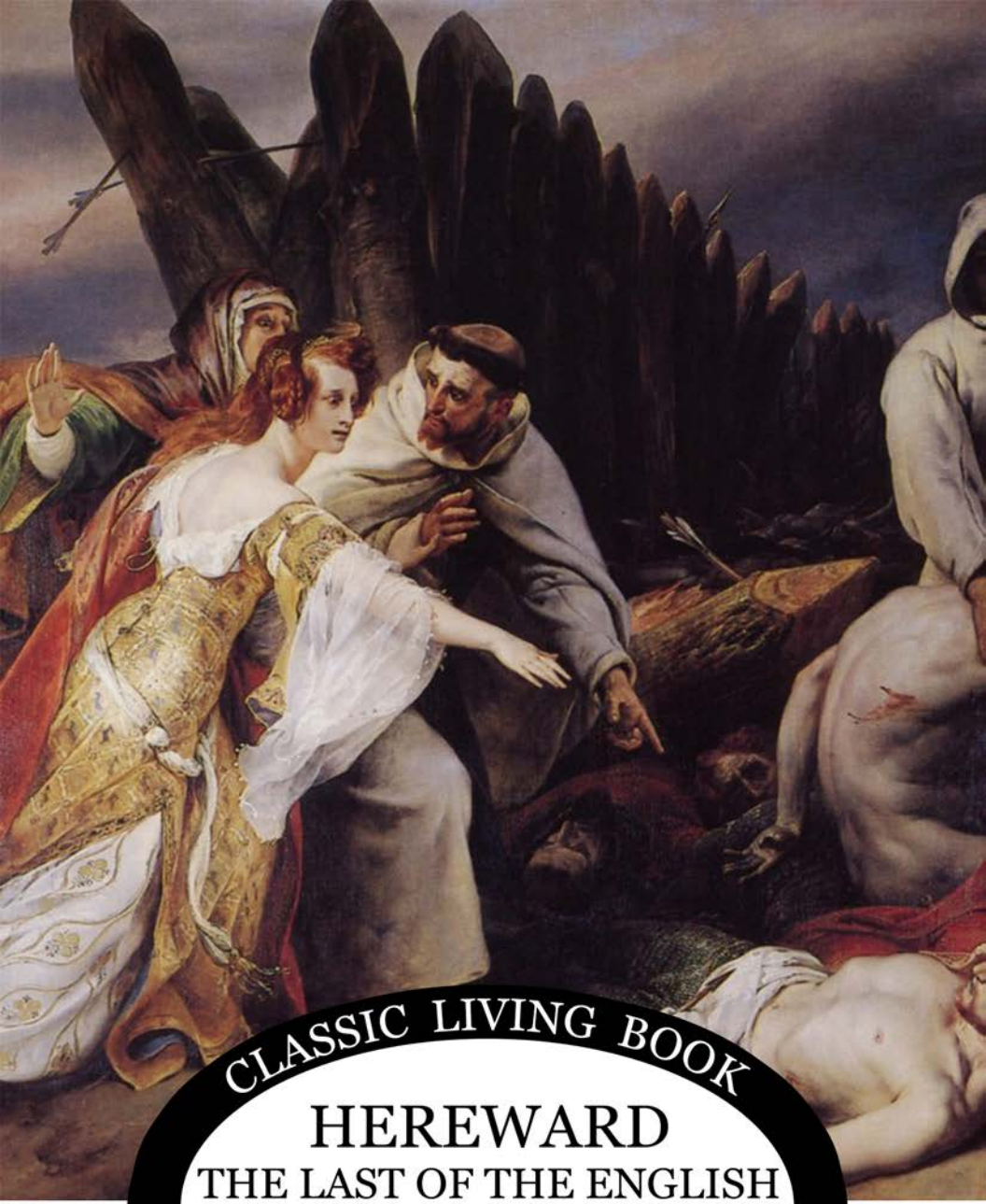

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

HEREWARD
THE LAST OF THE ENGLISH

Charles Kingsley

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

This edition published 2023
by Living Book Press

ISBN: 978-1-922950-88-8 (hardcover)
978-1-922950-82-6 (softcover)

First published in .

A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

HEREWARD,

THE LAST OF THE ENGLISH

BY

CHARLES KINGSLEY

CONTENTS

PRELUDE.

The heroic deeds of Highlanders, both in these islands and elsewhere, have been told in verse and prose, and not more often, nor more loudly, than they deserve. But we must remember, now and then, that there have been heroes likewise in the lowland and in the fen. Why, however, poets have so seldom sung of them; why no historian, save Mr. Motley in his "Rise of the Dutch Republic," has condescended to tell the tale of their doughty deeds, is a question not difficult to answer.

In the first place, they have been fewer in number. The lowlands of the world, being the richest spots, have been generally the soonest conquered, the soonest civilized, and therefore the soonest taken out of the sphere of romance and wild adventure, into that of order and law, hard work and common sense, as well as—too often—into the sphere of slavery, cowardice, luxury, and ignoble greed. The lowland populations, for the same reasons, have been generally the first to deteriorate, though not on account of the vices of civilization. The vices of incivilization are far worse, and far more destructive of human life; and it is just because they are so, that rude tribes deteriorate physically less than polished nations. In the savage struggle for life, none but the strongest, healthiest, cunningest, have a chance of living, prospering, and propagating their race. In the civilized state, on the contrary, the weakliest and the silliest, protected by law, religion, and humanity, have chance likewise, and transmit to their offspring their own weakliness or silliness. In these islands, for instance, at the time of the Norman Conquest, the average of man was doubtless superior, both in body and mind, to the average of man now, simply because the weaklings could not have lived at all; and the rich and delicate beauty, in which the women of the Eastern Counties still surpass all other

races in these isles, was doubtless far more common in proportion to the numbers of the population.

