## THE WHITE COMPANY

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CHAPTER V.

fore Alleyne Edricson, footsore and with the brown ale or the ruby wine. Behind her came a maid with a found himself in front of the forest inn which stood upon the outskirts of Lyndhurst. The building was long and low, standing back a little from the road, with two flambeaux blasing on either side of the door as a well-design of the company, who were company. The night had stready fallen, the moon was shining between rits of ragged, drifting clouds, thatched; but in strange contrast to which he was accustomed. it there ran along under the eaves . The room was not unlik a line of wooden shields, most gor-geously painted with chevron, bend, and saltire, and every heraldic de-trap doors with rough-hewn ladders

erning him were seldom to his By all accounts he was a hard and bitter man.

It might be an evil start to come to of his roof. Better to sleep here at this inn, and then travel on to Minstead in the morning. If his brother

would take him in, well and good. He would bide with him for a time what he might to serve him, If, on the other hand, he should have pardened his heart against him, he could only go on his way and do the best he might by his skill as a crafts-man and a scrivener. At the end of a year he would be free to return to cloisters, for such had been his father's bequest. A monkish upbring-ing, one year in the world after the of twenty, and then a free selection one way or the other-it was strange course which had been marked out for him. Such as it was, however, he had no choice but to follow it, and if he were to begin by making a friend of his brother he had best wait until morning before he knocked at his dwelling.

The rude plank door was ajar, but as Alleyne approached it there came from within such a gust of rough laughter and clatter of tongues that he stood irresolute upon the threshold. Summoning courage, however, and reflecting that it was a public dwelling, in which he had as much othe it open and stepped into the common

Though it was an autumn evening and somewhat warm, a huge fire of heaped billets of wood crackled and sparkled in a broad, open grate, rude chimney, but the greater part coming from without could scarce catch his breath. On this fire a great cauldron bubbled and simmered, giving forth a rich and promising smell. eated round it were a dozen or so of folk, of all ages and conditions, who set up such a shout as Alleyne entered that he stood peering, at them through the smoke, uncertain what riotous greeting might portend. "A rouse! A rouse!" cried one rough looking fellow in a tattered 'One more round of mead or

ale and the score to the last comer. Tis the law of the 'Pied Merlin," shouted another. "Ho, there, Dame Eliza! Here is fresh custom come to the house, and not a drain for the company." "I will take your orders, gentles;

will assuredly take your orders,' landlady answered, bustling - in with her hands full of leathern drinking cups. "What is it that you drink, then? Beer for the lads of the forest, mead for the gleeman, strong waters for the tinker, and wine for the rest. It is an old custom of the house, young sir. It has been the use at the 'Pled Merlin' this many a year back that the company should drink to the health of the last comer. Is it your pleasure to humor it?"

"I would not offend the customs of. your house, but it is only sooth when ever, I shall be right glad to do my bird

"Plainly said and bravely spoken, of my hostel?" my suckling friar," roared a deep voice, and a heavy hand fell upon Al-leyne's shoulder. Looking up, he saw beside him his former cloister companion, the renegade monk, Hordle

By the thorn of Glastonbury! ill days are coming upon Beaulien." said he. "Here they have got rid in one day of the only two men within their walls—for I have had mine eyes upon thee, youngster, and I know that for

swered gravely.

"Holy men? Holy cabbages! Holy bean-pods! What do they do but live and suck in the sustenance and grow fat. If that he boldness, I could show you hogs in this forest who are fit to head the calendar. Think you it was for such a life that this good arm was fixed upon my shoulder, or bean-pods! What do they do but live and suck in the sustenance and grow fat. If that he boldness, I could show you hogs in this forest who are fit to head the calendar. Think you it was for such a life that this good arm was fixed upon my shoulder, or that head placed upon your neck? There is work in the world, man, and it is not by hiding behind stone walls that we shall do it."

"Why, then, did you join the brothers?" asked Alleyne.

"No, nor any other bird that ever

"Why, then, did you join the broth-rs?" asked Alleyne.

once more. In betide the day that said Alleyne. "I pray you, good ever I took off my yoeman's jerkin dame, to give me those three pigment pout on the white gown!"

