HE WHITE COMPANY

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CHAPTER IX.

w Strange Things Befell in Minstead Wood.

path which the young clerk now to follow lay through a magicent forest of the very heaviest where the giant bowls of oak and of beech formed long aisles in very direction, shooting up their arches of Nature's own cathedral. fallen leaves, but yielding. asantly to the foot of the travel-

one so seldom used that in places it lost itself entirely among the grass, mouth marked the leader of men. to reappear as a reddish rut between His figure was erect and soldierly, the distant tree trunks. It was very and he rode his horse with the carestill here in the heart of the woodands. The gentle rustl of the branches and the distant cooing of pigeons garb, his masterful face and flash-In upon the silence, save that once yapping of the hounds.

they had held undisputed and par- leyne doffed hat and bowed head at ors of Bristerne and of Minstead at time when the Norman first set nailed foot upon English soil. The for an instant his powerful black ad its conversion into a royal Brocas; tu parles Anglais." demesne had clipped off a large secrtive Saxon rising. The fate of ears are worth." the ancestor had been typical of that windred years their domains had the hounds were hard at its heels." contracted. sometimes ment, and sometimes through such could understand English, he foors of Beaulieu Abbey to his younghad thus dwindled, but they still re- his escort, with a couple of farms and a grove

ments describe it. Above all, the own- spoke, and thundered away, land in free socage, with no feudal Saxon residence. He was suddenly dog, doff," he hissed, with a cap and tunic of untanned sheepskin, leather breeches, and galligaskins round legs and feet.

heavy cudget to enforce the order. Who are you who walks so freely through the wood? WWhither would treating figure. you go, and what is your errand?"
"Why should I answer your quesmy friend?" standing on his guard.

"Because your tongue may save your pate. But where have I looked d, recognizing the escaped art who

wrongs. "By the Virgin' yes. You were little clerk who sat so mum in the corner, and then cried fy on the man. What hast in the scrip

"Naught of any price." "How can I tell that, clerk? Let me sec." "Not I."

"Fool' I could pull you limb from limb like a pullet. What would you have. Hast forgot that we are alone far from all men? How can your clerkship help you? Wouldst lose scrip and life too?"

will part with neither without fight." "A fight, quotha? A fight betwirt

farthing shall you have with my free nether field." bue and cry from vill to vill, from less man, whom he left among the hundred to hundred, until you are trees where he had found him. His ting loudly, caught her wrist in one

The outlaw sank his club. Socman's brother!" he gusped. "Now, the nature, but also because it dis-by the keys of Peter! I had rather turbed him to hear his brother that hand withered and tongue was spoken of as though he were a chief poisted ere I had struck or miscalled of outlaws or the leader of a party you. If you are the Socman's broth- against the state, Indeed, of all the er you are one of the right side, I things which he had seen yet in the warrant, for all your clerky dress." world to surprise him there was none But if I were not, is that reason why class appeared to bear to class. The you should molest me on the king's talk of laborer, woodman and villein

If the line and a pointed to the line and a pointed to the line and now his king or for noble," cried the serf brother's name was spoken as though passionately. "Ill have I had from he were the very centre of the unithem, and ill I shall repay them. I versal discontent. In good truth, sm a good friend to my friends, and, commons throughout the length and

"And therefore the worst of foesen to thyself," said Alleyne, "But 1 their expense. So long as knight and to my brother's house."

he clear ringing call of a bugie burst been won by English yeomen and n the wood close behind them, and Welsh stabbers, war-like fame, Allerne caught sight for an instant only fame to which his class had at the dun side and white breast of ever aspired, appeared to have deon the laggards and The p

Historing to the loud "Hyke-a-Banard! | content, braking out into with which they called upon their some years later in the great ri favorite hounds, when a group of of Tyler. What Alleyne as horsemen crashed out through the wondered at in Hampshire underwood at the very spot with serf and he were standing. where