Another reason—and one which every Scot will understand—why lowland heroes "carent vate sacro," is that the lowlands and those who live in them are wanting in the poetic and romantic elements. There is in the lowland none of that background of the unknown, fantastic, magical, terrible, perpetually feeding curiosity and wonder, which still remains in the Scottish highlands; which, when it disappears from thence, will remain embalmed forever in the pages of Walter Scott. Against that half-magical background his heroes stand out in vivid relief; and justly so. It was not put there by him for stage purposes; it was there as a fact; and the men of whom he wrote were conscious of it, were moulded by it, were not ashamed of its influence. Nature among the mountains is too fierce, too strong, for man. He cannot conquer her, and she awes him. He cannot dig down the cliffs, or chain the storm-blasts; and his fear of them takes bodily shape: he begins to people the weird places of the earth with weird beings, and sees nixes in the dark linns as he fishes by night, dwarfs in the caves where he digs, half-trembling, morsels of copper and iron for his weapons, witches and demons on the snow-blast which overwhelms his herd and his hut, and in the dark clouds which brood on the untrodden mountain-peak. He lives in fear: and yet, if he be a valiant-hearted man, his fears do him little harm. They may break out, at times, in witch-manias, with all their horrible suspicions, and thus breed cruelty, which is the child of fear; but on the whole they rather produce in man thoughtfulness, reverence, a sense, confused yet precious, of the boundless importance of the unseen world. His superstitions develop his imagination; the moving accidents of a wild life call out in him sympathy and pathos; and the mountaineer becomes instinctively a poet.

The lowlander, on the other hand, has his own strength, his own "virtues," or manfulnesses, in the good old sense of the word: but they are not for the most part picturesque or even poetical.

He finds out, soon enough for his weal and his bane, that he is stronger than Nature; and right tyrannously and irreverently he lords it over her, clearing, delving, diking, building, without fear or shame. He knows of no natural force greater than himself, save an occasional

thunder-storm; and against that, as he grows more cunning, he insures his crops. Why should he reverence Nature? Let him use her, and eat. One cannot blame him. Man was sent into the world (so says the Scripture) to fill and subdue the earth. But he was sent into the world for other purposes, which the lowlander is but too apt to forget. With the awe of Nature, the awe of the unseen dies out in him. Meeting with no visible superior, he is apt to become not merely unpoetical and irreverent, but somewhat of a sensualist and an atheist. The sense of the beautiful dies out in him more and more. He has little or nothing around him to refine or lift up his soul, and unless he meet with a religion and with a civilization which can deliver him, he may sink into that dull brutality which is too common among the lowest classes of the English lowlands, and remain for generations gifted with the strength and industry of the ox, and with the courage of the lion, and, alas! with the intellect of the former, and the self-restraint of the latter.

But there may be a period in the history of a lowland race when they, too, become historic for a while. There was such a period for the men of the Eastern Counties; for they proved it by their deeds.

When the men of Wessex, the once conquering race of Britain, fell at Hastings once and for all, and struck no second blow, then the men of the Danelagh disdained to yield to the Norman invader. For seven long years they held their own, not knowing, like true Englishmen, when they were beaten; and fought on desperate, till there were none left to fight. Their bones lay white on every island in the fens; their corpses rotted on gallows beneath every Norman keep; their few survivors crawled into monasteries, with eyes picked out, or hands and feet cut off, or took to the wild wood as strong outlaws, like their successors and representatives, Robin Hood, Scarlet, and John, Adam Bell, and Clym of the Cleugh, and William of Cloudeslee. But they never really bent their necks to the Norman yoke; they kept alive in their hearts that proud spirit of personal independence, which they brought with them from the moors of Denmark and the dales of Norway; and they kept alive, too, though in abeyance for a while, those free institutions which were without a doubt the germs of our British liberty.

They were a changed folk since first they settled in that Danelagh;—

since first in the days of King Beorhtric, "in the year 787, three ships of Northmen came from Haeretha land, and the King's reeve rode to the place, and would have driven them up to the King's town, for he knew not what men they were: but they slew him there and then"; and after the Saxons and Angles began to find out to their bitter bale what men they were, those fierce Vikings out of the dark northeast.

But they had long ceased to burn farms, sack convents, torture monks for gold, and slay every human being they met, in mere Berserker lust of blood. No Barnakill could now earn his nickname by entreating his comrades, as they tossed the children on their spear-points, to "Na kill the barns." Gradually they had settled down on the land, intermarried with the Angles and Saxons, and colonized all England north and east of Watling Street (a rough line from London to Chester), and the eastern lowlands of Scotland likewise. Gradually they had deserted Thor and Odin for "the White Christ"; had their own priests and bishops, and built their own minsters. The convents which the fathers had destroyed, the sons, or at least the grandsons, rebuilt; and often, casting away sword and axe, they entered them as monks themselves; and Peterborough, Ely, and above all Crowland, destroyed by them in Alfred's time with a horrible destruction, had become their holy places, where they decked the altars with gold and jewels, with silks from the far East, and furs from the far North; and where, as in sacred fortresses, they, and the liberty of England with them, made their last unavailing stand.

For a while they had been lords of all England. The Anglo-Saxon race was wearing out. The men of Wessex, priest-ridden, and enslaved by their own aristocracy, quailed before the free Norsemen, among whom was not a single serf. The God-descended line of Cerdic and Alfred was worn out. Vain, incapable, profligate kings, the tools of such prelates as Odo and Dunstan, were no match for such wild heroes as Thorkill the tall, or Olaf Trygvasson, or Swend Forkbeard. The Danes had gradually colonized, not only their own Danelagh and Northumbria, but great part of Wessex. Vast sums of Danegelt were yearly sent out of the country to buy off the fresh invasions which were perpetually threatened. Then Ethelred the Unready, Ethelred Evil-counsel, advised himself to fulfil his name, and the curse which

Dunstan had pronounced against him at the baptismal font. By his counsel the men of Wessex rose against the unsuspecting Danes, and on St. Brice's eve, A.D. 1002, murdered them all with tortures, man, woman, and child. It may be that they only did to the children as the fathers had done to them: but the deed was "worse than a crime; it was a mistake." The Danes of the Danelagh and of Northumbria, their brothers of Denmark and Norway, the Orkneys and the east coast of Ireland, remained unharmed. A mighty host of Vikings poured from thence into England the very next year, under Swend Forkbeard and the great Canute; and after thirteen fearful campaigns came the great battle of Assingdown in Essex, where "Canute had the victory; and all the English nation fought against him, and all the nobility of the English race was there destroyed."