Whilst he was speaking the land-lady came in again, bearing a broad platter, upon which stood all the beakers and flagons charged to the him, as though fearing some other beakers and flagons charged to the him, as though fearing some other than the beakers and flagons the ruby stratagem, but as he made no de-

Two of the company, who were ging soon," she said. "They bide at dressed in the weather-stained green doublet of foresters, lifted the big here. Yeomen prickers they are, who pot off the fire, and a third, with a tend to the King's hunt. The gleeon either side of the door as a welcome to the traveler. From one window there thrust forth a long pole
with a bunch of greenery tied to the
end of it—a sign that liquor was to
be sold within. As Alleyne walked up
to it he perceived that it was rudey
mashioned out of beams of wood, with
mishioned out o twinkling lights all over where the sup in peace and watch the strange glow from within shone through the scene, which was so different to those chinks. The roof was poor and silent and well-ordered meals to

The room was not unlike a stable. The low celling, smoke-blackened and and saltire, and every heraldic device. By the door a horse stood tethered, the rudy glow beating strongly upon his brown head and patient eyes while his body stood back in the shadow.

Alleyne stood still in the roadway for a few minutes reflecting upon what he should do. It was, he knew, only a few mites further to Minstead, where his brother dwelt. On the other hand, he had never seen this grees of smokiness and dirt that they or hand, he had never seen this grees of smokiness and dirt that they brother since childhood, and the had been placed there at different reports which had come to his ears periods. There was no furniture, save a single long dresser covered with coarse crockery, and a number of wooden benches and trestles, the legs of which sank deeply into the his door so late and claim the shelter soft clay floor, while the only light, save that of the fire, was furnished by three torches stuck in sockets on he wall, which flickered and crackled, giving forth a strong resinous odor. All this was novel and strange to the cloister-bred youth; but most interesting of all was the motely circles of guests who sat eating their collops round the blaze. They were a humble group of wayfarers, such as might have been found that night any inn through the length and breadth of England; but to him they represented that vague world against which he had been so frequently and so earnest'y warned. It did not seem

to him from what he could see of it to be such a very wicked place after Three or four of the men round the fire were evidently under-keepers and verderers from the forest, sunburned and bearded, with the quick restless eye and the lithe movements of the deer among which they lived. Close to the corner of the chimney sat a middle-aged gleeman, clad in a faded garb o fNorwich cloth, the tunic of was so outgrown that it did not fasten at the neck and at the waish His face was swollen and eyes spoke of a life which never vandered very far from the wine-pot. A gilt harp, blotched with stains and with two of its strings missing, was tucked under one of his arms, while with the other he scoopsome of the smoke escaping up a ed greedily at his platter. Next to him sat two other men of about the same rolling out into the room so that the age, one with a trimming of fur to air was thick with it, and a man his coat, which gave him a dignity which was evidently dearer to him than his comfort, for he still drew it found him in spite of the hot glare of the faggots. The other, clad in a dirty russet suit with a long sweeping doublet, had a cunning, foxy face with keen, twinkling eyes and a peaky beard. Next to him sat Hordle John, and beside him three other rough unkempt fellows with tangled beards and metted hair-free laborers from the adjoining farms, where small patches of freehold property had been suffered to remain scatter ed about in the heart of the royal demesne. The company was completed by a peasant in a rude dress of undyed sheepskin, with the old-fash-loned galliguskins about his legs, and a gayly dressed man with striped oak jagged at the edges and particolored hosen, who looked about him with high disdain upon his face, and neld a blue smelling flask to his nose a busy spoon with the other. In the

a-sprawl upon a truss, snering ster-torously, and evidently in the last stage of drunkenness. "That is Wat the limner," quoth the landlady, sitting down beside Al-"Why, good dame," said Alleyne, to the sleeping man. "That is he who paints the signs and the tokens. Alack and alas that ever I should I say that my purse is a thin one have been fool enough to trust him. As far as two pence will go, howlin to be that being the proper sign

corner a very fat man was lying all

"Why," said Alleyne, "a merlin is a bird of the same form as an eagle or a falcon. I can well remember that learned brother Bartholomew, who is deep in all secrets of nature, pointed one out to me as we walked together near Vinney Ridge."