The one who led was a man between fifty and sixty years of age, war-worn and weather-beaten, with branches to build the majestic a broad, thoughtful forehead eyes which shone brightly from unneath lay a broad carpet of the der his fierce and overhung brows. His beard, streaked thickly with gray, bristled forward from his chin, and The track which guided him was spoke of a passionate nature, while less grace of a man whose life had been spent in the saddle. In common e the only sounds which broke ing eye would have marked him as heard afar off a mrry call with his silken tunic powdered with on a hunting bugle and the shrill golden fleurs-de-lis, his velvet mantle with the royal minever, and the was not without some emotion lions of England stamped in silver that he looked upon the scene around upon his harness, none could fail to for, in spite of his secluded recognize the noble Edward, most enough of the ancient warlike and powerful of all the long greatness of his own family to be line of fighting monarchs who had

amount sway over all that tract of the sight of him, but the serf folded country. His father could trace his his hands and leaned them upon his Saxon lineage back to that cudgel, looking with little love at the Godfrey Mall who had held the man- knot of nobles and knights-in-waiting who rode behind the king. "Ha!" cried Edward, reining up

efforestation of the district, however, steed. "Le cerf est passe? Non? Ici, "The deer, clowns?" said a hardof his estate, while other parts visaged, swarthy-faced man, who ben confiscate as a punishment rode at the king's elbow. "If ye have his supposed complicity in an headed it back it is as much as your

"It passed by the blighted beech of his descendants. During three there," said Alleyne, pointing, "and "It is well," - cried Edward, still through royal of feudal encroach- speaking in French; for, though he this to the Church as that with which never learned to express himself in so Allevne's father had opened the barbarous and unpolished a tongue. "By my faith, sirs," he continued, er son. The importance of the family half turning in his saddle to address "unless my woodcraft is tained the old Saxon manor-house, sadly at fault, it is a star of six times and large enough to afford pannage to this journey. A golden St. Hubert to a hundred pigs "sylva de centum the man who is the first to sound the draggled, which she smoothed and porcis," as the old family parch- mort." He shook his bridle as he er of the soil could still hold his knights lying low upon their horses head high as the veritable Socman and galloying as hard as whip and pink, was all stained with earth and of Minstead- that is, as holding the spur would drive them, in the hope with moss upon one side from shouldof winning the king's prize. Away superior, and answerable to no man they drove down the long green glade lower than the king. Knowing this -bay horses, black and gray, riders lips, for this woman seemed to him to little glow of clad in every shade of velvet, fur, or worldly pride as he looked for the silk, with glint of brazen horn and first time upon the land which so flash of knife and spear. One only many generations of his ancestors lingered, the black-browed Baron been associated. He pushed on Brocas, who, making a gambade

quicker, twirling his staff merri- which brought him within armly, and looking out at every turn of sweep of the serf, slashed him across path for some sign of the old the face with his riding whip. "Doff, by the appear- arch deigns to lower his eyes to such ance of a wild-looking fellow armed as you!"-then spurred through the with a club, who sprang out from be-hind a tree and barred his passage. gleam of steel shoes and flutter of He was a rough, powerful peasant, dead leaves.

underwood and was gone, with a uncomplaining mother Nature, long could look him in the eyes on the day slighted and miscalled, still bides her of his anger. But you! Look here, rat, dead leaves.

The villein took the cruel blow most errant of her children. without a wince or cry, as one to whom stripes are a birthright and an "Stand!" he shouted, raising his inheritance. His eyes flashed, however, and he shook his bony hand with a flerce wild gesture after the re-"Black hound of Gascony,"

said Alleyne, those like you set foot in free England! I know thy kennel of Rocheourt. The night will come when I may do to thee and thine what you upon your face before?"

"No longer ago than last night at the 'Pied Merlin,'" the clerk answerif fall to smite thee, thou French robmine and me. May God smite me if I fail to smite thee, thou French rob-ber, with thy wife and thy child and house, he soon came to doubt the had been so outspoken as to his all that is under thy castle roof!" "Forbear!" cried Alleyne, "Mix not Gods name with these unhallowed threats' And yet it was a coward's blow, and one to stir the blood and loose the tongue of the most peaceful. Let me find some soothing simples and lay them on the weal to draw the

ating." "Nay, there is but one thing that can draw the sting, and that the future may bring to me. But, clerk, if you would see your brother you must on, for there is a meeting to-day, and his merry men will await him ere the shadows turn from west to east, I pray you not to hold him back, for it would be an evil thing if all the spurred cock and new-hatched chick- stout lads were there and the leader ch! Thy fighting days may soon be a-missing. I would come with you, but sooth to say I am stationed here "Hadst asked me in the name of and may not move. The path over charity I would have given freely." yonder, betwirt the oak and the cried Alleyne. "As it stands, not one thorn, should bring out into his