That same year saw the mysterious death of Edmund Ironside, the last man of Cerdic's race worthy of the name. For the next twenty-five years, Danish kings ruled from the Forth to the Land's End.

A noble figure he was, that great and wise Canute, the friend of the famous Godiva, and Leofric, Godiva's husband, and Siward Biorn, the conqueror of Macbeth; trying to expiate by justice and mercy the dark deeds of his bloodstained youth; trying (and not in vain) to blend the two races over which he ruled; rebuilding the churches and monasteries which his father had destroyed; bringing back in state to Canterbury the body of Archbishop Elphege—not unjustly called by the Saxons martyr and saint—whom Tall Thorkill's men had murdered with beef bones and ox-skulls, because he would not give up to them the money destined for God's poor; rebuking, as every child has heard, his housecarles' flattery by setting his chair on the brink of the rising tide; and then laying his golden crown, in token of humility, on the high altar of Winchester, never to wear it more. In Winchester lie his bones unto this day, or what of them the civil wars have left: and by him lie the bones of his son Hardicanute, in whom, as in his half-brother Harold Harefoot before him, the Danish power fell to swift decay, by insolence and drink and civil war; and with the Danish power England fell to pieces likewise.

Canute had divided England into four great earldoms, each ruled, under him, by a jarl, or earl—a Danish, not a Saxon title.

At his death in 1036, the earldoms of Northumbria and East Anglia—the more strictly Danish parts—were held by a true Danish hero, Siward Biorn, alias *Digre* "the Stout", conqueror of Macbeth, and son of the Fairy Bear; proving his descent, men said, by his pointed and hairy ears.

Mercia, the great central plateau of England, was held by Earl Leofric, husband of the famous Lady Godiva.

Wessex, which Canute had at first kept in his own hands, had passed into those of the famous Earl Godwin, the then ablest man in England. Possessed of boundless tact and cunning, gifted with an eloquence which seems, from the accounts remaining of it, to have been rather that of a Greek than an Englishman; himself of high—perhaps of royal—Sussex blood (for the story of his low birth seems a mere fable of his French enemies), and married first to Canute's sister, and then to his niece, he was fitted, alike by fortunes and by talents, to be the king-maker which he became.

Such a system may have worked well as long as the brain of a hero was there to overlook it all. But when that brain was turned to dust, the history of England became, till the Norman Conquest, little more than the history of the rivalries of the two great houses of Godwin and Leofric.

Leofric had the first success in king-making. He, though bearing a Saxon name, was the champion of the Danish party and of Canute's son, or reputed son, Harold Harefoot; and he succeeded, by the help of the "Thanes north of Thames," and the "lithsmen of London," which city was more than half Danish in those days, in setting his puppet on the throne. But the blood of Canute had exhausted itself. Within seven years Harold Harefoot and Hardicanute, who succeeded him, had died as foully as they lived; and Godwin's turn had come.

He, though married to a Danish princess, and acknowledging his Danish connection by the Norse names which were borne by his three most famous sons, Harold, Sweyn, and Tostig, constituted himself the champion of the men of Wessex and the house of Cerdic. He had murdered, or at least caused to be murdered, horribly, Alfred the Etheling, King Ethelred's son and heir-apparent, when it seemed his interest to support the claims of Hardicanute against Harefoot. He

now found little difficulty in persuading his victim's younger brother to come to England, and become at once his king, his son-in-law and his puppet.

Edward the Confessor, if we are to believe the monks whom he pampered, was naught but virtue and piety, meekness and magnanimity,—a model ruler of men. Such a model ruler he was, doubtless, as monks would be glad to see on every throne; because while he rules his subjects, they rule him. No wonder, therefore, that (according to William of Malmesbury) the happiness of his times (famed as he was both for miracles and the spirit of prophecy) "was revealed in a dream to Brithwin, Bishop of Wilton, who made it public"; who, meditating in King Canute's time on "the near extinction of the royal race of the English," was "rapt up on high, and saw St. Peter consecrating Edward king. His chaste life also was pointed out, and the exact period of his reign (twenty-four years) determined; and, when inquiring about his posterity, it was answered, 'The kingdom of the English belongs to God. After you, He will provide a king according to his pleasure.'" But those who will look at the facts will see in the holy Confessor's character little but what is pitiable, and in his reign little but what is tragical.

Civil wars, invasions, outlawry of Godwin and his sons by the Danish party; then of Alfgar, Leofric's son, by the Saxon party; the outlaws on either side attacking and plundering the English shores by the help of Norsemen, Welshmen, Irish, and Danes,—any mercenaries who could be got together; and then,—"In the same year Bishop Aldred consecrated the minster at Gloucester to the glory of God and of St. Peter, and then went to Jerusalem with such splendor as no man had displayed before him"; and so forth. The sum and substance of what was done in those "happy times" may be well described in the words of the Anglo-Saxon chronicler for the year 1058. "This year Alfgar the earl was banished; but he came in again with violence, through aid of Griffin (the king of North Wales, his brother-in-law). And this year came a fleet from Norway. It is tedious to tell how these matters went." These were the normal phenomena of a reign which seemed, to the eyes of monks, a holy and a happy one; because the king refused, whether from spite or superstition, to have an heir to

the house of Cerdic, and spent his time between prayer, hunting, the seeing of fancied visions, the uttering of fancied prophecies, and the performance of fancied miracles.