"A falcon or an eagle, quotha? And pied, this is of two several colors. So any man would say except this barrel of lies. He came to me, host

thee, youngster, and I know that for all thy baby face there is the making of a man in thes. Then there is the Abbot, foo, I am no friend of his, nor he off mine; but he has warm blood in his veins. He is the only man left among them. The others, what are they?"

"They are holy men," Alleyne antique and all that he craved, leaving him alone, because he said that ing him alone, because he said that a man's mind must be left untroubled

A fair enough question; but it is wagged a feather. It is most like a purcey alsoaye, of Bolder, ried Crooked Thomas of Ring-d, and left a certain John of huote, or Sir Bernard Described for the gentles Sir Nicholas Boardie in the cold for the cold for

man is called Floyting Will. comes from the north country, but for many years he hath gone the ton to Christchurch. He drinks much and pays little; but it would make Jest of Hendy Tobias. Mayhap he will sign it when the ale has warmed

him."
"Who are those next to him?" ask-ed Alleyne, much interested. "He of the fur mantle has a wise and rever-

ent face." "He is a seller of pills and salves, learned in humors, and rheums, and fluxes, and all manner of ailments. He wears, as you perceive, the vernicle of Sainted Luke, the first physician, upon his sleeve. May good it. Thomas of Kent grant that it may be long before either I or mine need his help! He is here to-night for herbergage, as are the others except he foresters. His neighbor is a toothdrawer. That bag at his girdle is full of the teeth that he drew at Winthester fair. I warrant that there are more sound ones than sorry, for he is quick at his work and a trifle dim in the eye. The lusty man next him with the red head I have not seen before. The four on this side are all vorkers, three of them in the service of the bailiff of Sir Baldwin Redvers. and the other, he with the sheepskin, s, as I hear, a villein from the midlands who hath run from his master. His year and day are well-nigh up

when he will be a free man." "And the other?" asked Alleyne in a whisper. "He is surely some very great man, for he looks as though he scorned those who were about him."

The landlady looked at him in a

notherly way and shook her head. You have had no great truck with the world," she said, "or you would have learned that it is the small men and not the great who hold their noses in the air. Look at those shields. Each of them is the device of some noble lord or gallant knight who hath slept under my roof at one time or another. Yet milder men or easier to please I have never seen; eating my bacon and drinking my wine with a merry face, and paying my score with some courteous word or jest which was dearer to me than my profit. Those are the true gentles. But your chapman or your bearward will swear last with a curse instead of a blessing. This youth is a scholar from ambrig, where men are wont to be blown out by a little knewledge, and ose the use of their hands in learnng the laws of the Romans. But I must away to lay down the beds. So may the saints keep you and prosper you in your undertaking!"

Thus left to himself, Alleyne drew his panel of wood where the light of the torches would strike full upon it. and worked away with all the pleasure of the trained craftsman, listening the while to the talk which went on round the fire. The peasant in the sheepskins, who had sat glum and silent all evening, had been so heated by his flagon of ale that he was talking loudly and angrily with clenched hands and flashing eyes.

"Sir Humphrey Tennant of Ashby may till his own fields for me," he cried. "The castle has thrown its shadow upon the cottage over long. For three hundred years my folk have swinked and sweated, day in and day out, to keep the wine on the lord's table and harness on the lords back. Let him take off his plates and delve imself, if delving must be done."

"A proper spirit, my fair son!" said one of the free laborers. "I would that all men were of thy way of thinking."

"He would have sold me with his acres," the other cried in a voice which was hoarse with passion.
"The man, the woman and their litter'-so ran the words of the dotard bailiff. Never a bullock on the farm was sold more lightly. Hat he may flames licking about his ears-for fire is a good friend to the poor man, and have seen a smoking heap of ashes where over night there stood just

such another castlewick as Ashby."
"This is a lad of mettle!" shouted another of the laborers. "He dares to give tongue to what all men think. Are we not all from Adam's loins, all with flesh and blood, and with the same mouth that must needs have food and drink? Where all this difference then between the ermine clock and the leathern tunic, if what

they cover is the same?".
"Aye, Jenkin," said another, "our foeman is under the stole and the vestment as much as under the helmet and plate of proof. We have as much to fear from the tonsure as and the priest shricks, strike at priest and the noble lays his hands upon glaive. They are twin thieves who live upon our labor.""
"It would take a clever man to live

upon thy labor, Hugh?" remark one of the foresters, "seeing that the "Better that than stealing the deer that thou art placed to guard, like

"If you dare open that swine's mouth, against me," shouted the woodman, "I'll crop your ears for you before the hangman has the doing of it, thou long-jawed lack-brain."