"The and wrath were abhorent to his gen-"His brother I am." said Alleyne, more strange than the hate which in the inn had all pointed to by the Virgin! an evil forman to my breadth of the land were heart-feet." which had been played so long at you, since you seem to know baron were a strength and a guard to point out to me the shortest to the kingdom they might be endured, but now, when all men knew The serf was about to reply, when that the great battles in France had the ordiy stag glancing swiftly betwixt serted the plate-clad horsemen. The distant tree trunks. A minute sports of the lists had done much in came the shaggy deer-hounds, days gone by to impress the minds of or fourteen of them, run the people, but the plumed and un-a hot scont, with nose to wieldly champion was no longer an and tall in air. As they stream- object either of fear or of reverence at the allent forest around broke to feet whose fathers and brothers had and the short, sharp cries of interest of units. Cose behind the pack against the wapons of disciplined pensalts. Power had changed hands. in the shrill tected, and the whole fabric of the jargon which was the feudal system was tottering to a fall.

have appealed equally to the travel-er in any other English county from the Channel to the marches land.

He was following the track, his mis givings increasing with every step which took him nearer to that home which he had never seen, when of a the sward to spread out into a broad green lawn, where five cows lay in the sunshine and droves of black swine wandered unchecked. A brown forest stream swirled down the centre of this clearing, with a rude bridge flung across it, and on the other side was a second field sloping up to a was a second field sloping up to a long, low-lying wooden house, with thatched roof and open squares for windows. Alleyne gazed across at it with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes—for this, he knew, must be the home of his fathers. A wreath of blue smoke floated up through a hole in the smoke floated up through a hole in the thatch, and was the only sign of life. thatch, and was the only sign of life in the place, save a great black hound door post. In the yellow shimmer of the autumn sunshine it lay as peace-fully and as still as he had oft pictured it to himself in his dreams.

He was roused, however, from his

pleasant reverie by the sound of voices, and two people emerged from the forest some little way to his right and moved across the field in the direction of the bridge. The one was a man with yellow flowing beard and very long hair of the same tint drooping over his shoulders; his dress of good Norwich cloth and his assured bearing marked him as a man of posttion, while the sombre hue of his clothes and the absence of all ornament contrasted with the flash and glitter which had marked the king's retinue. By his side walked a wo-man, tall and slight and dark, with lithe, graceful figure and clear-cut, composed features. Her jet-black hair was gathered back under a light pink coif, her head poised proudly upon her neck, and her step long and springy, like that of some wild, tireess woodland creature. She held her left hand in front of her, covered with the finest that we have roused a red velvet glove, and on the wrist a little brown falcon, very fluffy and befondled as she walked. As she came his out in the sunshine, Alleyne noticed that her light gown, slashed with of an oak staring at her with parted e the most beautiful and graceful creature that mind could conceive of. battered hawk and discolored dress, sleek face and slavish manner, too which sent a tingle and thrill through menk-ridden and craven in spirit to his nerves such as no dream of radi-answer back rough word. Thy father, ant and staifless spirit had ever yet shaveling, with all his faults, had a been able to conjure up. Good, quiet, man's heart; and there

