you, with your magnanimous fortitude, to assist me to take revenge for the cruelty that hath been used against my unfortunate daughter."

On reading this sorrowful history, St George, with the other champions, shed many tears, which increased in them a further desire of revenge; and, being moved with great compassion, they protested, by their promises made to the honour of knighthood, to persevere speedily in their vowed revenge and determined purpose: so sealing up a promise to their plighted oaths, protesting that sooner should all the famous Romans be raised from death, from the time of Romulus to Cæsar, and all the rest unto this time, than they should be persuaded to retire from their promises, and never to travel back into Christendom till they had performed their vows; and thus, burning with desire to see the end of this sorrowful adventure, St George clasped up the bloody-written book, and

gave it again to the shepherd ; and so they proceeded towards the island where the knight of the Black Castle had his residence, guided only by the direction of the old man, whose aged limbs seemed so lusty in travelling, that it prognosticated a lucky issue to their enterprise.

CHAPTER XXII.

Of the preparations that the knight of the Black Castle made by magic art to withstand his enemies; how the seven champions entered the castle, and of their furious encounters therein; how they were enchanted into a deep sleep; afterwards how the castle was surrendered to the champions.

THE wicked Leoger, having become detested and abhorred in every company, as well by noble knights as gallant ladies, for the spoils and murders of which he had been guilty, and fearing sudden vengeance to fall upon his head, fortified himself strongly in his castle, and with his treasure hired many furious giants to defend it; and lest they failed and should chance to be overcome, he consorted with a wicked necromancer, that he with charms and spells might work wonders in his castle: which magic accomplishments we will pass over till a more convenient time, because I purpose to explain the history in good order to the reader.

First, speak we of St George, and the other Christian knights, who came in revenge of the shepherd and his unfortunate daughter, and with success arrived upon the shores of the island where this wicked Leoger and the magician had fortified the Black Castle. On landing, the champions, like the invincible followers of Mars, fearing no danger, nor the frowns of inconstant

Fortune, betook themselves the readiest way towards the castle. On their journey they were almost ravished with the pleasures of the island; for entering into a straight and narrow laue, garnished on both sides with trees of divers sorts, they heard the summer birds recording their pleasant melodies, making their sweet and accustomed songs without fear of any man to molest them. In which row of pleasant trees, that delighted them on both sides, there wanted not the green laurel, so much esteemed among learned scholars; nor the sweet myrtle tree, loved by ladies; nor the high cypress, so much regarded by lovers; nor the stately pine, which for his flourishing height is called the prince of trees: from which they judged it to be rather an habitation for gods and goddesses, than a terrestrial country, for the golden sun with his glittering beams passed through these green and pleasant trees without any hinderance of black clouds, for the skies were clear as tried silver; the western wind softly shook the shivering leaves, making as sweet harmony as if they had been celestial cherubims: a thousand little brooks ran upon the enamelled ground, making sundry fine works by their crooked turnings: and joining one water with another, with a very gentle meeting, made such silver music, that the champions with the pleasure thereof were almost ravished, and little regarded whether their horses went right or no; and travelling in this way, they rode forward till they came into a great and wide meadow, of such exceeding fairness, that I am not able with pen to paint the excellency thereof. Therein were feeding both wild and tame harts, adorned with great and craggy horns: and the

furious wild boar, the fierce lion, and the simple lambs, were feeding together with as great friendship as if, on the contrary, they were not enemies by nature.

The noble champions were almost overcome and amazed to see such strange love, contrary to nature, and that there was no difference betwixt the love of wild and tame beasts. In this manner they travelled along till on a sudden they arrived before the buildings of the Black Castle. Below, under the castle, there was an arch with a gate, which seemed to be of diamonds, and was compassed about with a moat or ditch, and was almost two hundred paces broad, and every gate had its drawbridge, all made of red boards, which seemed as though they had been bathed in blood. After this, the champions rode to the other side of this goodly castle, wondering at its curious and sumptuous workmanship, and espied a pillar of beautiful jasper stone, all wrought full of precious stones of strange work. This pillar was of great value, and was garnished with chains of gold, that were made fast to it by magic art; upon it likewise hung a very costly silver trumpet, with certain letters carved about the same, forming these words:

“If any dare attempt this place to see,
By sounding this, the gate shall opened be;
A trumpet here enchained by magic art,
To daunt with fear the proudest champion's heart;
Look thou for blows that interest this gate,
Return in time, repentance comes too late.”

When St George beheld, and understood the meaning of those mystical letters, without any more tarrying, he set the silver trumpet to his mouth, and sounded such

a vehement blast, that it seemed to echo in the foundation of the castle; whereupon the principal gate opened, and the drawbridge was let down, without the help of any visible hand, which made the champions wonder, and stand amazed; but yet, not intending to return like cowards daunted with a puff of wind, they alighted from their warlike steeds, and delivered them into the old shepherd's hands, to be fed upon the fragrant and green grass, till they had performed the adventure of the castle, which they vowed either to accomplish or never to return; so locking down their beavers, and drawing forth their keen-edged falchions they entered the gates: and being safe within, the champions looked about them to see if they could espy anybody, but they saw nothing but a pair of winding stairs, by which they descended. They had not gone many steps, but there was so great a darkness, that they could scarce see any light, yet, groping by the walls, they kept going down those narrow and turning stairs, which were very dark, and of such length, that they thought they had descended into the middle of the earth.

They spent a great time in descending these stairs, but in the end they came into a very fair and large court, encompassed with iron gates like a prison, or a place provided to keep untamed lions, and casting their eyes up to the top of the castle, they beheld the wicked knight walking with the necromancer upon a large gallery, supported by great pillars of brass; there were attending upon them seven giants, clothed in mighty iron coats, holding in their hands bats of steel. The noble and venturous champion of England spoke

with an undaunted courage and loud voice, saying :
 "Come down, thou wicked knight, thou that art surrounded by these monstrous giants, these wonderful works of nature. Come down, I say, from thy brazen gallery, and take to thee thy armour. Thou that hast a heart to commit the crimes, for whose revenge we come, now have courage in thy defence, for we vow never to depart out of thy castle till we have confounded thee, or be by thy force discomfited."

After which words he held his peace, expecting an answer; and the wicked knight, when he heard St George, began to fret and fume; like a starved lion, famished with hunger, even so raged Leoger the knight of the Black Castle, threatening forth fury from his sparkling eyes, and in this vile manner answered the noble champion of England :

"Proud knight," quoth he, "or peasant, whatsoever thou art, I care not the smallest hair of my head, for thy upbraiding me with thy unruly tongue. I will return thy uncivil speeches on thyself, for the pavements of my castle shall be sprinkled with thy cursed blood, and the bones of these thy unhappy followers shall be buried in the sinks of my channels. If thou hadst brought the army of Cæsar, that made all lands tremble where he came, yet were they but as a blast of wind unto my force. Seest thou not my giants, who stand like oaks upon our brazen gallery? they at my command shall take you from the places where you stand, and throw you over the walls of this my castle, so that they shall make you flee into the air more than ten falcions high."

At these words the giants, whom he hired to defend

him from his foes, came to him very strongly armed, with weapons in their hands, and requested him to be quiet, and to abate his anger, and they would bring to his presence all those boasting knights who were the occasion of his disquiet; and so, without tarrying for an answer, they departed down to the court, and left the knight of the castle with the magician standing together upon the gallery to behold the coming encounters. When the giants approached the champions' presence, and saw them so well proportioned and furnished, knights of so gallant stature, they flourished about their knotty clubs, and purposed not to spend the time in words but in blows.

Then one of the fiercest and cruelest giants of them all (who was called Brandamond) seeing St George to be first in the enterprise, and judging him to be the knight that had so braved his lord, began with a stern countenance to speak to him in this manner:

“Art thou that bold knight,” said the giant, “that with thy witless words hath so angered the mighty Leoger, the lord of this castle? If thou be, I advise thee by submission to seek to appease his furious wrath before revenge be taken upon thy person. Also I charge thee (if thou wish to retain thy life), that thou dost leave thy armour, and yield thyself, with all thy followers, with their hands bound behind them, and go and ask forgiveness at his feet.”

To which St George, with a smiling countenance, answered: “Giant,” said he, “I do not like thy counsel, nor will I receive thy advice; rather do we hope to send thee and all thy followers without tongues to the infernal king of fiery Phlegethon; and that you may not

have any more time to speak such folly, either return whence you came, and repent of what you have said, or else prepare yourselves for mortal battle."

When the giants heard the champions' resolution, and how slightly they regarded their threats, without longer tarrying they straightway fell upon St George and his company, intending with their bats of steel to beat them as small as flesh for the pot; but the queen of chance so smiled upon the Christian champions, that the giants little prevailed, for betwixt them was fought a long and terrible battle, in which the victory hung wavering on both sides, not knowing on whom it would fall; the bats and falchions made such a noise upon each other's armour, that they sounded like the blows of the Cyclops working upon their anvils; and at every blow that was given, fire flew from their steeled corselets like sparks from their flaming furnaces; the skies resounded with the echoes of their strokes; the ground shook as though it had been oppressed with an earthquake: the pavement of the court was overspread with a mixture of blood and sweat, and the strong walls of the castle were mightily battered by the giants' clubs. By the time that glittering Sol began to decline from the top of heaven, the giants began to faint; whereat the Christian knights with more courage began to increase in strength, and with such vigour assailed the giants, that before the golden sun had dived to the western world, the giants were quite discomfited and slain; some lay with their hands dis severed from their bodies, weltering in purple gore; some had their brains sprinkled against the walls; some lay in channels, with their entrails trailing down in streams

of blood; and some jointless, with their bodies cut in pieces, so that there was not one left alive to withstand the Christian champions.