But there were excuses for him. An Englishman only in name,—a Norman, not only of his mother's descent (she was aunt of William the Conqueror), but by his early education on the Continent,—he loved the Norman better than the Englishman; Norman knights and clerks filled his court, and often the high dignities of his provinces, and returned as often as expelled; the Norman-French language became fashionable; Norman customs and manners the signs of civilization; and thus all was preparing steadily for the great catastrophe, by which, within a year of Edward's death, the Norman became master of the land.

Perhaps it ought to have been so. Perhaps by no other method could England, and, with England, Scotland, and in due time Ireland, have become partakers of that classic civilization and learning, the fount whereof, for good and for evil, was Rome and the Pope of Rome: but the method was at least wicked; the actors in it tyrannous, brutal, treacherous, hypocritical; and the conquest of England by William will remain to the end of time a mighty crime, abetted—one may almost say made possible, as too many such crimes have been before and since—by the intriguing ambition of the Pope of Rome.

Against that tyranny the free men of the Danelagh and of Northumbria rose. If Edward, the descendant of Cerdic, had been little to them, William, the descendant of Rollo, was still less. That French-speaking knights should expel them from their homes, French-chanting monks from their convents, because Edward had promised the crown of England to William, his foreign cousin, or because Harold Godwinsson of Wessex had sworn on the relics of all the saints to be William's man, was contrary to their common-sense of right and reason.

So they rose and fought: too late, it may be, and without unity or purpose; and they were worsted by an enemy who had both unity and purpose; whom superstition, greed, and feudal discipline kept together, at least in England, in one compact body of unscrupulous and terrible confederates.

But theirs was a land worth fighting for,—a good land and large:

from Humber mouth inland to the Trent and merry Sherwood, across to Chester and the Dee, round by Leicester and the five burghs of the Danes; eastward again to Huntingdon and Cambridge (then a poor village on the site of an old Roman town); and then northward again into the wide fens, the land of the Girvii and the Eormingas, "the children of the peat-bog," where the great central plateau of England slides into the sea, to form, from the rain and river washings of eight shires, lowlands of a fertility inexhaustible, because ever-growing to this day.

They have a beauty of their own, these great fens, even now, when they are diked and drained, tilled and fenced,—a beauty as of the sea, of boundless expanse and freedom. Much more had they that beauty eight hundred years ago, when they were still, for the most part, as God had made them, or rather was making them even then. The low rolling uplands were clothed in primeval forest: oak and ash, beech and elm, with here and there, perhaps, a group of ancient pines, ragged and decayed, and fast dying out in England even then; though lingering still in the forests of the Scotch highlands.

Between the forests were open wolds, dotted with white sheep and golden gorse; rolling plains of rich though ragged turf, whether cleared by the hand of man or by the wild fires which often swept over the hills. And between the wood and the wold stood many a Danish "town," with its clusters of low straggling buildings round the holder's house, stone or mud below, and wood above; its high dikes round tiny fields; its flocks of sheep ranging on the wold; its herds of swine in the forest; and below, a more precious possession still,—its herds of mares and colts, which fed with the cattle in the rich grass-fen.

For always, from the foot of the wolds, the green flat stretched away, illimitable, to an horizon where, from the roundness of the earth, the distant trees and islands were hulled down like ships at sea. The firm horse-fen lay, bright green, along the foot of the wold; beyond it, the browner peat, or deep fen; and among it, dark velvet alder beds, long lines of reed-rond, emerald in spring, and golden under the autumn sun; shining river-reaches; broad meres dotted with a million fowl, while the cattle waded along their edges after the rich sedge-grass, or wallowed in the mire through the hot summer's day.

Here and there, too, upon the far horizon, rose a tall line of ashen trees, marking some island of firm rich soil. Here and there, too, as at Ramsey and Crowland, the huge ashes had disappeared before the axes of the monks, and a minster tower rose over the fen, amid orchards, gardens, cornfields, pastures, with here and there a tree left standing for shade. "Painted with flowers in the spring," with "pleasant shores embosomed in still lakes," as the monk-chronicler of Ramsey has it, those islands seemed to such as the monk terrestrial paradises.

Overhead the arch of heaven spread more ample than elsewhere, as over the open sea; and that vastness gave, and still gives, such "effects" of cloudland, of sunrise, and sunset, as can be seen nowhere else within these isles. They might well have been star worshippers, those Girvii, had their sky been as clear as that of the East: but they were like to have worshipped the clouds rather than the stars, according to the too universal law, that mankind worship the powers which do them harm, rather than the powers which do them good.

And therefore the Danelagh men, who feared not mortal sword, or axe, feared witches, ghosts, Pucks, Will-o'-the-Wisps, werewolves, spirits of the wells and of the trees, and all dark, capricious, and harmful beings whom their fancy conjured up out of the wild, wet, and unwholesome marshes, or the dark wolf-haunted woods. For that fair land, like all things on earth, had its darker aspect. The foul exhalations of autumn called up fever and ague, crippling and enervating, and tempting, almost compelling, to that wild and desperate drinking which was the Scandinavian's special sin. Dark and sad were those short autumn days, when all the distances were shut off, and the air choked with foul brown fog and drenching rains from off the eastern sea; and pleasant the bursting forth of the keen north-east wind, with all its whirling snowstorms. For though it sent men hurrying out into the storm, to drive the cattle in from the fen, and lift the sheep out of the snow-wreaths, and now and then never to return, lost in mist and mire, in ice and snow;—yet all knew that after the snow would come the keen frost and the bright sun and cloudless blue sky, and the fenman's yearly holiday, when, work being impossible, all gave themselves up to play, and swarmed upon the ice on skates and sledges, and ran races, township against township, or visited old friends full

forty miles away; and met everywhere faces as bright and ruddy as their own, cheered by the keen wine of that dry and bracing frost.