meadow to the narrow bridge, he in know that all these were squeezed fain hear it." There they paused, and stood for a few minutes face to face talking earnestly. Alleyne had read and had heard of love and of lovers. Such were muttered, "evil the day that you and these, doubtless-this golden-bearded man and the fair damsel with the proud face. Why else should they wander together in the woods, or be so lost in talk by rustic streams? And yet as he watched, uncertain whether to advance from the cover or truth of this first conjecture. The man stood, tall and square, blocking the entrance to the bridge, and throwing out his hands as he spoke in a wild. eager fashion, while the deep tones of his stormy voice rose at times into accents of menace and of anger. She stood fearlessly in front of him, still stroking her bird; but twice she threw a swift questioning glance over her shoulder, as one who is in search of aid. So moved was the young clerk by these mute appeals, that he came forth from the trees and crossed the meadow, uncertain what to do, and yet loth to hold back from one who might need his aid. So intent, were they upon each other that neither took note of his approach; until, when he was close upon them, the man threw his arm roughly round the damsel's waist and drew her towards him, she straining her lithe, supple figure away and striking flercely at him, while the hooded hawk screamed with ruffled wings and pecked blindly will, and when I see my brother, the Alleyne lost no time in following in its mistress' defence. Bird and seeman of Minstead, he will raise the directions of the wild, master-maid, however, had but little chance

taken as a common robber and a heart was the heavier for the en- hand while he drew her towards him

this knave loose me."
"Stand by you I will, and that blithely," said Alleyne. "Surely, sir, you should take shame to hold the damsel against her will." The man turned a face upon him which was lion-like in its strength and in its wrath. With this tangle of

"Liar!" cried the woman; and, stooping her head, she suddenly bit fliercely into the broad brown hand which held her. He whipped it back ly three housest described to the suddenly bit to a septiment of the water of the water of the suddenly bit to a septiment out of breath she suggested the suddenly bit to a septiment out of breath she suggested to be suddenly by three bounds out of breath she suggested to be suddenly by three bounds. venery and woodcraft. Hence the flerce mutterings of the flercely into the broad brestill gazing after them, lower classes and the constant dis-

silows ere I lay hands upon you; for our foot is on my land, and I my you as a common draw-latch."
this your land, then?" gasped

ald you dispute it, dog? Would you wish by trick or quibble to jug-gle me out of these last acres? Know, base-born knave, that you have dared this day to stand in the path of one ruce have been the advisers of and the leaders of hosts, ere this hounds as you were let loose to preach that the thief should have his booty and the honest man should sin if he strove to win back is own." Min-

the Socman, of the pure blood of Godfrey the thane, by the only daughter of the house of Aturic, whose forefathers held the white-horse banner at the fatal fight where horse banner at the fatal fight where our shield was broken and our sword shivered. I tell you, clerk, that my folk held this land from Bramshaw Wood to the Ringwood road; and by the sould of my father! it will a strange thing if I am to be bearded upon the little that is left of it. Begone, I say, and meddle net with my affair."

"If you leave me now," whisper the woman, "then shame forever upor

"Surely, sir," said Alleyne, speak-ing in as persuasive and soothing a way as he could, "if your birth is gentle, there is the more reason that your manner should be gentle too. I am well persuaded that you did but jest with this lady, and that you will now permit her to leave your land either alone or with me as a guide, if she should need one, through the wood. As to birth, it does not become me to boast, and there is sooth in what you say as to the worthiness of clerks, but it is none the less true that I am as well born as you." "Dog!" cried the furious Soeman, "there is no man in the south

can say as much "Yet can I," said Alleyne smiling; for indeed I also am the son of Edric the Socman, of the pure blood of Godfrey the thane, by the only daughter of Aluric of Brockenhurst. Surely, dear brother," he continued, holding out his hand, "you have a warmer greeting than this for me. There are but two boughs left upon this old, old Saxon trunk."

His elder dashed his hand aside creature that mind could conceive of. with an oath, while an expression of Such had be imagined the angels, and malignant hatred passed over his passuch he had tried to paint them in the sion-drawn features. "You are the Beaulieu siissals; but here there was young cub of Beaulieu, then," said something human, were it only in the be. "I might have known it by the he. "I might have known it by the

long could look him in the eyes on the day slighted and miscalled, still macs are at all all all all times and draws to her bosom the on yonder field where the cows graze, most errant of her children. orchard hard by the church. Do you out of your dying father by greedy priests, to pay for your upbringing in the cloisters? I, the Socman, am shorn of my lands that you may snivel Latin and eat bread for which you never did hand's turn. You rob me first, and now you would come preaching and whining, in search mayhap of another field or two for your priestly friends. Knave! my dogs shall be set upon your but, meanwhile, stand out of my path, and stop me at your As he spoke he rushed ward, and, throwing the lad to one caught the woman's wrist. Al-however, as active as a young

shound, sprang to his iron-shod staff as he did so. You may say what you will to me," he said between his dienched teeth-"It may be no better than I deserve; but, brother or no, I swear by my hopes of salvation that I will break your arm if you do not leave