St George, with the other six knights, fell upon their knees, and thanked the Immortal Director of all good chance for their victory. But when the knight of the Black Castle, who stood upon the gallery during all the time of the encounter, saw how all the giants were slain by the prowess of these strange knights, he raged in great wrath, wishing that the ground might gape and swallow him, before he was delivered into the hands of his enemies; and would have cast himself headlong from the top of the gallery, and so dashed out his brains against the pavement, had not the necromancer, who likewise beheld the encounter, intercepted him in his intended drift, and promised to perform by art what the giants could not do by force. So the necromancer fell to his magic spells and charms, by which the Christian champions were mightily troubled and molested, and brought in danger of their lives in a fearful and strange manner, as shall be hereafter shown: for as they stood after their long encounter unbuckling their armour to take the fresh air and dress the bloody wounds received in their last conflict, the magician caused by his art a spirit, in the likeness of a lady of marvellous beauty, to look through an iron grate, seeming to lean her face upon her hand very pensively, and distilling from her crystal eyes great abundance of tears. When the champions saw this beautiful creature, they remained in great admiration, thinking that by some hard misfortune she was imprisoned. At which the lady seemed

to open her fair and crystalline eyes, looking earnestly upon St George; and giving a grievous sigh, she withdrew herself from the grate; her sudden departure causing the Christian knights to have a great desire to know who she might be, although suspecting that by some enchantment they might be overthrown. And casting their eyes again to see if they could find her, they could not; but they saw, in the very same place, a woman of great and princely stature, who was all armed in silver plates, with a sword girded at her waist, sheathed in a golden scabbard, and had hanging at her neck an ivory bow and a gilt quiver: this lady was of so great beauty, that she seemed almost to exceed the first; but, like the other, upon a sudden she vanished, leaving the champions no less troubled in their thoughts than before. The Christian knights had not long bewailed the absence of the two ladies, than, without seeing any body, they were stricken with such furious blows upon their back, that they were constrained to stoop with one knee upon the ground; yet in a trice they rose again, and looking about to see who they were that struck them, they perceived them to be the images of certain knights, which in great haste seemed to run in at a door that was at one of the corners of the court; whereupon the champions were immensely enraged at seeing themselves so hardly treated, and followed with their accustomed lightness after the knights, in at the same door; but they had not proceeded three steps, when they fell down into a cave, which was covered over in such a subtle manner, that whoever entered the door, straightway fell into it, except he was told thereof before. Within the

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cave it was as dark as the silent night; and when the champions found themselves thus treacherously betrayed, they greatly feared some other mischief would follow to their utter overthrow; so with their swords drawn, they stood ready to make their defence against whatsoever should after happen: but as from the great darkness they could not see any thing, nor discover wherein they were fallen, they determined to settle themselves against something, either post, pillar, or wall, and groping about the cave, they searched in every place for some other door that might bring them forth out of the dark den.

As they went groping and feeling up and down, they found that they trod upon dead men's bones, which caused them to stand still; and not long after they espied a secret window, at which entered a little sunshine, and gave some light in the den, by which they espied a bed most richly furnished with curtains of silk and golden pendants, which stood in a secret room of the cave, hung with rich tapestry of sable colour. The champions, being somewhat weary from their long fight with the giants in the court of the castle, required some rest, and desired to sleep upon the bed, but not all at once, for they feared some danger; and therefore St George, as one most willing to be their watchman, and keep sentinel in so dangerous a place, caused the other champions to take their repose upon the bed, and he would be as wakeful as the cock against all dangerous accidents; so the six Christian knights repaired to the bed, whereon they were no sooner laid, than they fell into a heavy enchanted sleep, so that they could not be awakened by any manner

of violence. The bed was enchanted by the necromancer's charms, so that whosoever but sat upon its sides or even touched the furniture of the bed, were presently cast into as heavy a sleep as if they had drunk the juice of henbane, or the seed of poppy. Here we will leave them for a time, like men cast into a trance, and speak of the terrible adventure that happened to St George in the cave. He, little fearing any enchantments, stood like a careful guard, keeping the furious wolf from the spoil of the silly sheep: but upon a sudden his heart began to throb, and his hair to stand upright upon his head, yet, having a heart fraught with invincible courage, he purposed not to awaken the other knights, but of himself to withstand whatsoever happened; so in this princely resolve, there appeared to him, as he thought, the shape of a magician with a visage lean, pale, and full of wrinkles, having locks of black hair hanging down to his shoulders like wreaths of envenomed snakes, and his body seemed to consist of nothing but skin and bones, who spoke to St George in this threatening manner:

“In an evil hour,” said the magician, “camest thou hither, and so shall thy lodgings be, and thy entertainment worse; for now thou art in a place where thou shalt look for nothing but to be meat for some furious beast, and thy strength shall not be able to make any defence.”

The English champion, whose heart was oppressed with extreme wrath, answered: “O false and accursed charmer, whom ill chance confound for thy condemned arts, and for whom the fiends have digged an everlasting tomb, what fury hath incensed thee, that with thy

false and devilish charms thou dost practise so much evil against travelling and adventurous knights? I hope to obtain my liberty in spite of all thy mischief, and with the strength of this arm to break all thy bones to pieces."

"All that thou canst do, I could suffer at thy hands," replied the necromancer, "for the revenge that I will take of thee for the slaughter of my master's giants, who as yet lie unburied in the court," and thereupon he went invisibly out of the cave. Not long after, St George heard a sudden noise at his back, and beheld as it were a window opening by little and little, whereat there appeared a clear light, by which he plainly perceived that the walls were dashed with blood, and likewise that the bones whereon they trod at their entry into the den were those of human bodies from which it appeared not to be very long since the flesh was torn off; but this consideration did not long endure with him, for he heard a great rushing, and looking what it might be, he saw coming forth of another den a mighty serpent with wings, as great in body as an elephant; she had only two feet, which appeared out of her monstrous body but of a span length, and each foot had three claws of three spans in length; she came with open mouth, of so monstrous and huge a size, and so deformed, that a whole armed knight, horse and all, might enter in thereat; she had upon her jaws two tusks which seemed to be as sharp as needles, and all her body was covered with sharp scales of divers colours; and with great fury she came with her wings out-spread. St George, although he had a valiant and undaunted mind, yet could not choose but

be troubled at the sight of so monstrous a beast. But considering that it was now time to have courage, and to be expert and valiant in making his defence, he took his good cutting sword in his hand, and shrouding himself under his hard and strong shield, waited the coming of the ugly monster. When the furious beast saw that there was prey whereon she might employ her sharp teeth, she struck with her venomous wings, and with her piercing claws laid fast hold upon St George's hard shield, intending to have at once swallowed this courageous warrior; and fastening her sharp tusks upon his helmet, which she found so hard that she let go her hold, she furiously pulled at his target with such strength that she drew it from his arm: upon which the English knight struck at her head a strong and mighty blow with his sword, but it could not hurt her by reason of the hard scales wherewith it was covered; yet, though he gave her no wound, for all that she felt the blow, so that it made her recoil to the ground, and fall upon her long and hideous tail; then the valiant knight made great haste to redouble his force to strike her another blow, but all was in vain, for upon a sudden she stretched herself so high, that he could not reach her head. However, Fortune so favoured his hand that he struck her upon the belly, where she had no defence from scales, nor any thing but feathers, and there issued such an abundance of black blood, that it sprinkled all the den about.

This terrible and furious serpent, when she felt herself so sorely wounded, struck at St George such a terrible blow with her tail that if he had not seen it com-

ing it had been sufficient to have crushed his body in pieces; the knight, to clear himself from the blow, fell flat upon the ground, for he had no time to make any other defence. That terrible blow had no sooner passed over him than straightway he recovered his feet, as the furious serpent came towards him. Now, St George having great confidence in his strength, performed such a valiant exploit, that all former adventures that have been ever done by any knight may be put in oblivion, and this kept in perpetual memory. For he threw his sword out of his hand, and ran upon the serpent, and caught her betwixt his arms, and did so squeeze her, that the furious beast could not help herself with her sharp claws, but only with her wings she beat him on every side. This valiant champion and noble warrior would never let her loose, but still remained holding her betwixt his arms, continuing this perilous and dangerous fight, till his bright armour was embued with her bestial blood, by which she lost a great part of her strength, and was disabled from continuing the contest.