Such was the Fenland; hard, yet cheerful; rearing a race of hard and cheerful men; showing their power in old times in valiant fighting, and for many a century since in that valiant industry which has drained and embanked the land of the Girvii, till it has become a very "Garden of the Lord." And the Scotsman who may look from the promontory of Peterborough, the "golden borough" of old time; or from the tower of Crowland, while Hereward and Torfrida sleep in the ruined nave beneath; or from the heights of that Isle of Ely which was so long "the camp of refuge" for English freedom; over the labyrinth of dikes and lodes, the squares of rich corn and verdure,—will confess that the lowland, as well as the highland, can at times breed gallant men. [1]

1 The story of Hereward (often sung by minstrels and old-wives in succeeding generations) may be found in the "Metrical Chronicle of Geoffrey Gaimar," and in the prose "Life of Hereward" (paraphrased from that written by Leofric, his house-priest), and in the valuable fragment "Of the family of Hereward." These have all three been edited by Mr. T. Wright. The account of Hereward in Ingulf seems taken, and that carelessly, from the same source as the Latin prose, "De Gestis Herewardi." A few curious details may be found in Peter of Blois's continuation of Ingulf; and more, concerning the sack of Peterborough, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. I have followed the contemporary authorities as closely as I could, introducing little but what was necessary to reconcile discrepancies, or to illustrate the history, manners, and sentiments of the time.—C. K.

CHAPTER I.

HOW HEREWARD WAS OUTLAWED AND WENT NORTH TO SEEK HIS FORTUNES.

Known to all is Lady Godiva, the most beautiful as well as the most saintly woman of her day; who, "all her life, kept at her own expense thirteen poor folk wherever she went; who, throughout Lent, watched in the church at triple matins, namely, one for the Trinity, one for the Cross, and one for St. Mary; who every day read the Psalter through, and so persevered in good and holy works to her life's end,"—the "devoted friend of St. Mary, ever a virgin," who enriched monasteries without number,—Leominster, Wenlock, Chester, St. Mary's Stow by Lincoln, Worcester, Evesham; and who, above all, founded the great monastery in that town of Coventry, which has made her name immortal for another and a far nobler deed; and enriched it so much "that no monastery in England possessed such abundance of gold, silver, jewels, and precious stones," beside that most precious jewel of all, the arm of St. Augustine, which not Lady Godiva, but her friend, Archbishop Ethelnoth, presented to Coventry, "having bought it at Pavia for a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold."[2]

Less known, save to students, is her husband, Leofric the great Earl of Mercia and Chester, whose bones lie by those of Godiva in that

2 William of Malmesbury.

same minster of Coventry; how "his counsel was as if one had opened the Divine oracles"; very "wise," says the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "for God and for the world, which was a blessing to all this nation"; the greatest man, save his still greater rival, Earl Godwin, in Edward the Confessor's court.

Less known, again, are the children of that illustrious pair: Algar, or Alfgar, Earl of Mercia after his father, who died, after a short and stormy life, leaving two sons, Edwin and Morcar, the fair and hapless young earls, always spoken of together, as if they had been twins; a daughter, Aldytha, or Elfgiva, married first (according to some) to Griffin, King of North Wales, and certainly afterwards to Harold, King of England; and another, Lucia (as the Normans at least called her), whose fate was, if possible, more sad than that of her brothers.

Their second son was Hereward, whose history this tale sets forth; their third and youngest, a boy whose name is unknown.

They had, probably, another daughter beside; married, it may be, to some son of Leofric's stanch friend old Siward Biorn, the Viking Earl of Northumberland, and conqueror of Macbeth; and the mother, may be, of the two young Siwards, the "white" and the "red," who figure in chronicle and legend as the nephews of Hereward. But this pedigree is little more than a conjecture.

Be these things as they may, Godiva was the greatest lady in England, save two: Edith, Harold's sister, the nominal wife of Edward the Confessor; and Githa, or Gyda, as her own Danes called her, Harold's mother, niece of Canute the Great. Great was Godiva; and might have been proud enough, had she been inclined to that pleasant sin. And even then (for there is a skeleton, they say, in every house) she carried that about her which might well keep her humble; namely, shame at the misconduct of Hereward, her son.

Her favorite residence, among the many manors and "villas," or farms which Leofric possessed, was neither the stately hall at Loughton by Bridgenorth, nor the statelier castle of Warwick, but the house of Bourne in South Lincolnshire, between the great woods of the Bruneswald and the great level of the fens. It may have been her own paternal dowry, and have come down to her in right of her Danish ancestors, and that great and "magnificent" Jarl Oslac, from whom

she derived her all-but-royal blood. This is certain, that Leofric, her husband, went in East Anglia by the name of Leofric, Lord of Bourne; that, as Domesday Book testifies, his son Alfgar, and his grandson Morcar, held large lands there and thereabout. Alfgar's name, indeed, still lives in the village of Algar-Kirk; and Lady Godiva, and Algar after her, enriched with great gifts Crowland, the island sanctuary, and Peterborough, where Brand, either her brother or Leofric's, was a monk, and in due time an abbot.

The house of Bourne, as far as it can be reconstructed by imagination, was altogether unlike one of the tall and gloomy Norman castles which twenty years later reared their evil donjons over England. It was much more like a house in a Chinese painting; an irregular group of low buildings, almost all of one story, stone below and timber above, with high-peaked roofs,—at least in the more Danish country,—affording a separate room, or rather house, for each different need of the family. Such a one may be seen in the illuminations of the century. In the centre of the building is the hall, with door or doors opening out into the court; and sitting thereat, at the top of a flight of steps, the lord and lady, dealing clothes to the naked and bread to the hungry. On one side of the hall is a chapel; by it a large room or "bower" for the ladies; behind the hall a round tower, seemingly the strong place of the whole house; on the other side a kitchen; and stuck on to bower, kitchen, and every other principal building, lean-to after lean-to, the uses of which it is impossible now to discover. The house had grown with the wants of the family,—as many good old English houses have done to this day. Round it would be scattered barns and stables, in which grooms and herdsmen slept side by side with their own horses and cattle; and outside all, the "yard," "garth," or garden-fence, high earth-bank with palisades on top, which formed a strong defence in time of war. Such was most probably the "villa," "ton," or "town" of Earl Leofric, the Lord of Bourne, the favorite residence of Godiva,—once most beautiful, and still most holy, according to the holiness of those old times.