There was a ring in his voice and a flash in his eyes which promised that the blow would follow quick at the heels of the word. For a moment the brood of the long line of hot-headed thanes was too strong for the soft whisperings of the doctrine of meekness and mercy. He was conscious of a fierce wild thrill through his nerves and a throb of mad glad-

maid, however, had but little chance against their assailant, who, laughing loudly, caught her wrist in one hand while he drew her towards him with the other.

"The best rose has ever the longest thorns," said he. "Quiet, little one, or you may do yourself a hurt. Must pay Saxon toll on Saxon. land, my proud Maude, for all your airs and graces."

"You boor!" she hissed. "You base underbred clod! Is this your care and your hospitality? I would rather wed a branded serf from my father's fields. Leave go, I say—Ah! good youth. Heaven has sent you. Make him loose me! By the honor of your mother, I pray you to stand by me and to make this knave loose me."

"Stand by you I will, and that bilthely," said Alleyne. "Surely, sir, you should take shame to hold the brushwood, and he stooped at the threshold to unloose the black in the threshold the threshold the threshold the threshold the threshold the t his right hand, and the threshold to unloose the bound.

"This way!" the woman whispe ed, in a low eager voice, "Through the bushes to that forked ash. Do not which was iton-like in its streagth and in its wrath. With this tangle of golden hair, his fierce blue eyes, and his large, well-marked features, he was the most comely man whom Alleyne ind ever seen; and yet there was something so sinster and so fell in his expression that child or beast might well have shrunk from him. His brows were drawn, his cheek flushed and there was a mad sparkle in his eyes which spoke of a wild, untamable nature.

"Young fool!" he cried, holding the woman still to his side, though every line of her shrinking figure spoke her abhorence. "Do you keen your spoon in your own broth. I rede you to go no your way, lest worse befall you. This little wench has come with me and with me she shall bide."

"Laar!" cried the woman; and,

"Not so. We are well off his land

"Not so. We are well off his land now, nor can he tell in this great wood which way we have taken. But you—you had him at your mercy. Why did you not kill him?"

"Kill him! My brother!"

"And why not?"—with a quick gleam of her white teeth. "He would have killed you. I know him, and I read it in his eyes. Had I had your staff I would have tried—aye, and done it, too." She shook her clenched white hand as she spoke, and her lips tightened ominously.

you that. But it is as you may think, sir, a very pleasant thing for me to hear that you are grieved at what you have done, and I can but rede that we should go back together, and you should make your peace with the Socman by handing back your pris-oner. It is a sad thing that so small a thing as a woman should come beween two who are of one, blood!" Simple Alleyne opened his eyes at this little spurt of feminine bitter-ness. "Nay, lady," said he, "that were worst of all. What man would be so

saitiff and thrall as to fail you at your need? I have turned my brother against me. and now, alas! I appear to have given offence also with my clumsy tongue. But, indeed, lady, I am torn both ways, and can scarce grasp in my mind what it is that has "Nor can I marvel at that,"

she, with a little tinkling laugh. came in as the knight does in the jongleur's romances, between drag-on and damsel, with small time for she the asking of questions. Come," went on, springing to her feet, and smoothing down her rumpled frock, let us walk through the shaw together, and we may come upon Bertrand with the horses. If poor Trou-badour had not cast a shoe, we should Nay, not have had this trouble. musts have your arm; for, though I

speak lightly, now that all is happily over I am as frightened as my brave Roland. See how his chest heaves, and his dear feathers all awry—the little knight who would not have his lady mishandled." So she prattled on to her hawk, while Aleyne walked by her side, stealing a glance from time to time at this queenly and wayward woman. In silence they wandered together over the velvet turf and on through the lichen-draped beeches threw their circles of black shadow upon the sunlit sward.
"You have no wish, then to hear

answered.
"Oh!" she cried tossing her head. "if it is of so little interest to you, we had best let it bide."
"Nay," said he eagerly, "I would