Long endured this great and dangerous encounter, and the infernal serpent remained fast to the noble and valiant breast of the English knight, till he plainly perceived that the monster began to get faint, and to lose her strength. It could not be otherwise than that St George waxed somewhat weary, considering the fight he had had so lately with the giants. Notwithstanding, when he felt the great weakness of the serpent, he animated himself with courage, and having opportunity, from the quantity of blood that issued from her wounds, he took his trusty sword and thrust it into her heart, with such violence that he clove it in



St. George of England.

two pieces. So this infernal monster fell down dead upon the ground and carried the Christian champion with her, for they were fast closed together; but as the serpent lacked strength, he quickly cleared himself of her claws, and recovered his sword. When he saw certainly he was clear from the monster, and that she had yielded up her detested breath, he kneeled down and gave thanks to the queen of chance for his happy delivery.

After the victory was thus obtained, and the monster dead, the skies began to wax dark, and immediately to be overspread with a black and thick cloud, and there came such great thunderings and lightnings, and such a terrible noise, as though the earth would have sunk; and the longer it endured, the more appeared the fury thereof.

By this sudden alteration of the heavens, the Knight of the Castle knew that the monster was vanquished, the champions redeemed from their enchanted sleep, the castle delivered to the pleasure of the knights, and his own life to the fury of their swords, except he preserved it by a sudden flight; so presently he departed, and secretly fled out of the island unsuspected by any one.

The necromancer by his art likewise knew that the castle was delivered to his enemies' power, and that his charms and spells would no more prevail; he therefore caused two airy spirits, in the likeness of two dragons, to carry him swiftly through the air in an ebon chariot.

Here we will leave him, because it appertaineth to our history now to speak of the Six Renowned Champions

of Christendom, who were awakened from their enchantments. When they had risen from their sleep, and had roused up their drowsy spirits, like men newly recovered from a trance, being ashamed of their dishonourable proceedings, they a long time gazed on each other's faces, unable to express their minds but by blushing looks, the silent speakers of their extreme sorrow; at last St George began to express the extremity of his grief in this manner.

“What is become of you, brave European champions? where is now your wonted valour, of late so much renowned through the world? what has become of your vigorous strength, that hath bruised enchanted helmets, and quelled the power of mighty multitudes? what is become of your terrible blows, that have subdued mountains, hewed asunder invincible armour, and brought whole kingdoms under your subjection? Now I see that all is forgotten, for you have buried all your honour, dignity, and fame, in slothful slumbers upon that silken bed.”

Thereupon he fell upon his knees, and said, “Thou that art the guider of all our fortunes, thee I invoke and call, and desire thee to help us, and do not permit us to have our fame taken away for this dishonour; let us merit dignity by our victories, so that our bright renown may ride upon the glorious wings of Fame; whereby babes as yet unborn may speak of us, and in time to come fill whole volumes with our princely achievements.”

These and such-like speeches pronounced this discontented champion, till the elements cleared, and golden-faced Phoebus glittered with resplendent

brightness through a secret hole into the cave, which seemed in their fancy to dance about the veil of heaven, and to rejoice at their happy delivery.

In this joyful manner, they returned to the court of the castle, when they remembered the old shepherd, whom they had almost forgotten in the joy that they felt in their happy release. He as yet remained without the castle gates, carefully keeping their horses; but they caused him to come in, and not only gave him the honour due to his age, but frankly bestowed upon him the state and government of the castle, with stores of jewels, pearls, and treasures, to be maintained and kept for the relief of poor travellers.

This being concluded with their general consent, they spent the remnant of the day in banqueting and in pleasant conference upon their strange adventures: and when night with her sable clouds had overspread the day's delightful countenance, they betook themselves to their rest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

How, after the Christian knights were gone to bed in the Black Castle, St George was awakened from his sleep in the dead time of the night, after a most fearful manner; and likewise how he found a knight lying upon a tomb that stood over a flaming fire; as also of the sorrowful lady that came from under the tomb.

Most sweet was the sleep that these princely-minded champions took in the castle all the first part of the night; but betwixt twelve and one, such a strange alteration was wrought in St George's thoughts that he could not enjoy the benefit of more sleep, and was

forced to lie broad awake, like one disquieted by some sudden fear : and as he lay with wakeful eyes, thinking upon his past fortunes, he heard, as it were, a cry of night ravens, which flew beating their fatal wings against the windows of his lodging, from which he imagined that some direful incident was near at hand : yet not frightened by the fearful noise, nor daunted by the croaking of these ravens, he lay silent, not revealing it to any of the other champions, who lay in six several beds in the same chamber : but at last, being between sleeping and waking, he heard as it were, the voice of a sorrowful knight, uttering these words :

“O thou invincible knight of England, thou that art not frightened in this sorrowful dwelling, wherein thou canst see nothing but torments, rise up, I say, from thy sluggish bed, and with thy undaunted courage and strong arm break the charm of my enchantment.”

Thereupon it seemed to give a most terrible groan, and so ceased. This unexpected noise caused St George to arise from his bed, and to buckle on his armour, and to search about the castle to see if he could find the place that harboured the knight that made such sorrowful lamentations.

So he went up and down by-corners in the castle all the latter part of the night, without finding the source of this strange voice, or disturbance from any other cause, except that he was hindered from his natural and quiet sleep ; but on the break of day, when the night began to withdraw her sable curtains, and to give Aurora liberty to display her purple brightness, he entered into a square parlour, hung round about with

black cloth, and other mournful habiliments. On the one side he saw a tomb, covered likewise with black, and upon it there lay a man of a pale colour, who at certain times gave most grievous sighs, caused by burning flames that proceeded from under the tomb, so that it seemed his body would be converted into coals: the flame was so stinking, that it made St George retire from the place where he saw this most fearful spectacle.

He who lay upon the tomb, casting his eyes aside, espied St George, and knowing him to be a human creature, with an afflicted voice said, "Who art thou, sir knight, that art come into this place of sorrow, where nothing is heard but clamours of fear and terror?"

"Nay, tell me," said St George, "who thou art, that with so much grief dost demand of me that which I stand in doubt to reveal to thee."

"I am the king of Babylon," answered he, "who, without consideration, with my cruel hand did pierce the white and delicate breast of my beloved daughter. Woe be to me, and woe unto my soul therefore; for she at once did pay her offence by death, but I, a most miserable wretch, with many torments do die living."

When the worthy champion, St George, was about to answer him, he saw come forth from under the tomb a damsel, who had hair of a yellow colour, hanging down about her shoulders, and by her face seemed to be very strangely afflicted with torments; who with a sorrowful voice said:

"O unfortunate knight, what dost thou seek in this

infernal lodging, where cannot be given thee pleasure but only mortal torment? There is but one thing that can clear thee from it, and this cannot be told thee by any other but by me; yet I will not express it, except thou will grant me one request, which I will ask of thee."

The English champion, who with a sad countenance stood beholding the sorrowful damsel, being greatly amazed at the sight which he had seen, answered and said:

"The powers which are governors of my liberty will do their pleasures; but touching the grant of thy request, I never denied any lawful thing to either lady or gentlewoman, but with all my power and strength I endeavoured to fulfil the same: therefore state what thy pleasure is?" Upon that the damsel threw herself into the sepulchre, and with a grievous voice said: "Now, most courteous knight, perform thy promise; strike but three strokes upon this fatal tomb, and thou shalt deliver us from a world of miseries, and likewise make an end of our continual torments."

Then the invincible knight replied: "Whether you be human creatures," said he, "placed in this sepulchre by enchantment, or furies raised from fiery Acheron to work my confusion, I know not; and there is so little truth in this infernal castle, that I stand in doubt whether I may believe thy words or not: but yet tell me the truth of all your past fortunes, and by what means you were brought into this place, and as I am a true knight, and one that fights in the quarrels of Christendom, I vow to accomplish whatsoever lieth in my power."

Then the damsel began with a sorrowful lamentation to declare as strange a tragedy as ever was told; and lying in the fatal sepulchre, unseen by St George, with a hollow voice, like a murdered lady whose bleeding soul as yet felt the terrible stroke of her death, she repeated this pitiful tale.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of the tragical discourse pronounced by the lady in the sepulchre, and how her enchantment was finished by St George; and how the seven champions of Christendom restored the Babylonian king unto his kingdom.

“IN famous Babylon some time reigned a king who had only one daughter, who was very fair, whose name was Angelica, humble, wise, and chaste; who was beloved by a mighty duke, a man wonderfully cunning in the Black Art. This magician deserved the government better than any other man in the kingdom, and was well esteemed throughout all Babylon, almost equally with the king; for which there was engendered in the king’s heart a secret rancour and hatred towards him. The magician cast his love upon the young princess Angelica, and it was ordained by destiny that she should repay him with the same affection; so that both their hearts being wounded with love, the one to the other, they endured sundry great passions.

“Then Love, which continually seeketh occasions, did on a time set before this magician a waiting-maid of Angelica’s, named Fidelia, who seemed to be moulded by the immortal power of the goddess Venus.

Oh! in what fear the magician was to discover to her all his heart, and to betray the secrets of his love-sick soul! But in the end, by the great industry and diligence of the waiting-maid (whose name was answerable to her mind), there was opportunity given for these two lovers to meet together.