Now on a day—about the year 1054—while Earl Siward was helping to bring Birnam wood to Dunsinane, to avenge his murdered brother-in-law, Lady Godiva sat, not at her hall door, dealing food

and clothing to her thirteen poor folk, but in her bower, with her youngest son, a two-years' boy, at her knee. She was listening with a face of shame and horror to the complaint of Herluin, Steward of Peterborough, who had fallen in that afternoon with Hereward and his crew of "housecarles."

To keep a following of stout housecarles, or men-at-arms, was the pride as well as the duty of an Anglo-Danish Lord, as it was, till lately, of a Scoto-Danish Highland Laird. And Hereward, in imitation of his father and his elder brother, must needs have his following from the time he was but fifteen years old. All the unruly youths of the neighborhood, sons of free "holders," who owed some sort of military service to Earl Leofric; Geri, his cousin; Winter, whom he called his brother-in-arms; the Wulfrics, the Wulfards, the Azers, and many another wild blade, had banded themselves round a young nobleman more unruly than themselves. Their names were already a terror to all decent folk, at wakes and fairs, alehouses and village sports. They atoned, be it remembered, for their early sins by making those names in after years a terror to the invaders of their native land: but as yet their prowess was limited to drunken brawls and faction-fights; to upsetting old women at their work, levying blackmail from quiet chapmen on the high road, or bringing back in triumph, sword in hand and club on shoulder, their leader Hereward from some duel which his insolence had provoked.

But this time, if the story of the sub-prior was to be believed, Hereward and his housecarles had taken an ugly stride forward toward the pit. They had met him riding along, intent upon his psalter, in a lonely path of the Bruneswald,—"Whereon your son, most gracious lady, bade me stand, saying that his men were thirsty and he had no money to buy ale withal, and none so likely to help him thereto as a fat priest,—for so he scandalously termed me, who, as your ladyship knows, am leaner than the minster bell-ropes, with fasting Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, beside the vigils of the saints, and the former and latter Lents.

"But when he saw who I was, as if inspired by a malignant spirit, he shouted out my name, and bade his companions throw me to the ground."

"Throw you to the ground?" shuddered the Lady Godiva.

"In much mire, madam. After which he took my palfrey, saying that heaven's gate was too lowly for men on horseback to get in thereat; and then my marten's fur gloves and cape which your gracious self bestowed on me, alleging that the rules of my order allowed only one garment, and no furs save catskins and such like. And lastly—I tremble while I relate, thinking not of the loss of my poor money, but the loss of an immortal soul—took from me a purse with sixteen silver pennies, which I had collected from our tenants for the use of the monastery, and said, blasphemously, that I and mine had swindled your ladyship, and therefore him, your son, out of many a fair manor ere now; and it was but fair that he should tithe the rents thereof, as he should never get the lands out of our claws again; with more of the like, which I blush to repeat,—and so left me to trudge hither in the mire."

"Wretched boy!" said the Lady Godiva, and hid her face in her hands; "and more wretched I, to have brought such a son into the world!"

The monk had hardly finished his doleful story, when there was a pattering of heavy feet, a noise of men shouting and laughing outside, and a voice, above all, calling for the monk by name, which made that good man crouch behind the curtain of Lady Godiva's bed. The next moment the door of the bower was thrown violently open, and in walked, or rather reeled, a noble lad eighteen years old. His face was of extraordinary beauty, save that the lower jaw was too long and heavy, and that his eyes wore a strange and almost sinister expression, from the fact that the one of them was gray and the other blue. He was short, but of immense breadth of chest and strength of limb; while his delicate hands and feet and long locks of golden hair marked him of most noble, and even, as he really was, of ancient royal race. He was dressed in a gaudy costume, resembling on the whole that of a Highland chieftain. His knees, wrists, and throat were tattoed in bright blue patterns; and he carried sword and dagger, a gold ring round his neck, and gold rings on his wrists. He was a lad to have gladdened the eyes of any mother: but there was no gladness in the Lady Godiva's eyes as she received him; nor had there been for many

a year. She looked on him with sternness,—with all but horror; and he, his face flushed with wine, which he had tossed off as he passed through the hall to steady his nerves for the coming storm, looked at her with smiling defiance, the result of long estrangement between mother and son.

"Well, my lady," said he, ere she could speak, "I heard that this good fellow was here, and came home as fast as I could, to see that he told you as few lies as possible."

"He has told me," said she, "that you have robbed the Church of God."

"Robbed him, it may be, an old hoody crow, against whom I have a grudge of ten years' standing."

"Wretched, wretched boy! What wickedness next? Know you not, that he who robs the Church robs God himself?"

"And he who harms God's people," put in the monk from behind the chair, "harms his Maker."

"His Maker?" said the lad, with concentrated bitterness. "It would be a gay world, if the Maker thereof were in any way like unto you, who call yourselves his people. Do you remember who told them to set the peat-stack on fire under me ten years ago? Ah, ha, Sir Monk, you forget that I have been behind the screen,—that I have been a monk myself, or should have been one, if my pious lady mother here had had her will of me, as she may if she likes of that doll there at her knee. Do you forget why I left Peterborough Abbey, when Winter and I turned all your priest's books upside down in the choir, and they would have flogged us,—me, the Earl's son,—me, the Viking's son,—me, the champion, as I will be yet, and make all lands ring with the fame of my deeds, as they rung with the fame of my forefathers, before they became the slaves of monks; and how when Winter and I got hold of the kitchen spits, and up to the top of the peat-stack, and held you all at bay there, a whole abbeyful of cowards there, against two seven years' children? It was you bade set the peat-stack alight under us, and so bring us down; and would have done it, too, had it not been for my Uncle Brand, the only man that I care for in this wide world. Do you think I have not owed you a grudge ever since that day, monk? And do you think I will not pay it? Do you think I

would not have burned Peterborough minster over your head before now, had it not been for Uncle Brand's sake? See that I do not do it yet. See that when there is another Prior in Borough you do not find Hereward the Berserker smoking you out some dark night, as he would smoke a wasps' nest. And I will, by—"

"Hereward, Hereward!" cried his mother, "godless, god-forgotten boy, what words are these? Silence, before you burden your soul with an oath which the devils in hell will accept, and force you to keep!" and she sprung up, and, seizing his arm, laid her hand upon his mouth.