"Nay, gentles, gentles!" cried Dame Eliza, in a singsong heedless voice, which showed that such blokerings were nightly things among her guests. "No brawling or babbling, gentles! Take heed of the good name of the

house."

"Besides, if it comes to the cropping of ears, there are other folk who may say their say," quoth the third laborer. "We are all freemen, and I trow that a yosman's cudget is as good as a forester's knife. By St. Anseins it would be an axis day

if we had to bend to our master's ser vants as well as to our masters. "No man is my master save the the woodman answered Who is there, save a false traitor. who would refuse to serve the Eng-

"I know not about the English king," said the man Jenkin. sort of English king is it who cannot lay his tongue to a word of English? You mind last year when he came down to Malwood, with his inner marshal and his outer marshal, his justiciar, his seneschal, and his four ind twenty guardsmen. One noontide I was by Franklin Swinton's gate when up he rides with a youman pricker at his heels. 'Ouvre,' he cried, ouvre,' or some such word, making signs for me to open the gatee; and 'Merci,' as though then adrad of me. And you talk of an Engish king?"

"I do not marvel at it." the Cambrig scholar, speaking in the high drawling voice which was common among his class. "It is not a ongue for men of sweet birth and delicate unbringing. It is a foul, snortng, snardling manner of speech. For myself, I swear by the learned Polycarp that I have most ease with Hea brew, and after that perchance with

"I will not hear a word said against old King Ned," cried Hordle John in a voice like a bull. "What if he is fond of a bright eve and a saucy face. I know one of his subjects who could match him at that. If he cannot speak like an Englishman I trow that he can fight like an Englishman, and he hammering at the gates of Paris while alchouse topers were grutching and grumbling at home.'

This loud speech, coming from man of so formidable an appearance, somewhat daunted the disloyal party, and they fell into a sullen sisomething of the talk which was gong on in the further corner between the physician, the tooth-drawer and the gleeman.

"A raw rat," the man of drugs was saying, "that is what it is ever my use to order for the plague—a raw rat with its paunch cut open." "A raw rat sounds a most sorry

and cheerless dish." "Not to be eaten." cried the physician, in high disdain. "Why should ly, His eyes happening to wander

any man eat such a thing?"
"Why indeed?" asked the gleeman, taking a long drain at his tankard. "It is to be placed on the sore or swelling. For the rat, mark you, being a foul-living creature, hath a natural drawing or affinity for all foul things, so that the noxious humors pass from the man into the unclean

"Would that cure the black death, master?" asked Jenkin. "Aye, truly would it, my fair son." Then I am right

that there is a lime in the wine, and were none who knew of it. The black water in the ale, and fling off at the death is the best friend that ever the common folk had in England.' "How that then?" asked Hordle John.

"Why, friend, it is easy to see that you have not worked with your hands or you would not need to ask. When half the folk in the country were dead it was then that the other half could pick and choose who they would work for, and for what wage. That is why I say that the murrain was the best friend that the borel folk ever had."

"True, Jenkin," said another workman; "but it is not all good that is brought by it either. We well know through it corn-land has been turned into pasture, so that flocks of sheep with perchance a single shep wander now where once a hundred men had work and wage."

"There is no great harm, in that, remarked the tooth-drawer, "for the sheep give many folk their living. There is not only the herd, but the shearer and brander, and then the dresser, the curer, the dyer, the fuller, the webster, the merchant and a score of others.' "If it come to that, said one of the

foresters, "the tough meat of them will wear folks' teeth out, and there is a trade for the man who can draw them."