“This fair Angelica, because she could not safely meet her true lover, determined to leave her own native country and father; and with this intention, being one night with her love, she cast her arms about his neck, and said :

“ ‘O my sweet and well-beloved friend, seeing that the destinies have been so kind to me as to have my heart linked in thy breast, let no one find in thee ingratitude, for I cannot live except continually I enjoy thy sight; and do not muse, my lord, at these my words, for the entire love that I bear to you constraineth me to make it manifest: and this believe of a certainty, that if thy image be absent from me, it will cause my heart to lack its vital recreation, and my soul to forsake her earthly habitation. You know, my lord, how that the king, my father, doth bear you no good will, but doth hate you from his soul, so that we cannot enjoy our hearts’ contentment; for which I have determined (if you think well thereof) to leave both my father and my native country, and to go and live with you in a strange land. Now if you deny me this, you shall very quickly see your loving lady without life. But I know you will not deny me, for therein consist all my welfare and my chief prosperity.’ And thereupon shedding tears from her crystal eyes, she held her peace.

“The magician, as one half-ravished by her earnest desires, answered and said :

“‘My love and sweet mistress, wherefore have you any doubt that I will fulfil and accomplish your desire in all things? Therefore at once put all things in readiness that your pleasure wishes to have done; for what more benefit or content can I receive, than to enjoy your sight continually, so that neither of us may depart from the other’s company, till the fatal Destinies end our lives?’

“After this, within a few days, the magician by his enchantment caused a chariot to be made, that was drawn by flying dragons; into which, without being espied by any one, they put themselves, together with their trusty waiting-maid, and in great secrecy they departed out of the king’s palace, and took their journey towards the country of Armenia; where in a marvellously short time they arrived, and came without any misfortune to a place where deep rivers continually struck upon a rock, upon which stood an old building, which they intended to inhabit, as a most convenient place for their dwelling; wherein they might, without fear of being discovered, live peaceably, enjoying each other’s love. And not far from that place there was a small village whence they might have necessary provision for the maintaining of their bodies.

“Great joy and pleasure these two lovers received, when they found themselves in such a place. The magician delighted in nothing but to go hunting with certain country dwellers who inhabited the next village, leaving his sweet Angelica, accompanied by her trusty Fidelia, in the house.

“So thus they lived together four years, spending their days in great pleasure; but in the end, Time (who had never rested in one degree) took from them their rest, and repaid them with sorrow and extreme misery. For when the king her father found her missing, his sorrow and grief were so great that he kept his chamber a long time, and would not be comforted by any body.

“Two years he passed away in great heaviness, filling the court with echoes of his beloved daughter, and making the skies resound with his lamentations. But at last, upon a time as he sat in his chair, lamenting her absence with great heaviness, and being overcome with grief, he chanced to fall into a troublesome dream; for after quiet sleep had closed up his eyes, he dreamed that he saw his daughter standing upon a rock by the sea-side, offering to cast her body into the waves before she would return to Babylon, and that he beheld her lover, with an army of satyrs and wild men ready furnished with habiliments of war to pull him from his throne, and to deprive him of his kingdom.

“Out of this vision he presently started from his chair, as though it had been one freighted with a legion of spirits, and caused four of the chief peers of his land to be sent for, to whom he committed the government of his country, certifying that he intended a voyage to the sepulchre at Memphis, to qualify the fury of his daughter’s ghost, whom he dreamed to be drowned in the sea; and unless he sought by true submission to appease the angry Fates, whom he had offended, he should be deposed from his kingdom.

“None could withdraw him from his determination, though it was to the prejudice of the whole land:

therefore within twenty days he furnished himself with all necessaries, as well of armour and martial furniture as of gold and treasure, and so departed from Babylon privately and alone, not suffering any one to bear him company.

“ But he travelled not as he told his lords, after any ceremonious duty, but like a blood-hound, searching country after country, nation by nation, and kingdom by kingdom, that after a barbarous manner he might be revenged upon his daughter for her disobedience: and as he travelled, there was no cave, den, wood, or wilderness, but he furiously entered, and diligently searched for his Angelica.

“ At last, by strange fortune he wandered into Armenia, near the place where his daughter had her residence; where, after he had intelligence from the people of the country, that she remained in an old ruined building on the top of a rock near at hand, without any more delay he travelled to the place, at a time when the magician her husband was gone about his accustomed hunting; and coming to the gate, and finding it locked, he knocked ther^eat so furiously, that he made the noise resound all over the house with the redoubling echo.

“ When Angelica heard the knock, she came to the gate, and with all speed opened it; and when she thought to embrace her lover, she saw that it was her father, and giving a great shriek, she ran with all speed she could back into the house.

“ Her father, being angry, like a furious lion followed her, saying, ‘ It doth little avail thee, Angelica, to run away, for thou shalt die by this revengeful hand, paying

me with thy death the dishonour that my crown hath received by thy flight.'

"So he followed her till he came to the chamber where her waiting-maid Fidelia was, who likewise presently knew the king; upon whose wrathful countenance appeared the image of pale death; and fearing the harm that might happen to her lady, she put herself over her lady's body, and gave most terribly loud shrieks.

"The king, as one kindled in wrath, and forgetting the natural love of a father towards his child, laid hands upon his sword, and said: 'It doth not profit thee, Angelica, to fly from thy death, for thy desert is such that thou canst not escape from it; for mine own arm shall be the slayer of my own flesh, and I unnaturally hate that which nature itself commanded me especially to love.'

"Then Angelica, with a countenance more red than scarlet, answered and said: 'Ah, my lord and father! will you be now as cruel to me, as you were wont to be kind? Appease your wrath, and withdraw your unmerciful sword, and hearken to what I say, freeing myself of that you charge me withal. You shall understand, my lord and father, that I was overcome and constrained by Love to forget all fatherly love and duty towards your majesty; yet for all that, having power to accomplish the same, it is not to your dishonour, that I live honourably with my husband.' Then the king (with a visage fraught with terrible anger, more like a dragon in the woods of Hyrcania than a man by nature) answered and said:

"Thou viperous brat, degenerate from nature's kind!

thou wicked traitor to thy generation! what reason hast thou to make this false excuse, when thou hast committed a crime that deserves more punishment than human nature can inflict?’

“And saying these words, he lifted up his sword, intending to strike her to the heart, and to bathe his weapon in his own daughter’s blood; when Fidelia being present, gave a terrible shriek, and threw herself on the body of the unhappy Angelica, offering her tender breast to the fury of his sharp-cutting sword, only to set at liberty her dear lady and mistress.

“But when the furious king saw her thus make this defence, he pulled her off by the hair of her head, threatening to trample her delicate body under his feet, to make a way that he might execute his determined purpose without further resistance.

“When Fidelia saw the king determined to kill his daughter, she hung about his neck like a lioness, and said: ‘Thou monstrous murderer, more cruel than the mad dogs of Egypt, why dost thou determine to slaughter the most chaste and loyal lady in the world, even she within whose lap untamed lions will come and sleep, thou art thyself, I say, the occasion of all this evil, and thine only is the fault; for that thou wert so malicious, and so full of mischief, that she durst not let thee understand her love.’

“These words and tears of Fidelia did little profit to mollify the king’s heart, who, rather like a wild boar in the wilderness compassed about by a company of dogs, most irefully shook his limbs, and threw Fidelia from him, so that he had almost dashed her brains against the chamber walls, and with double wrath he proceeded

to indulge his fury. Yet, for all this, Fidelity with terrible shrieks sought to hinder him, till with his cruel hand he thrust his sword into her lady's breast, so that it appeared forth at her back, whereby her soul was forced to leave its terrestrial habitation.

“The ireful king, when he beheld his daughter's blood sprinkled about the chamber, and that by his own hands, repented of the deed, and cursed the hour wherein the first notion of such a crime entered into his mind, wishing the hand that did it ever after might be lame, and the heart that did contrive it be plagued with more extremities than was the miserable *Œdipus*.

“In this manner the unfortunate king repented his daughter's bloody murder, and determined not to stay till the magician returned from his hunting exercise, but to exclude himself from the company of all men, and to spend the remnant of his loathsome life among untamed beasts in some wild wilderness. Upon this resolution he left the chamber, and said: ‘Farewell, thou lifeless body of my *Angelica*; and may thy blood, which I have spilt, crave vengeance of the Fates against my guilty soul; for my earthly body shall endure a miserable punishment.’

“Fidelity, after the departure of the king, used such violent fury against herself, by rending her hair, and tearing her face with her nails, that she rather seemed an infernal fury subject to wrath, than an earthly creature furnished with clemency. She sat over *Angelica's* body, wiping her bleeding bosom with a damask scarf, which she pulled from her waist, and bathing her dead body with her warm tears, which

forcibly ran down from her eyes like an overflowing fountain."

"In this woful manner the sorrowful Fidelia spent that unhappy day, till bright Phœbus went into the western part. At which time the magician returned from his accustomed hunting, and finding the door open, he entered Angelica's chamber, where when he found her body weltering in congealed blood, and beheld how Fidelia sat weeping over her bleeding wounds, he cursed himself, accounting his negligence the occasion of her death, because he had not left her in more safety. But when Fidelia told him, how by the hands of her own father she was slaughtered; (who, after ranging about the country like a frantic man, returned near to the spot where the cruel tragedy was committed;) he began to rage against black Destiny, and to fill the air with terrible exclamations.