Hereward looked at her majestic face, once lovely, now careworn, and trembled for a moment. Had there been any tenderness in it, his history might have been a very different one; but alas! there was none. Not that she was in herself untender; but that her great piety (call it not superstition, for it was then the only form known or possible to pure and devout souls) was so outraged by this, or even by the slightest insult to that clergy whose willing slave she had become, that the only method of reclaiming the sinner had been long forgotten, in genuine horror at his sin. "Is it not enough," she went on, sternly, "that you should have become the bully and the ruffian of all the fens?—that Hereward the leaper, Hereward the wrestler, Hereward the thrower of the hammer—sports, after all, only fit for the sons of slaves—should be also Hereward the drunkard, Hereward the common fighter, Hereward the breaker of houses, Hereward the leader of mobs of boon companions which bring back to us, in shame and sorrow, the days when our heathen forefathers ravaged this land with fire and sword? Is it not enough for me that my son should be a common stabber—?"

"Whoever called me stabber to you, lies. If I have killed men, or had them killed, I have done it in fair fight."

But she went on unheeding,—"Is it not enough, that, after having squandered on your fellows all the money that you could wring from my bounty, or win at your brutal sports, you should have robbed your own father, collected his rents behind his back, taken money and goods from his tenants by threats and blows; but that, after outraging them, you must add to all this a worse sin likewise,—outraging God, and driving me—me who have borne with you, me who have concealed

all for your sake—to tell your father that of which the very telling will turn my hair to gray?"

"So you will tell my father?" said Hereward, coolly.

"And if I should not, this monk himself is bound to do so, or his superior, your Uncle Brand."

"My Uncle Brand will not, and your monk dare not."

"Then I must. I have loved you long and well; but there is one thing which I must love better than you: and that is, my conscience and my Maker."

"Those are two things, my lady mother, and not one; so you had better not confound them. As for the latter, do you not think that He who made the world is well able to defend his own property,—if the lands and houses and cattle and money which these men wheedle and threaten and forge out of you and my father are really His property, and not merely their plunder? As for your conscience, my lady mother, really you have done so many good deeds in your life, that it might be beneficial to you to do a bad one once in a way, so as to keep your soul in a wholesome state of humility."

The monk groaned aloud. Lady Godiva groaned; but it was inwardly. There was silence for a moment. Both were abashed by the lad's utter shamelessness.

"And you will tell my father?" said he again. "He is at the old miracle-worker's court at Westminster. He will tell the miracle-worker, and I shall be outlawed."

"And if you be, wretched boy, whom have you to blame but yourself? Can you expect that the king, sainted even as he is before his death, dare pass over such an atrocity towards Holy Church?"

"Blame? I shall blame no one. Pass over? I hope he will not pass over it, I only want an excuse like that for turning kempery-man—knight-errant, as those Norman puppies call it,—like Regnar Lodbrog, or Frithiof, or Harold Hardraade; and try what man can do for himself in the world with nothing to help him in heaven and earth, with neither saint nor angel, friend or counsellor, to see to him, save his wits and his good sword. So send off the messenger, good mother mine: and I will promise you I will not have him ham-strung on the way, as some of my housecarles would do for me if I but held up my hand; and

let the miracle-monger fill up the measure of his folly, by making an enemy of one more bold fellow in the world."

And he swaggered out of the room.

And when he was gone, the Lady Godiva bowed her head into her lap and wept long and bitterly. Neither her maidens nor the priest dare speak to her for nigh an hour; but at the end of that time she lifted up her head, and settled her face again, till it was like that of a marble saint over a minster door; and called for ink and paper, and wrote her letter; and then asked for a trusty messenger who should carry it up to Westminster.

"None so swift or sure," said the house steward, "as Martin Lightfoot."

Lady Godiva shook her head. "I mistrust that man," she said. "He is too fond of my poor—of the Lord Hereward."

"He is a strange one, my lady, and no one knows whence he came, and, I sometimes fancy, whither he may go either; but ever since my lord threatened to hang him for talking with my young master, he has never spoken to him, nor scarcely, indeed, to living soul. And one thing there is makes him or any man sure, as long as he is well paid; and that is, that he cares for nothing in heaven or earth save himself and what he can get."

So Martin Lightfoot was sent for. He came in straight into the lady's bedchamber, after the simple fashion of those days. He was a tall, lean, bony man, as was to be expected from his nickname, with a long hooked nose, a scanty brown beard, and a high conical head. His only garment was a shabby gray woollen tunic, which served him both as coat and kilt, and laced brogues of untanned hide. He might have been any age from twenty to forty; but his face was disfigured with deep scars and long exposure to the weather. He dropped on one knee, holding his greasy cap in his hand, and looked, not at his lady's face, but at her feet, with a stupid and frightened expression. She knew very little of him, save that her husband had picked him up upon the road as a wanderer some five years since; and that he had been employed as a doer of odd jobs and runner of messages, and that he was supposed, from his taciturnity and strangeness, to have something uncanny about him.

"Martin," said the lady, "they tell me that you are a silent and a prudent man."

"That am I.

'Tongue speaketh bane,
Though she herself hath nane.'"

"I shall try you: do you know your way to London?"

"Yes."

"To your lord's lodgings in Westminster?"

"Yes."

"How long shall you be going there with this letter?"

"A day and a half."

"When shall you be back hither?"

"On the fourth day."