"You have a right to know it, if you have lost a brother's favor through it. And yet—Ah well, you are, as I understand, a clerk, so I must think of you as one step further in orders, and make you my fatherconfessor. Know then that this man has been a suitor for my hand, less as I think of my own sweet sake than because he hath ambition and it on his mind that he might had his fortunes by dipping my father's strong box-though the found little enough therein. My father, however, is a proud man, a gallant knight and tried so dier of the oldest blood, to whom this man's churlish birth and lo wdescent—Oh, lackaday! I had forgot that he was of the same strain as yourself."

"Nay, trouble not for that," said Alleyne, "we are all from good mother Eve." er Eve."

"Streams may spring from one source, and yet some be clear and some be foul," quoth she quickly.

"But to be brief over the matter,

my father would have none of his as he is known to be a perilous man, with many outlaws and others at his back, my father forbade that I should hawk or hunt in any part of the wood to the north of the Charles and where it is likely I shall join them." wooing, nor in sooth would I. she nerves and a throb of mad gladness at his heart, as his real human self burst for an instant the bonds of custom and of teaching which had held it so long. The socman sprang back, looking to left and to right for some stick or stone which might serve him for weapon; but finding none, he turned and ran at the top of his speed for the house, blowing the while upon a shrill whistle.

"Come!" gasped the woman "Fly"

should hawk or hunt in any part of the christ. At the castle which is held by the braye knight, Sir Nigel Loring, consider to the Earl of Salisbury."

To his surprise she burst out alughing, and, spurring her palfrey, dashed off down the glade, with her page riding behind her. Not one word his speed for the house, blowing the but that my horse Troubadour trod waved a last greeting. Long time he was loosed at a strong-winged heron, and page Bertrand and I rode on, with no thoughts but for the sport, until we found ourselves in Minstead woods. Small harm then, but that my horse Troubadour trod waved a last greeting. Long time he was loosed at a strong-winged hero, and page Bertrand and I rode on, with no thoughts but for the sport, until we found ourselves in Minstead woods. Small harm then, but that my horse Troubadour trod waved a last greeting. Long time be was loosed at a strong-winged hero, and page Bertrand and I rode on, with no thoughts but for the sport until we found ourselves in Minstead woods. Small harm then, but that my horse Troubadour trod waved a last greeting. Long time be wanted in her saddle and the trees she burst out a laughing, and, spurring her palfrey, dashed off down the glade, with her page riding behind her. Not one word his speed for the house, blowing the waved a last greeting. Long time he was loosed at a strong winged hero, and page Bertrand and I rode on the page riding behind her. Not one word waved a last greeting to the care in the waved with the trouble waved a last greeting to the care in the waved with the tother church. rearing and throwing me to the ground. See to my gown, the third that I have befouled within the week. Wo worth me when Agatha, the tirewoman, sets eyes upon it!"

"And what then, lady?" asked Al-

leyne. "Why, then away ran Troubadour "Why, then away ran Broubadour, for belike I spurred him in falling, and Bertrand rode after him as hard as hoofs could bear him. When I rose there was the Sooman himself by my side, with the news that I was on his land, but with so many courteous words besides, and such gallant bearing that he prevailed upon me to come to his house for ahelter, there to wait until the page return. By the grace of the Virgin and the help of my patron St. Magdalen, I stopped short ere I reached his door, though, as you saw, he strove to hale me up to it. And then—ar-h-h-i!" she shivto it. And then—ar-h-h-h!" she shiv-ered and chattered like one in an ague What is it?" cried Alleyne, look-

ing about in alarm. "Nothing, friend, nothing! I was but thinking how I bit into his hand. Sooner would I bite a living toad or poisoned snake. Oh, I shall loathe my lips forever! But you—how brave you were, and how quick! How meek for yourself and how bold for a stranger! If I were a man, I should wish to do what you have done." "It was a small thing." he ed, with a tingle of pleasure words of flattery.
"What will you do?"