A general laugh followed this sally at the dentist's expense, in the midst of which the gleeman placed his battered harp upon his knee, and began to pick out a me ody upon the frayed strings. Elbow room for Floyting Will!"

cried the woodmen, "Twang us a merry lilt." 'Aye, aye, the 'Lasses of Lancast-

one suggested. "Or 'St. Simeon and the Devil." "Or the 'Jest of Henry Tobias.' " To all these suggestions the jondeur made no response, but sat with his eyes fixed abstractedly upon the ceiling, as one who calls words to his

mind. Then, with a sudden sweep across the strings, he broke out into a song so gross and so foul that ere he had finished a verse the pureminded lad sprang to his feet with the blood tingling in his face. "How can you sing such things?" he cried. "You, too, an old man who should be an example to others" .

most atonishment at the interrup-"By the holy Dicon of Hampole our silent clerk has found his tongue." said one of the woodmen. "What is

amiss with the song then? How has it offended your babyship "A milder and better mannered song hath never been heard within these walls," cried another. "What

sort of talk is this for a public inn?" "Shall it be litany, my good clerk?" shouted a third; "or would a hymn be good enough to serve?" The jongleur had put down his harp in high dudgeon. "Am I to be preached to by a child?" he cried, staring across at Alleyne with an in-flamed and angry countenance. "Is a

fismed and angry countenance. "Is a hairless infant to raise his tongue against me, when I have sung in every fair from Tweed to Trent, and have twice been named aloud by the High Court of the Minstrels at Beverly? I shall sing no more to-night."

"Nay, but you will so," said one of the laborers "Hi, Dame Eliza, bring a stoup of your best to Will to clear his throat, Go forward with thy song, and if our girl-faced clerk does not love it he can take to the road and

in reproof, he having gone early into the cloisters and seen little of the rough ways and words of the world. Yet there is truth in what he says, for, as you know well, the song was not of the cleanest. He shall stand by him, therefore, and he shall neither be put out on the be put out on the road, nor shall his ears be offended indoors."

"Indeed, your high and mighty race," sneered one of the youmen have you in sooth so ordained?" "By the Virgin!" said a second. "I think that you may both chance to find yourselves upon the road before

"And so belabored as to be scarce able to crawl along it," cried a he had met. Men had been good or third. had been bad in his catalogue, but "Nay, I shall go! I shall go!" said

Alleyne hurriedly, as Hordle John eare an arm like a leg of mutton. 'I would not have you brawl about "Hush! lad," he whispered. count them not a fly. They may find

they have more tow on their distaff than they know how to spin. Stand thou c'ear and give me space.' Both the foresters and the laborers had risen from their bench, and Dame Eliza and the traveling doctor had flung themselves between the two parties with soft words and sooth ing gestures, when the door of the "Pled Merlin" was flung violently open, and the attention of the company was drawn from their own quarrel to the new-comer who had

CHAPTER VI.

HOW SAMKIN ALYWARD WAGER-ED HIS FEATHER-BED. He was a middle- sized man,

most massive and robust build, with an arching chest and extraordinary breadth of shoulder. His shaven face was as brown as a hazel nut, ranned and dried by the weather, with harsh vell marked features, which were not improved by a long white scar which stretched from the corner of his left nostril to the angle of the jaw. His were bright and searching, with something of menace and of authority in their quick glitter, and mouth firm set and hard, as befitted one who was wont to set his face gainst danger. A straight sword by his side and a painted long bow jutting over his shoulder proclaimed his profession, while his scarred brigan dine of chain mail and his dinted steel cap showed that he was no holiday soldier, but one who was even lence, which enabled Alleyne to hear now fresh from the wars. A white surceat with the lion of St. Georg in red upon the centre covered his broad breast, while a sprig of new plucked broom at the side of his head grace to his grim, war-worn equip-

ment. "Ha!" he cried, blinking like an "Might it not be broiled, most owl in the sudden glare. "Good even learned sir" asked the tooth-draw- to you, comrades! Hola! a woman, owl in the sudden glare. "Good even by my soul!" and in an instant he nad clipped Dame Eliza round the waist and was kissing her violentupon the maid, however, he instantin confusion up one of the ladders, ly abandoned the mistress and danced off after the other, who scurried and dropped the heavy trap-door upon her pursuer. He then turned back and saluted the landlady once more with the utmost relish and sat-

> "La petite is frightened," said he. "Ah, c'est l'amour, l'amour! Curse some good English ale. By my hilt! black shadow the galley at Hythe, this very day, down on my bones, and I kissed the good brown earth, as I kiss the now, ma belle, for it was eight long years since I had seen it. The very smell of it seemed life to me.