"'Oh cruel murderer!' said he, 'crept from the womb of some untamed tiger; I will be so revenged upon thee, O unnatural king, that all ages shall wonder at thy misery. And likewise thou, unhappy virgin, shalt endure like punishment, because thy accursed tongue hath noised this fatal deed in my ears; the one for committing the crime, and the other for reporting it. For I will cast such deserved vengeance upon your heads, and place your bodies in such continual torments, that you shall lament my lady's death, keeping alive her fame by your lamentations.'

"And saying these words, he drew a book out of his bosom, and reading certain charms and enchantments that were therein contained, he made a great and very black cloud appear in the skies, which was

brought by terribly high winds, in which he took them both up, and brought them into this enchanted castle, where ever since they have remained in this tomb cruelly tormented with unquenchable fire, and must for ever continue in the same extremity, except some courteous knight will vouchsafe to give but three blows upon the tomb, and break the enchantment.

“Thus have you heard, magnanimous knight, the true history of my unhappy fortunes. The virgin who for the true love she bore her lady was committed to this torment is myself; and this pale body lying upon the tomb is the unhappy Babylonian king who unnaturally murdered his own daughter; and the magician who committed all these villanies is that accursed wretch, who by his charms and enchantments hath so strongly withstood your encounters.”

These words were no sooner finished, than St George drew out his sharp cutting sword, and gave three blows upon the enchanted tomb, whereupon presently appeared the Babylonian king standing before him, attired in rich robes, with an imperial diadem upon his head, and the lady standing by him, with a countenance more beautiful than the damask rose.

When St George beheld them, he was not able to speak for joy, nor to utter his mind, so exceeding was the pleasure that he took in their sight; so without any ceremony, he took them by both his hands, and led them into the chamber, where he found the other knights newly risen from their beds. To them he revealed the strange adventure, and how he redeemed the king and lady from their enchantments, which was as great joy to them as it was to St George.

After they had for six days refreshed themselves in the castle, they accompanied the Babylonian king into his country, to place him again in his kingdom.

When the valiant Christian champions accompanied the Babylonian king to his kingdom of Assyria, as they had solemnly promised him, and made no question of princely entertainment, there was neither sign of peace nor likelihood of joyful and friendly welcome, for all the country raged with intestine war, four several competitors unjustly striving for what properly and of right belonged to the king.

The unnatural causers and stirrers up of this bloodshedding controversy were four noblemen, to whom the king unadvisedly committed the government of his realm, when he went in pursuit of his fair daughter, after his dream, that caused him so cruelly to seek her death; and the breaking out into this confusion grew first to a head in manner following:—

For two years after the king's departure, these deputies governed the public state in peace, and with prudent policy, till no tidings of the king could be heard, notwithstanding many messengers were sent into every quarter of the world to inquire after him; then did ambition kindle in their hearts, each striving to wrest into his hand the sole possession of the Babylonian kingdom. To this end they severally made friends; for this had they contended in many fights; and now, lastly, they intended to set all their hopes upon the main chance of war, purposing to fight till three fell, and one, whose head should be beautified with a crown, remained victor over the rest.

But to traitors and treason the end is sudden and

shameful; for no sooner had St George (placing himself between the armies) in a brief oration told the adventures of the king, and he himself discovered his reverend face to the people, than they all shouted for joy; and hauling the usurpers to death, they reinstalled him in his ancient dignity, their true, lawful, and long-looked-for king.

The king being thus restored, married Fidelia for her faithfulness; and after the nuptial feast, the champions departed to seek adventures in other countries.

CHAPTER XXV.

Of the triumphs, tilts, and tournaments, that were solemnly held in Constantinople by the Grecian emperor; and of the honourable adventures that were there achieved by the Christian champions.

In the eastern parts of the world the fame and valiant deeds of the champions of Christendom were noised, with their heroic acts and feats of arms; naming them the mirror of nobility, and the types of bright honour. All kings and princes to whose ears the report of their valour was known, desired much to behold their noble personages. And when the emperor of Greece, keeping then his court in the city of Constantinople, heard of their mighty and valiant deeds, he thirsted after their sight, and his mind could never be satisfied until he had devised a means to bring them to his court, not only that he might enjoy the benefit of their company, but that he might have his court honoured with the

presence of such renowned knights: and in this manner it was accomplished.

The emperor despatched messengers into divers parts of the world, and gave them in charge to publish, throughout every country and province as they went, an honourable tournament that should be held in the city of Constantinople within six months following: thereby to accomplish his intent and to bring the Christian champions, whose company he so much desired, to his court.

This charge of the Grecian emperor was performed with such diligence that in a short time it came to the ears of the Christian knights, as they travelled betwixt the provinces of Asia and Africa; and at the time appointed they came in great pomp to Constantinople to take part in the honourable proceedings.

There likewise resorted thither a great number of knights of great valour and strength; among whom were the prince of Algiers with a goodly company of noble persons, and the prince of Fez with many well-proportioned knights; likewise came thither the king of Arabia in great state, and with no less majesty came the king of Sicilia, and a brother of his, who were both giants. Many other brave and valiant knights came thither to honour the Grecian emperor. As they came to honour the triumphs, so likewise they came to prove their fortitude, and to get fame and name, and the praise that belongeth to adventurous knights. It was supposed of all the company, that the king of Sicilia would gain by his prowess the dignity from the rest, because he was a giant of very big limbs; although his brother was taken to be the more furious knight,

but his brother determined that the king should get the honour and praise from all the knights that came:— but it fell out otherwise, as hereafter you shall hear.

When the day of tournament was come, all the ladies and damsels put themselves in places to behold the jousting, and attired themselves in the greatest elegance they could devise, and the great court swarmed with people who came thither to behold the scenes of the tournament.

What shall I say of the emperor's daughter, the fair Alcida, who sat glittering in rich ornaments amongst the other ladies, like Phœbus in the crystal firmament? When the emperor was seated upon the imperial throne, under a tent of green velvet, the knights began to enter the lists; and he that first entered was the king of Arabia, mounted upon a very fair and well-adorned courser. He was armed with black armour, bespotted with silver knobs, and he brought with him fifty knights apparelled in the same livery. After him entered the Pagan knight who was lord of Syria, armed with armour of lion's colour, accompanied with a hundred knights, all apparelled in velvet of the same colour, and passed round about the place, showing to the ladies great friendship and courtesy, as did the other.

After which, he beheld the king of Arabia waiting to receive him at the joust; and the trumpets began to sound, giving them to understand that they must prepare themselves for the encounter; whereto these two knights were nothing unwilling, but spurred their coursers with great fury, and closed together with courageous valour. The king of Arabia most strongly

made his encounter, and struck the Pagan upon the breast; but the Pagan, at the next race, struck him so surely with his lance, that he heaved him out of his saddle, and he fell to the ground: after which the Pagan knight rode up and down with great pride and gladness.

The Arabian king being thus overthrown, there entered the lists the king of Algiers, who at the first encounter was thrown to the ground. In like manner did that Pagan overthrow fifteen knights of fifteen provinces, to the great amazement of the emperor and all the assembly.

During all these valiant encounters, St George, with the other Christian champions, stood afar off upon a high gallery beholding them, not intending as yet to be seen in the tilt.

But now this valiant Pagan, after he had rode about six courses up and down the place, and seeing no one enter the tilt-yard, thought to bear all the fame and honour away for that day. But at the same instant there entered the noble-minded prince of Fez, for courage the chief pride of his country. He was a marvellously well-proportioned knight, and was armed in white armour, wrought with excellent knots of gold; and he brought in his company a hundred knights, all attired in white satin; and riding about the place, he made his obedience to the emperor, and to all the ladies; and thereupon the trumpets began to sound. At the signal the two knights spurred their coursers, and made their encounter so strong, and with such great fury, that the proud Pagan was cast to the ground, and so left the lists in great dishonour.

Straightway entered the brave king of Sicilia, who was armed in a glittering corselet of very fine steel, and was mounted upon a strong and mighty courser; he brought in his company two hundred knights, all apparelled in cloth of gold, having every one an instrument of music in his hand, making thereon a most delightful melody.

After the Sicilian king had made the accustomed courtesy in the lists, he locked down his beaver, and put himself in readiness to fight. When the sign was given by the chief herald at arms, they spurred their horses, and made their encounter so valiantly, that at the first race they made their lances shiver in the air, and the pieces thereof were scattered abroad like aspen leaves in a whirlwind. At the second course, the young prince of Fez was carried over his horse's buttocks, and the saddle with him betwixt his legs; which was a great grief to the emperor and all the company, for he was well-beloved by them all, and held as a knight of great esteem.

The Sicilian king grew proud at the prince of Fez's overthrow, and was so enraged and furious, that in a short time he left not a knight remaining in the saddle, that had attempted to fight with him; for every one, whatever their country or nation, he unhorsed in the encounter; so that there was no question, among either nobles or the multitude, but that to him the honour of the victory would be attributed.