"There is a great oak mear h and I think that Bertrand will be the horses there, for it is an old in ing-tryst of ours. Then hey for he and no more hawking to-day! twelve-mile gallop will dry feet skirl."

ed white hand as she spoke, and her lips tightened ominously.

"I am already sad in heart for what I have done," said he, sitting down on the bank, and sinking his face into his hands. "God help me!— all that is worst in me seemed to come uppermost. Another instant, and I had smitten him; the son of my own mother, the man whom I have longed to take to my heart. Alas! that I should still be so weak."

"Weak!" she exclaimed, raising her black eyebrows. "I do not think that even my father himself, who is a hard judge of manhood, would call you that. But it is as you may think, sir, a very pleasant thing for me to in vain for some backward glance or sign, of relenting but she walked on with a rigid neck until her dress was only a white flutter among the teaves. Then, with a sunken head and a heavy heart, he plodded wearily down the other path wrouth with himself for the and uncoth tongue which had

He had gone some way, lost in doubt and in self-reproach, his mind all tremulous with a thousand newfound thoughts and fears and wonderments, when of a sudden there was a light rustle of the leaves behind him, and, glancing around, there was this graceful, swift-tooted creature, treading in his very shadow, with her proud bowed, even as his was—the picture of humility and reperisance. "I shall not vex you, nor even speak," she said; "but I would fain keep with you while we are in the wood."

"Nay, you cannot vex me," he answered, all warm again at the very sight of her. "It was my rough words which vexed you; but I have been thrown among men all my life, and hrown among men all my life, and ndeed, with all the will. I scarce w to temper my speech to a lady's ear."

"Then unsay it," cried she quickly:
"say that I was right to wish to have
vengeance on the Socman." ed gravely.

you, sir?"

"There spoke your true self," said more precious than wisdom, for he; and you will find more pleasure in leyne as he walked on braced such forgiveness than in any venaance.

to this courteous stranger. And now sir," she continued, springing into her saddle, "it is not fit that I seave you without a word more. Clerk or no, you have acted this day as becomes a you have acted this day as becomes a true knight. King Arthur and all his table could not have done more. It may be that, as some small return, my father or his kin may have power to advance your interest. He is not rich, but he is honored and hath great friends. Tell me what is your purpose, and see if he may not aid

"Alas! lady, I have now no purp did she say, but as she vanished amd the trees she turned in her saddle and waved a last greeting. Long time he stood, half hoping that she might again come back to him; but the thud of the hoofs had died away, and there was no sound in all the woods but the gentle rustle and dropping of the leaves. At last he turned away and made his way back to the high road -another person from the light-heart-ed boy who had left it a short three hours before.

CHAPTER X. How Hordis John Found a Whom He Might Follow.

Whom He Might Follow.

If he might not return to Beautleu within the year, and it his brother's dogs were to be set upon him if he showed face upon Minstead land, then indeed he was adrift upon earth. North, south, east and west—he might turn where he would, but all was equally chill and cheerless. The Abbot had rolled ten silver crowns in a lettuce leaf and his them away in his scrip, but that would he a sorry support for twelve long months. In all the darkness there was but the one bright spot of the sturdy comrades whom he had left that mornin: If he could find them again all would be be well. The afternoon was not very advanced, for all that had befallen him. When a main is afoot at cock-crow much may be done in the day. If he walked fast he might yet overtake his friends are they reached their destination. He pushed on therefore, now walking and now running. As he journeyed he bit into a crust which remained from his Beautleu bread, and he washed it down by a draught from a woodland stream. It was no easy or light thing to journey through this great forest, which was some twenty miles from east to west and a good sixteen from Brambhaw Woods in the north to Lymington in the south. Alleyne, how-If he might not return to Beautley

half running, half flying, with stri the road beggars and couriers, chemen and tinkers cheery fellows the most part, with a rough jest