where are my six rascals? Hola, there! En avant!" At the order, six men, dressed as common drudges, marched solemnly into the room, each bearing a nuge bundle upon his head. formed line, while the soldier stood in front of them with stern eyes checking off their several packages "Number one—a French feather

bed with the two counterpanes of white sandell," said he. "Here, worthy sir," answered the first of the bearers, laying a great package down in the corner. "Number two-seven ells of Turkey cloth and nine ells of cloth

of gold. Put it down by the other. Good dame, prythee give each of these men a bottrine, of wine or a jack of ale. Three—a full plece of white Genoan velvet with twelve ells of purple silk. Thou rascal, there is

dirt on the hem! Thou hast brushed it against some wall, coquin!" "Not I, most worthy sir," cried the carrier, shrinking away from the flerce eyes of the bowman.

"I say yes, dog! By the three en finger bones that there is not one boat, a ewer of silver, a gold buck'e them, camarades, at the Church of upon an outland soil," St. Dennis in the harrying of Narbonne, and I took them away with the wicked. Five-a cloak of fur turned up with minever, a gold goblet with stand and cover, and a of rose colored sugar. See that you hem together. Six-a box monies, three pounds of Limousine gold-work, a pair of boots, silver agged, and, lastly, a store of naping linen. So, the tally is complete! Here is a great apiece, and you may

ne of the carriers. "Whither? To the devil if ye will. What is it to me? Now, ma belle, to supper. A pair of cold capons, a mortess of brawn, or what you will, with a finite or two of the right Gascony. I have crowns in my pouch, my sweet, and I mean to spend them. dressing. Buyons, my brave lads; you shall each empty a stoup with me." Here was an offer which the comany other date are slow to refuse. The fiagons were regathered and came back with the white foam dripping over their edge. Two of the woodmen and three of the laborers drank their portions off hurriedly and trooped off together, for their homes were distant and the hour late. The others, however, drew closer, leaving the place of honor to the right of the gleman to the free-handed newcomer. He had thrown off his steel cap and his brigandine, and had placed them with his sword, his quiver and his painted long how, on the top of his varied heap of plun-

"Go in hither, worthy sir " asked

forty years of age, though hard toil and harders pleasue had left their Algrim marks upon his features. leyne had ceased painting his merlin, and sat, brush in hand, staring with open eyes at a type of man not so strange and so unlike any whom here was a man who was fierce one instant and gentle the next, with a the country," quoth Dame El curse on his lips and a smile in his whom the soldier's free and began to slowly roll up his sleeve, and curse on his lips and a smile in his eye. What was to be made of such a man as that? It chanced that the soldier looked up and saw the questioning glance which the young clerk threw upon him. He raised his fiagon and drank him, with a merry flash of his white teeth. "A tol, mon garcon," he cried "Hast surely never seen a man-atarms, that thou sholdst stare so? "I never have," said Alleyne franky, "though I have oft heard talk of

der in the corner. Now, with his thick and somewhat bowed legs stretched in front of the blaze, his green jerkli

thrown open, and a great quart pol held in his corded fist, he looked the

their deeds." "By my hilt!" cried the other, "if you were to cross the narrow sea you would find them as thick as bees at tee-hole. Couldst not shoot a bolt down any street of Bordeaux, I warburst so uncermoniously upon them. rant, but you would pink archer,

quire or knight. There are more breastplates than gaberdines to be seen, I promise you.' "And where got you all these pretty things?" asked Hordle John, pointing at the heap in the corner. "Where there is as much

waiting for any brave lad to pick it up. Where a good man can always a good wage, and where master, but just reach his hand out and help himself. Aye, it is a goodly be with them! Arouse all together, mes enfants, under pain of my dis-pleasure. To Sir Claude Latour and

the White Company!" "Sir Charles Latour and the White Company!" shouted the travelers, iraining off their gobiets.

"Well quaffed, mes braves! It is for me to fill your cups again, since you have drained them to my dear lads of the white jerkin. Hola! mon ange bring wine and ale. How runs the old stave?