But, in his arrogant pride, he heard a great noise, as of a tumult, drawing near, which caused him to stand still, expecting some strange accident; and looking about he beheld St George entering the lists, having

just come from the gallery. He was arrayed in strong armour all of purple, full of golden stars: and before him rode the champions of France, Italy, Spain, and Scotland, all on stately coursers, bearing in their hands four silken streamers of four several colours; and there followed him the champion of Wales, carrying his shield, whereon was pourtrayed a golden lion in a sable field; and the champion of Ireland carried his spear, of knotty ash, strongly bound about with plates of steel.

When St George had passed by the royal seat whereon the emperor sat in company of many princes, he rode along by the other side, where Alcida, the emperor's fair daughter, sat richly appavelled in a vesture of gold, amongst many gallant ladies and fair damsels; to whom he veiled his bonnet, showing them the courtesy of a knight. When he was come before his adversary, he took his shield and spear, and prepared himself to joust; and being both provided, the trumpets began to sound; when with great fury these two warlike knights met together, and neither of them missed their blows at the encounter; but yet, St George having a desire to increase his fame, and make his name resound through the world, struck the giant such a mighty blow upon his breast, that he threw him to the ground; and with great state and majesty he passed along, without any show of pride; whereupon the people gave so great a shout, that it resounded like an echo in the air, and St George said: "This great and furious boaster is overthrown, and his mighty strength hath little availed him."

After this, many princes proved their skill against the English champion, and every knight who was of any

estimation fought with him, but with ease he overcame them all, in less than the space of two hours. Now as the day was drawing to an end, there entered the lists the brave and mighty giant, brother to the Sicilian king, with a great spear in his hand, whose glimmering point of steel glittered throughout the court. He brought with him only one squire, attired in silver mail, having in his hand another lance.

So this furious giant, without any care or courtesy to the emperor, or any of his knights there present, entered the place; and the squire who brought the other spear went to the English champion and said :

“Sir knight, yonder brave and valiant giant, my lord and master, doth send to thee this warlike spear, and therewith he willeth thee to defend thyself to the uttermost of thy power and strength, for he hath vowed before sunset to be either lord of thy fortunes, or a vassal to thy prowess; and likewise saith, that he doth not only defy thee in the tournament, but also challengeth thee to mortal battle.”

This boasting message caused St George to smile, and raised in his breast a new desire of honour, so he returned him this answer: “Friend, go thy ways, and tell the giant that sent thee that I do accept his demand, although it doth grieve my very soul to hear this arrogant defiance, to the great disturbance of this royal company, in presence of so mighty an emperor. But seeing his stomach is gorged with so much pride, tell him, that I, George of England, am ready to make my defence, and also that shortly he shall repent his bravado, by the pledge of my knighthood.”

Saying these words, he took the spear from the

squire, and delivered him his gauntlet, to carry to his master, and then put himself in readiness for the encounter.

For some time the two warriors, mounted upon their steeds, tarried for the sign to be made by the trumpets; which being given, they set forward their coursers, with their spears in their rests, with so great fury and desire, the one to unhorse the other, that they both failed in the encounter. The giant, who was very strong and proud, when he saw that he had missed his intent, returned against St George, carrying his spear upon his shoulder; and coming nigh to him, upon a sudden, before he could clear himself, struck him such a mighty blow upon his corselet, that his staff broke in pieces, from the fineness of his armour, and made the English knight double his body backwards upon his horse's crupper. Who, when he saw the great villany that the giant used against him, his anger increased very much; and so, taking his spear in the same way, he went towards the giant, and struck him so furiously on the breast, that the spear, passing through the giant's body, appeared forth at his back, and he fell down dead to the ground. All who were present were very much amazed, and wondered greatly at the strength and force of St George, accounting him the most fortunate knight that ever wielded lance, and the very pattern of true nobility.

At this time the golden sun had finished his course, showing nothing above the horizon but his glittering beams; wherefore the judge of the tournament commanded, with sound of trumpets, that the jousts should cease and be ended for that day.

So the emperor descended from his imperial throne into the tilting place, where were all the knights and gentlemen, to receive the noble champion of England, and desired him to go with them into his palace, there to receive all the honours due to a knight of such desert. To which he could not make any refusal, but most willingly consented. After this, the emperor's daughter, in company of many courtly virgins, likewise descended from her place; and Alcida bestowed upon St George her glove, which he wore for her favour many a day after in his burgonet.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Of the praiseworthy death of St Patrick; how he buried himself; and for what cause the Irishmen to this day do wear a red cross upon St Patrick's day.

You may suppose, gentle readers, that Time had run a long race before these thrice-honoured champions had purchased so many victories: and, being now wearied with age, Death, with his gloomy countenance, began to challenge an end to all their worldly achievements, and to draw their noble names to full perfection: therefore preparing a black stage for each in honour to act his last scene out.

The valiant champion St Patrick, feeling himself weakened by time and age, not able any longer to endure the bruises of princely achievements, became a hermit, and wandering up and down the world in poor attire, he came at last to the country of his birth, which is now called Ireland, but in former times

Hibernia ; where, instead of martial achievements, he offered up, in the name of his Redeemer, devout orisons, daily making petitions to the Deity of Glory, in behalf of his desired peace : a life more delightful to his aged heart than all his former accomplishments. And now, willing to bid farewell to the world, he desired an enclosure to be made, and to be pent up by a stony wall from the sight of all earthly objects. To this request of the holy father (now no soldier, but a man of peace) the inhabitants consented, and built him a square house of stone, without either window or door, only a little hole to receive his food by ; wherein they closed him up, never more to be seen alive by the eyes of mortal men. Also appointing persons to bring him at convenient times food to maintain nature, they delivered it in at the aforesaid hole, which they thought to be a deed of more than common charity, and believed the receiver to be an honour to their country, from the severe and strict course of life he put himself to. Thus he, the servant of his God lived, day and night kneeling on the bare ground, till thrice the winter's cold had taken departure, and as often the summer's warmth had cheered the cold earth ; making his knees hard with kneeling and his eyes dim with lamentations for his former offences. The hairs of his head were all overgrown, and the nails of his fingers seemed like the talons and claws of an old raven, with which, by little and little, he dug his own grave, preparing for the hour of his death which, in process of time, thus happened.

When he had passed, as I have said before, thrice twelve months in divine contemplation, by inspiration

(as it seemed) he laid him down in the grave that his own nails had dug, and gave up the ghost.

Thus being changed from a lively substance to a dead corpse, his attendants, as their usual custom was, came with food to relieve him, and calling at the hole where he had went to receive it, they heard nothing but empty air, blowing in and out, which made them conjecture that death had prevailed, and the fatal sisters had finished their labours. So calling together more company, they made an entrance; and finding what had happened, by common consent of the whole kingdom they pulled down the house or tower, and in the same place built a most sumptuous chapel, calling it St Patrick's Chapel; and in the place where this holy father had buried himself, they erected a monument of much richness, framed upon pillars of pure gold, beautified with many artificial sights, most pleasant to behold; whereunto for many years after resorted distressed people, such as were commonly afflicted with loathsome diseases; and making their orisons at St Patrick's tomb, they found help, and were restored to their former health.

By which means the name of St Patrick is grown so famous through the world, that to this day he is entitled one of our Christian champions, and the saint of Ireland; and, in remembrance of him, and of the honourable achievements done in his lifetime, the Irishmen, as well in England as in that country, do as yet, in honour of his name, keep one day in the year a festival, wearing upon their hats each of them a cross of red silk, in token of his many adventures under the Christian cross, as you have heard in his former history. His

noble deeds, both in life and death, we will now leave with him in the grave, and speak of the fate allotted to St David, the champion of Wales, at that time entitled Cambria.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Of the honourable victory won by St David in Wales; of his death, and the cause why leeks are worn on St David's day by Welshmen.

Some months after the departure of St Patrick from the city of Constantinople, St David, having a heart still fired with fame, thirsted even to his dying day for honourable achievements: and although age and time had almost worn him away, yet would he once more make his endeavour in the field of Mars, and seal up his honours in the records of fame with a noble farewell.

So one morning, framing himself for a knightly enterprise, he took his leave of the other champions; and all alone, well mounted upon a lusty courser, furnished with sufficient habiliments, he took the journey home towards his own country, accounting that his best joy, and the source of his greatest comfort.

But he had not long travelled, ere he heard how Wales was beset with a people of a savage nature, thirsting for blood and the ruin of that brave kingdom: and how many battles had been fought to the disparagement of Christian knighthood. Whereupon arming himself with true resolution, he went forward with a courageous mind, either to redeem its fame, or to lose his best blood in honour of the adventure.