down his cheeks. Further on he sturdy black-bearded man, mo on a brown horse, with a rosary in his right hand and a long two-handed sword jangling against his stirrup. By his black robe and the eightpointed cross upon his sleeve, Alleyne recognized him as one of the Knights recognized him as one of the Kn recognized him as one of the Kn Hospitallers of St. John of Jerus whose presbytery was at Bedd He held up two fingers as he put "Ranadica, fills meus!" v with a "Benedice, fille meus!" where at Alleyne doffed hat and bent knee looking with much reverence at one who had devoted his life to the over-throw of the infidel. Poor simple ladine had not learned yet that what "Then who is ungentle and unkind now?" she cried in triumph. "How stern' and cold you are for one so young! Art surely no mere clerk, but bishop or cardinal at the least. Shouldst have crozier for staff and mitre for cap. Well, well, for your sake I will forgive the Sooman and take vengeance on none but on my own wilful self whomsat needs run into danger's path. So will that please you, sir?" who had devoted his life to the overthrow of the infidel. Poor simple lad! he had not learned yet that what men are and what men profess to be are very wide asunder, and that the Knights of St. John, having come late large part of the riches of the component of the infidel. Poor simple lad! he had not learned yet that what men are and what men profess to be are very wide asunder, and that the Knights of St. John, having come late I will forgive the Sooman and take vengeance on none but on my own wilful self whomsat needs run into danger's path. So will that please for a tent, or the cellulars of Engiand for the thirsty deserved. ing their palace for a tent, or the cellars of England for the thirsty des erts of Syria. Yet ignorance may of this other's sacrifice, and strength-She shook her head, as if by no ened himself by his example, which means assured of it, and then with he could scarce have done had he a sudden little cry, which had more of known that the Hospitalier's mind

a sudden little cry, which it, "Here is surprise than of joy in it, "Here is services and the horses!"

Down the giade there came a little green-clad page with laughing eyes, and long curls floating behind him. He sat perched on a high bay horse, and held on to the bridle of a spirited black paifrey, the hides of both gilstening from a long run.

"I have sought you everywhere, dear Lady Maude," said he in a pipting and dropping of the leaves. Alleyne, giancing round for shelter, saw a thick and lotty holly-bush, so hollowed out beneath holly-bush, so hollowed out beneath horse and holding the stirrup. Troubadour galloped as far as Holmhill for shelter, saw a thick and lofty for shelter, saw a thick and lofty have no hurt or scath?" He shot a questioning glance at Alleyne as he spoke.

"No. Bertrand," said she, "thanks their hands to Alleyne that he should have been dyler. join them. As he approached he saw that they had five dried herrings faid out in front of them, with a great hunch of wheaten bread and a leath-ern flask of milk, but instead of setting to at their food they appeared to have forgot all about it, and were disputing together with flushed faces and angry gestures. It was easy to see by their dress and manner that they were two of those wandering students who formed about this time so enormous a multitude in every country in Europe. The one was

so enormous a multitude in every country in Europe. The one was ong and thin, with melancholy features, while the other was fat and sleek, with a loud voice and the air of a man who is not to be gainsaid, "Come hither, good youth," he cried, "come hither, good youth," he cried, "come hither! Vultus ingenui puer. Heed not the face of my good cos here. Foenum habet in cornu, as Dan Horace has it; but I warrant him harmless for all that."

"Stint your bull's beilowing!" exclaimed the other. "If it come to Horace, I have a line in my mind: Loquaces at sapiat— How doth it run? The English o't being that a man of sense should ever avoid a great talker. That being so, if all men of sense then thou wouldst be a lonesome man, com."

"Alas! Dicon, I fear that your logic is as bad as your philosophy or your divinity—and God wot it would be hard to say a worse word than that for it. For, hark ye: granting propter argumentum, that I am a talker, then the true reason runs that since all men of sense should avoid me, and thou hast not avoided me, but art at the present moment eating herrings with me under a holly hush, ergo you are no man of sense, which is exactly what I have been dinning into your long ears ever since I first clapped eyes on your sunken chops."

"Tut, tut!" cried the other. "Your tongue goes like the clapper of a mill wheel. Sit down here friend, and partake of this herring. Understand first, however, that there are certain conditions attached to it."

"I had hoped." said Alleyne, falling into the humor of the twain. "That a tranchoir of bread and a draught of milk might be attached to it."

"Hark to him, hark to him!" cried the other. "Wour that a tranchoir of bread and a draught of milk might be attached to it."

"Hark to him, hark to him!" cried