We'll drink all together To the gray goose feather and the land where the gray goose flew. He roared out the catch in a harsh

unmusical voice, and ended with a shout of laughter. "I trust that I am a better bowman than a minstrel," said "Methinks I have some rememman, running his fingers over

brance of the lilt," remarked the gleestrings, "Hoping that it will give thee no offence, most holy sir"-with a vicious snap at Alleyne—"and with the kind permit of the company, will even venture upon it." Many a time in the after days Al-

leyne Edricson seemed to see that scene, for all that so many which were stranger and more stirring were soon to crowd upon him. The fat, red-faced gleeman, the listening group, the archer with upraised finger beating in time to the music, and this trick of French, which will stick the huge sprawling figure of Hordle to my throat. I must wash it out with John, all thrown into red light and self better. Mon Dieu! yes, ye camarades, there is no drop of in the centre-memory was to come French blood in my body, and I am often lovingly back to it. At the time a true, English bowman, Samkin Ayl- he was lost in admiration at the deft ward by name; and I tell you, mes way in which the jongeur disguised amis, that it warms my very heart- the loss of his two missing strings, roots to set my feet on the dear old and the lusty, hearty fashion in land once more. When I came off which he troiled out his little ballad of the outland bowmen, which ran in some such fashion as this:

What of the bow?
The bow was made in England:
Of true wood, of yew wood,
The wood of English bows: So men who are free Love the old yew tree And the land where the yew tree grows

The cord was made in England: A rough cord, a tough cord, A cord that bowmen love; So we'll drain our jacks
To the English flax
And the land where the hemp was wove. What of the shaft?

What of the shart?
The shaft was cut in England:
A long shaft, a strong shaft,
Barbed and trim and true;
So we'll drink all together
To the grey goose feather Ed the land where the gray goose flew.

What of the men? The men were bred in England;
The bowman—the yeoman—
The lads of dale and fell
Here's to you—and to you!
To the hearts that are true
and the land where the true hearts

"Well sung, by my hilt!" shouted the archer in high delight. "Many a night have I heard that song, both in the old war time and after in the days of the White Company. when Black Simon of Norwich would lead kings! I have seen a man gasp out the stave, and four hundred of the his last breath for less. Had you gone best bowmen that ever drew string through the pain and unease that I would come roaring in upon the cho-have done to earn these things you rus. I have seen old John Hawkwould be at more care. I swear by my wood, the same who has led half the Company into Italy, stand laughing of them that hath not cost its weight in his beard as he heard it, until his in French blood! Four-an incense plates rattled again. But to go the full smack of it ye must yourselves there are toes to my feet, and for and a cope worked in pearls. I found be English bowmen, and be far off

Whilst the song had been singing Dame Eliza and the maid had placed me lest they fall into the hands of a board across two trestles, and had laid upon it the knife, the spoon, the salt, the tranchoir of bread, and finally the smoking dish which held the savory supper. The archer settled himself to it like one who had known what it was to find good food scarce; but his tongue still went as merrily as his teeth.

"It passes me," he cried, "how all you lusty fellows can bide scratching your backs at home when there are such doings over the seas. Look at me—what have I to do? It is but the eye to the cord, the cord to the shaft, and the shaft to the mark. There is the whole song of it. It is but what you do yourselves for pleasure upon a Sunday evening at the parish vil-lage butts.""
"And the wage?" asked a laborer.

"You see what the wage brings," he answered. "I eat of the best, and drink deep. I treat my friend, and I ask no friend to treat me. I clap a slik gown on my girl's back. Never a knight's lady shall be better betrimmed and betrinketed. How of all that, mon garcon? And how of the heap of trifles that you can see for yourselves in youder corner? They are from the South French, every one, upon whom I have been making war. By my hilt! camrades. I think that I may let my plunder speak for itself."

picture of comfort and of good fel-lowship. His hard-set face had soft-ened, and the thick crop of crisp brown curls which had been hidden by his helmet grew low upon his massive neck. He might have been horse and harness. Tis quick as the Fr what then? By the twang it would be a bad thing if ter than on woman—eh, ma bell
"It would indeed be a bad th bring wealth and kindly custo ways had made a deep impres "A tol, ma cherie!" said he, his hand over his heart. "Ho is in petite peeping from behind the door. A tol. assi, ma petite! Mo Dieu! but the lass has a good color!