All the way as he travelled, he drew to his aid and

assistance all the best knights he could find, of any nation whatsoever, giving them promises of noble rewards, and such entertainment as befitted so worthy a fellowship. By this means, before he came upon the borders of Wales he had gathered together the number of five hundred knights, of such noble resolution, that all Christendom could not afford better, the Seven Champions excepted. And these, all well furnished for battle, entered the country; where they found many towns unpeopled, gallant houses subverted, monasteries defaced, cities ruined, fields of corn consumed by fire—yea, everything as much out of order as if the country had never been inhabited. Whereupon, with a grieved mind, seeing the region of his birth so deserted, and nothing but uproars of murder and death sounding in his ears, he summoned his knights together, placing them in battle array to travel high up into the country, for the performance of his desired hopes. But as they marched along at an easy pace, to prevent danger, there resorted to them people of all ages, both young and old, bitterly complaining of the wrongs thus done to their country. And when they knew him to be the champion of Wales, whom they so long had desired to see, their joy was so great, that all former woes were banished, and they sought nothing but revenge.

The rest of the knights who came with St David, perceiving their force and numbers to increase, proposed a present onset, and to show themselves before their enemies, who lay encamped amongst the mountains, with such strength and policy that it was hard to make an assault.

Whereupon the noble champion, being then their general and leader, called his captains together, and with bold courage said as follows :

“ Now is the time, brave soldiers, to be canonized the sons of Fame : this is the day of dignity or dishonour—an enterprise to make us ever live, or to end our names in obscurity ! Let not chill Fear, the coward’s companion, pull us back from the golden throne, where the adventurous soldier sits in glory deservedly. We are to trample on the field of death and dead men’s bones, and to buckle with an enemy of great strength, a Pagan power, that seeks to overrun all Christian kingdoms, and to wash our Cambrian fields with innocent blood. To arms ! I say, brave followers : I will be the first to give death the onset ; and for my colours or ensign do I wear upon my bur-gonet, you see, a green leek set in gold, which shall, if we win the victory, hereafter be an honour to Wales ; and on this day, being the first of March, be it for ever worn by Welshmen in remembrance thereof ! ”

Which words were no sooner spoken by the champion, than all the royal army, of every degree and calling, got themselves the like recognizance—which was a green leek upon their hats or beavers, which they wore all the time of the battle ; and by that means the champion’s followers were known from the others. It was not long before St David and his company beheld, descending from the mountains, an army of Pagans, which seemed numberless ; people of such mighty stature, that their sight might have daunted their noble resolution, had not the brave champion still animated them with princely encouragement. Time

stayed not long ere the armies joined; and the Pagans, with their iron clubs and bats of steel, so laid about them, that had not the Christian army been preserved by miracle, such slaughter had been made of the champion and his knights as might well have caused the whole world to wonder.

But the queen of chance so favoured St David and his followers, that, what with their nimble lances, keen darts and arrows, shot from their quick bows, and Welsh hooks in great abundance, (the sun also lying in the Pagans' faces, to their great disadvantage), in a short time the noble champion won a worthy victory. The ground lay covered with mangled carcasses; the grassy fields changed from green into red from the crimson streams of blood which ran from horse and man thus slaughtered. A noble policy was it for all the Christians in that battle to wear green leeks in their burgonets for their colours; by which they were all known and preserved from slaughter by one another's swords, St David himself excepted, who, being victor, in the highest pride of his glory, was at last vanquished. O unhappy fate, to cut off his honour, who was the only darling of honour! Help me, Melpomene, to bewail his loss, that, having won all, lost his dear life; a life that the whole world might well lament. Oh fatal chance! For, coming from the battle, over-heated in blood, so sudden a cold congealed all his life's members, that he was forced to yield to Death, to the great grief of his knights and followers, who for the space of forty days mourned for him in great bitterness, and attended him to his grave with much sorrow.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

How St Denis was beheaded in his own country, and how, by a miracle shewn at his death, the whole kingdom of France received the Christian faith.

ST DENIS, being the third in this our pilgrimage of death, was likewise desirous of the sight of his own country, which he had not seen for many years; and purposing a toilsome journey home, took leave of the other champions, who were not altogether willing to lose so noble a champion; yet, considering the desire of his mind, they consented, wishing him the best welfare of knighthood, and so parted; they to their princely pavilions, and he to his restless journey, as well mounted, and as richly furnished with habiliments of knighthood, as any warrior in all Arabia, in which country he then was. But leaving that place, to satisfy his desire, he travelled day by day towards the kingdom of France, without any adventure worth reporting, till he arrived upon the borders of the fair country that he had so long wished to behold. But now see how Fate frowned! for there was remaining in the French king's court a knight of the order of St Michael, who in former times hearing of the honourable adventures of this noble champion St Denis, and thinking him to be a disparagement to his knighthood and the rest of their order, conspired to betray him, and to bring all his former honours with his life to a final overthrow.

This envious knight of St Michael went to the king, (then a Pagan prince, one that had no true knowledge of the Deity,) and said: There was come into his kingdom a strange knight, a false believer, one that in time would draw the love of his subjects from him to the

worship of a strange god; and that, in spite of him and his country, he would establish a false opinion; and that he wore upon his breast the Christian cross; with many other things, contrary to the laws of his kingdom.

Upon this false information the king grew so enraged, that, without any more consideration, he caused the good knight St Denis to be attacked in his bed-chamber; otherwise a score of the best knights in all France had had not been sufficient to bring him prisoner to the king's presence; who, with more than human fury, without cause, and without any further trial, adjudged him a speedy death.

The good champion St Denis, even in death having a most noble resolution, nothing at all dismayed, and knowing his cause to be good, and that he should suffer for the name of his sweet Redeemer, most willingly accepted the judgment, saying: "Most mighty but yet cruel king, think not but that this exceeding tyranny will be requited in a strange manner. Thy censure I take with much joy, in that I die for Him, whose colours I have worn from my infancy; and this my death fills up the measure of all my comfort. And thou, sweet country, where I first took life, receive it again, a legacy due to thee; for this my blood, which here I offer up into thy bosom, is the best gift I can bestow on thee. Farewell, knighthood; farewell, honourable adventures and princely achievements; never will this dauntless arm brandish weapon more in honour of the Christian cross; for death waiteth at my back to cut off all such noble hopes, and by tyranny am I betrayed thereto!"

This speech being uttered, he was forced to stand silent; and in the presence of the king, and many hundreds more, was constrained to yield his body to the fatal stroke; and his head being laid upon the block, was by a base executioner quickly dissevered from the rest of his manly members. This was no sooner done, and the champion lifeless, than the elements, beset with cloudy exhalations, sent down such a terrible thunderclap, as struck dead the knight of St Michael, who accused him, the executioner, and others that were present. At which fearful spectacle the king himself grew so amazed, that he deemed him to be a blessed creature; that he had suffered wrongfully; and that His cause, for which he so willingly rendered up his life, was the true cause for which all must have a desire to die; wherefore, instantly, from Pagan the king turned Christian, and caused the same to be proclaimed through all his provinces, ordaining churches to be built in remembrance of this great man.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Of the splendid chapel built by the Spanish champion St James, and of the tyrannous death the said champion endured.

Now, gentle reader, with a sad heart prepare to hear the sorrowful manner of the Spanish champion's death, by tyranny and cruel dealing of the infidels: for age and time, as upon the others, grew upon him, and so enfeebled his strength that he was no longer able to manage the adventures of chivalry, nor fight the battles of his Saviour. Wherefore resolving to spend the

remnant of his days in peace, he likewise desired leave to commit his fortunes to the queen of chance; which like the others, he quickly obtained: and so, leaving Constantinople, he set himself to travel towards the country of his first being, not decked in his shining armour, nor mounted on his Spanish jennet, but poor and bare in outward habit, though inwardly furnished with gold and jewels of inestimable value, which he had sewed up in the patches of a russet gaberdine, the better to travel with. Instead of a bright shining battle-axe, his pilgrim's staff served him to walk with: and for his burgonet of glittering steel, he covered his head (now as white as thistledown with age) with a hat of a grey colour, broached with a broad scallop-shell. His princely lodgings were changed to green pastures, and his canopies to the skies' azure covering, where the nightingale and lark told the passage of time.

In which manner travelling many days, and giving as he went to the poor and needy such small pieces of silver as he could well spare, he arrived at last upon the confines of Spain: where in honour of that God for whom he had fought so many battles, he built, at his own charge, a sumptuous chapel, to this day bearing the name of St Jacques's chapel (which name Jacques is the same as our James:) and, for the maintenance of the said chapel, he purchased divers lands adjoining: and placed choristers to sing day and night therein, Hallelujah to his Redeemer.

This celestial gift and glorious service begot such love in the meaner sort of people that they esteemed him more than a man; such reverence they bestowed upon him, that the very name of this noble champion

won greater admiration than the high titles of the reigning king; who was a cruel tyrant and a proud ruler, maintaining atheism by his government, and who grew so envious, that he caused St Jacques, with the whole choir of celestial singers, to be closed up together in the chapel which the champion had erected, and so starved them to death. Oh bloody butchery, and inhuman cruelty! A death of more terror than had ever been heard of. But to be short, hunger prevailed and they died; their bodies putrified, and in time consumed away to dust and mould; but to show that they died in the favour and the love of heaven, a light shone in the chapel day and night, with such brightness, as if it had been the glorious palace of the sun: and likewise continually was heard therein, though no creature remained, a choir of melodious harmony, as if it had been the sound of celestial music. Which strange events, both to the eyes and ears, created so great an amazement in the whole country, that all with common consent accused their king for the tyrannous putting to death of these good men, but especially of the noble St Jacques, whom they purposed to regard as their country's saint and champion till the world's dissolution. The proud king perceiving now his own rashness, and the common hate against him for this cruel deed, was afflicted with such grief, that he languished away and died.

CHAPTER XXX.

Of the strange sights beheld by the Italian champion, St Anthony, and his honourable and worthy death in the chapel dedicated to him.

AFTER all these proceedings, Nature, the common nurse of us all, so wrought on the heart of St Anthony, the champion for Italy, that he undertook the next enterprise, and leaving St George with St Andrew, in the emperor's court at Constantinople, he took his journey towards Italy; and knowing, by the course of nature, that his days were not many, he purposed there to stay the rest of his life, and in death to finish all earthly troubles. So coming, after a long journey, to imperial Rome, where the emperor Domitian kept his court; and the city being then in her chief pomp and glory, there was a great desire in the champion's mind to see its monuments and sumptuous buildings.

So one morning, going from his lodgings, he walked up and down the streets with admiration, and fed his eyes upon many delightful objects. First, with great wonder he stood gazing upon the monuments that were erected in honour of all the famous emperors, consuls, orators, and conquerors, which yielded him great pleasure. The next thing that his eyes delighted in, was the temple of the three Sibyls, a most miraculous building; in which temple all their prophecies were enrolled; as also the beginning and ending of the whole catalogue of the heathen gods, as Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Apollo, and suchlike; with their manner of worship. The next that he saw was the house of Remus and Romulus, who built Rome: a

building of much worthiness. Next unto it stood an ancient prison (an old rotten thing) where the man lay that was condemned to death, and could have nobody come to him but was searched, yet was kept alive a long term by sucking his daughter's breasts. After this he saw Pompey's theatre, reputed one of the nine wonders of the world: the emperor Nero's tomb, maintained with disgrace, for the offence he did in setting Rome on fire. To conclude, he spent many days in viewing the martyrs' tombs, and other relics brought from Jerusalem. Amongst many other delightful sights, he came to a chapel dedicated to himself, called "The Honour of St Anthony;" wherein was pourtrayed, in alabaster pictures, the forms of all the champions of Christendom, with the stories of their adventures, combats, tournaments, and battles; their imprisonments, dangers and enchantments; whereon ran a prophecy, that the patron of this chapel should ever live unconquered, and never embrace death, till his eyes were witness of the same portraitures; which in golden letters was inscribed over the chapel door, or entrance. When St Anthony beheld this, knowing himself to be the man, with a firm mind he embraced his end, and never after departed from the chapel, but remained kneeling there upon the bare marble, making his orisons of repentance to the Eternal Deity, till pale destiny had cut off the thread of his old days.

And thus, being converted to mouldy earth, the emperor caused him to be entombed in the chapel; and over his grave to be set a magnificent chair; in which for many years after, the Roman conquerors received their laurel rewards of victory.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Of the martyrdom of St Andrew the Scottish champion ; and how the king built a monastery at the place where he suffered.

ST GEORGE and St Andrew were the two last champions that stayed together, and, as it seemed, the dearest love remained between them ; but yet rusty Time with his swift course would needs part them, and break up their united fellowship. For the summons of honour so animated the bold heart of the Scottish champion, that he burned with desire to see his native country, and to behold the place of his first being. So leaving Constantinople, only honoured with the presence of St George, he travelled, day by day, till Time and Fate set him happily in the kingdom of Scotland ; where, not having been for many years, he received entertainment as costly as if he had been the greatest emperor of the world : for all the streets and passages as he went were furnished with people of the best estate, to give him a gracious welcome to his native home ; especially the king himself, who, for the love and honour he bore to his name and knighthood, lodged him in his own palace, and proclaimed for his noble welcome a princely tournament to be held for the space of fifteen days, during which all the nobility and martial knights of Scotland performed such well-approved achievements, that neither Greece, Constantinople, Rome, nor Jerusalem, could equal them. St Andrew being now aged, and unfit for such princely encounters, sat as a beholder, and gave such due commendations as befitted so gallant a company. And

bidding farewell to these time-honoured pastimes, he desired leave of the king to depart, and to spend the remnant of his life in private contemplation, for the good of his soul, and to wash away with the water of true penitence all the blood he had spilt in his travel about the world in the maintenance of knighthood; a request so reasonable that the king could not but give his consent. So, taking leave of his majesty, and the rest of the nobility and knights there present, he departed to a mountain, far remote from the king's court, under which was a cave or hollow vault; wherein he remained for the space of a year, studying divinity and the commands of his Redeemer. At that time Scotland was a rude and heathenish country, inhabited by a common sort of people, by whom he was much dreaded, and supposed to be sent from some place unknown, as a messenger to bring them evil tidings: whereupon these unbelieving people, by common consent, (taking him for some subtle conspirer against their Pagan gods, which as then they worshipped,) put him secretly to death; and after cutting off his head, in hope of reward, bore it to the king, deeming they had done a deed which deserved commendation. When the king saw their inhuman cruelty, he with much grief lamented the loss of this good man; and with all speed, in revenge of his death, raised a host of his best-resolved knights of war, putting every one to the sword, both man, woman, and child, that had in any way consented to the champion's death; and, in process of time, appointed a monastery to be built over the place where he died.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Of the adventure performed by St George, and how he received his death by the sting of a venomous dragon. Of his honourable interment in the city of Coventry; and how the king decreed the patron of the land should be named St George.

Now droops my weary muse, for she is come to her last tragedy. St George is summoned to the bar of Death, while Honour stands ready to bequeath his name in noble renown to all ensuing ages.

When this illustrious champion was left by the other six, such strange imaginations day by day possessed his mind, that he could neither rest nor sleep: sometimes supposing his companions were in great distress; then that they had won their chief goal of honour, little needing his knightly service and assistance; and sometimes one thing, sometimes another, so molested him, that he must needs follow them.

Whereupon he went to the Grecian emperor, and requested that he might depart, with his leave and liking; for knightly adventures had challenged him to appear in some foreign region, where noble achievements were to be performed; but where and in what country, his destiny had not yet revealed to him.

So arming himself in habiliments of shining steel, he left Constantinople, and, guided by Fate, he came to England, then called Britain, whose chalky cliffs and grassy hills he had not seen for twice twelve years: and now drawing nigh to the city of Coventry, where he was born, and received his first being, but upon

whose glittering pinnacles he had no sooner cast his eye-sight, than the inhabitants interrupted his delights with a doleful report, that upon Dunsmore Heath there remained an infectious dragon, which so annoyed the country that the inhabitants thereabouts could not pass the heath without great danger; and how fifteen knights of the kingdom had already lost their lives in venturing to suppress the same. Also giving him to understand a prophecy, "that a Christian knight never born of woman should be the destroyer thereof, and that his name in after ages, for accomplishing the adventure, should be held for an eternal honour to the kingdom."

St George no sooner heard this, and what wrongs his native country received from this infectious dragon, than, knowing himself to be the knight, he grew so encouraged, that he purposed forthwith to put the adventure to trial, and either to free his country from so great danger, or to finish his days in the attempt; so taking leave of those present, he rode forward with as noble a spirit as he did in **Egypt**, when he there combated with the burning dragon.

So he came to the middle of the plain, where his infectious enemy, crouching on the ground in a deep cave, and by a strange instinct of nature knowing his death to draw near, made such a yelling noise, as if the elements had burst with thunder, or the earth had shaken with a terrible exhalation; and coming from his den, and espying the champion, ran with such fury against him, as if he would have devoured both man and horse in a moment; but the champion, being quick and nimble, gave the dragon such way that he

missed him, and run his sting full two feet into the earth; but, recovering, he returned again with such rage upon St George, that he had almost turned his horse over and over; but the dragon, having no stay of his strength, fell with his back on the ground, and his feet upwards: of which the champion taking advantage, kept him still down, with his horse standing upon him, and with his lance pierced him through in divers parts of the body; but the dragon's sting annoyed the good knight so much, that the abominable beast being no sooner slain, and weltering in his venomous gore, than St George likewise took his death-wound from the deep strokes of its sting, which he had received in many parts of his body, and bled in such abundance, that he began to be enfeebled and grow weak: yet retaining his true nobleness of mind, he valiantly returned victor to the city of Coventry; where the whole inhabitants stood without the gates in great splendour, to receive him, and to give him the honour that belonged to so worthy a conqueror. He had no sooner arrived before the city, and presented them with the dragon's head, than from the abundance of blood that issued from his deep wounds, and their continuous bleeding, he was forced to yield up his breath; and the whole country, from the king to the shepherd, mourned for him for the space of a month. When this sad time was ended, the king of England, being a virtuous and noble prince, in remembrance of the Christian champion, ordained for ever after a solemn procession to be kept in his royal court, by all the princes and chief nobility of the country, upon the twenty-third day of April,

naming it St George's day, (upon which day he was most solemnly interred in the city where he was born), and caused a stately monument to be erected in his honour. He likewise decreed, by consent of the whole kingdom, that the patron of the land should be named St George, our Christian champion, who had fought so many battles for the honour of Christendom.