"There is one thing, fair air," said the Cambridge student in his piping voice, "which I would fain that you would make more clear. As I under tand it, there was peace made at the lown of Bretigny some six years bac between our most graciou and the King of the French. This be ing so, it seems most passing strange that you should talk so loudly of war and of companies when there is no quarrel between the French and us. "Meaning that I lie," said the arch-

er, laying down his knife. "May heaven forfend!" cried the student hastily, "Magna est veritas sed rara, which means in the Latin tongue that archers are all honorable men. I come to you se knowledge, for it is my trade learn."

"I fear that you are yet a tice to that trade," quoth the solneed look upon no man as his pay- died; "for there is no child over the water but could answer what you ask. Know then that though there and proper life. And here I drink to may be peace between our own provmine old comrades, and the saints inces and the French, yet within the marches of France there is always war, for the country is much divided against itself, and is furthermore harried by bands of flayers, skinners Brabacons, ardvenus and the rest of them. When every man's grip is on his neighbor's throat, and every fivesous-piece of a baron is marching with tuck of drum to fight whom he will, it would be a strange thing if five hundred brave English boys could not pick up a living. Now that Sir John Hawkwood hath gone with East Angian lads and the Nottingham woodmen into the service of the Marquis of Montferrat to fight against the Lord of Milan, there are but ten score of us left, yet I trust that I may be able to bring some back with me to fill the ranks of the White Company. By the tooth of Peter! It would be a bad thing if I could not muster many a Hamptonshire man who would be ready to strike in under the red flag of St. George, and the more so if Sir Nigel Loring, of Christchurch, should don hauberk once more and take the lead of us."

"Ah, you would indeed be in luck then," quoth a woodsmen; "for it is said that, setting aside the prin and mayhap good old Sir John Chandos, there was not in the whole army man of such tried courage."

"It is sooth, every word of it," the archer answered. "I have seen with these two eyes in a stricken field, and never did man carry himnot credit it to look at him, or t hearken to his voice, but from the sailing from Orwell down to the foray to Paris, and that is clear twen ty years, there was not a skirmish onfall, sally, bushment, escalado or battle, but Sir Nigel was in the heart of 't. I go now to Christchurch with a letter to him from Sir Claude Latour to ask him if he will take the place of Sir John Hawkwood; and there is the more chance that he will if I bring one or two likely men at my heels. What say you, woodman; will leave the bucks to loose a shaft

at a noble mark?" The forester shook his head. "I have wife and child at Emery Down," quoth he; "I would not leave them for such a venture." "You, then, young sir?" asked the

"Nay, I am a man of peace," said Alleyne Edricson. "Besides, I have other work to do." growled the "Pestel!" striking his flagon on the board until the dishes danced again. "What, in the name of the devil, hath come over the name of the devi, all moping by the fireplace, like crowds round a dead horse, when there is man's work to be done within a few leagues of ye? Out upon you all, as a set of laggards and hang-backs! By my hilt I believe that the England are all in France already and that what is left behind are in sooth the women ed up in their paltocks and ho

"Archer," quoth Hordle John, more than twice; for which, and also because I see much in you to dislike I am sorely tempted to lay you upon your back. "By my hilt! then I have found a man at last!" shouted the bown "And, 'fore God, you are a man than I take you for if you can lay me on my back, mon garcon, have won the ram more times than

man in the Company who could make my jerkin-dusty."
"We have had enough bobance boasting," said Hordle John, ris and throwing off his doublet. "I wil show you that there are better left in England than ever

seven long years I have fou

thieving to France." "Pas Dieu!" cried the arch foeman over with the keen glam of one who is a judge of manhood. have only once before seen such body of a man. By your leave, n red-headed friend, I should be rig sorry to exchange buffets with your I will allow that there is no man. in the company who would against you on a rope; so let the a salve to your pride. On the hand I should judge that you led a life of ease for some me back, and that my muscle is he than your own. I am ready to a line myself arabut you if you

upon myself against you if you not afeard."

"Afeard, thou lurden!" growled John. "I never saw the face yet the man that I was afeard of. Co out, and we shall see who is the left man."

"But the wager?"