"And you will go to my lord and deliver this letter safely?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Why do you call me Majesty? The King is Majesty."

"You are my Queen."

"What do you mean, man?"

"You can hang me."

"I hang thee, poor soul! Who did I ever hang, or hurt for a moment, if I could help it?"

"But the Earl may."

"He will neither hang nor hurt thee if thou wilt take this letter safely, and bring me back the answer safely."

"They will kill me."

"Who?"

"They," said Martin, pointing to the bower maidens,—young ladies of good family who stood round, chosen for their good looks, after the fashion of those times, to attend on great ladies. There was a cry of angry and contemptuous denial, not unmixed with something like laughter, which showed that Martin had but spoken the truth. Hereward, in spite of all his sins, was the darling of his mother's bower; and there was not one of the damsels but would have done anything short of murder to have prevented Martin carrying the letter.

"Silence, man!" said Lady Godiva, so sternly that Martin saw that he had gone too far. "How know'st such as thou what is in this letter?"

"Those others will know," said Martin, sullenly, without answering the last question.

"Who?"

"His housecarles outside there."

"He has promised that they shall not touch thee. But how knowest thou what is in this letter?"

"I will take it," said Martin: he held out his hand, took it and looked at it, but upside down, and without any attempt to read it.

"His own mother," said he, after a while.

"What is that to thee?" said Lady Godiva, blushing and kindling.

"Nothing: I had no mother. But God has one!"

"What meanest thou, knave? Wilt thou take the letter or no?"

"I will take it." And he again looked at it without rising off his knee. "His own father, too."

"What is that to thee, I say again?"

"Nothing: I have no father. But God's Son has one!"

"What wilt thou, thou strange man?" asked she, puzzled and half-frightened; "and how camest thou to know what is in this letter?"

"Who does not know? A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. On the fourth day from this I will be back."

And Martin rose, and putting the letter solemnly into the purse at his girdle, shot out of the door with clenched teeth, as a man upon a fixed purpose which it would lighten his heart to carry out. He ran rapidly through the large outer hall, past the long oak table, at which Hereward and his boon companions were drinking and roistering; and as he passed the young lord he cast on him a look so full of meaning, that though Hereward knew not what the meaning was, it startled him, and for a moment softened him. Did this man who had sullenly avoided him for more than two years, whom he had looked on as a clod or a post in the field beneath his notice, since he could be of no use to him,—did this man still care for him? Hereward had reason to know better than most that there was something strange and uncanny about the man. Did he mean him well? Or had he some grudge against him, which made

him undertake this journey willingly and out of spite?—possibly with the will to make bad worse. For an instant Hereward's heart misgave him. He would stop the letter at all risks. "Hold him!" he cried to his comrades.

But Martin turned to him, laid his finger on his lips, smiled kindly, and saying "You promised!" caught up a loaf from the table, slipped from among them like an eel, and darted out of the door, and out of the close. They followed him to the great gate, and there stopped, some cursing, some laughing. To give Martin Lightfoot a yard advantage was never to come up with him again. Some called for bows to bring him down with a parting shot. But Hereward forbade them; and stood leaning against the gate-post, watching him trot on like a lean wolf over the lawn, till he was lost in the great elm-woods which fringed the southern fen.

"Now, lads," said Hereward, "home with you all, and make your peace with your fathers. In this house you never drink ale again."

They looked at him, surprised.

"You are disbanded, my gallant army. As long as I could cut long thongs out of other men's hides, I could feed you like earl's sons: but now I must feed myself; and a dog over his bone wants no company. Outlawed I shall be before the week is out; and unless you wish to be outlawed too, you will obey orders, and home."

"We will follow you to the world's end," cried some.

"To the rope's end, lads: that is all you will get in my company. Go home with you, and those who feel a calling, let them turn monks; and those who have not, let them learn

'For to plough and to sow,
And to reap and to mow,
And to be a farmer's boy.'

Good night."

And he went in, and shut the great gates after him, leaving them astonished.

To take his advice, and go home, was the simplest thing to be done. A few of them on their return were soundly thrashed, and deserved

it; a few were hidden by their mothers for a week, in hay-lofts and hen-roosts, till their father's anger had passed away. But only one turned monk or clerk, and that was Leofric the Unlucky, godson of the great earl, and poet-in-ordinary to the band.

The next morning at dawn Hereward mounted his best horse, armed himself from head to foot, and rode over to Peterborough.

When he came to the abbey-gate, he smote thereon with his lance-but, till the porter's teeth rattled in his head for fear.

"Let me in!" he shouted. "I am Hereward Leofricsson. I must see my Uncle Brand."

"O my most gracious lord!" cried the porter, thrusting his head out of the wicket, "what is this that you have been doing to our Steward?"

"The tithe of what I will do, unless you open the gate!"

"O my lord!" said the porter, as he opened it, "if our Lady and St. Peter would but have mercy on your fair face, and convert your soul to the fear of God and man—"

"She would make me as good an old fool as you. Fetch my uncle, the Prior."

The porter obeyed. The son of Earl Leofric was as a young lion among the sheep in those parts; and few dare say him nay, certainly not the monks of Peterborough; moreover, the good porter could not help being strangely fond of Hereward—as was every one whom he did not insult, rob, or kill.

Out came Brand, a noble elder: more fit, from his eye and gait, to be a knight than a monk. He looked sadly at Hereward.

"'Dear is bought the honey that is licked off the thorn,' quoth Hending," said he.

"Hending bought his wisdom by experience, I suppose," said Hereward, "and so must I. So I am just starting out to see the world, uncle."

"Naughty, naughty boy! If we had thee safe here again for a week, we would take this hot blood out of thee, and send thee home in thy right mind."

"Bring a rod and whip me, then. Try, and you shall have your chance. Every one else has had, and this is the end of their labors."

"By the chains of St. Peter," quoth the monk, "that is just what thou needest. Hoist thee on such another fool's back, truss thee up, and lay it on lustily, till thou art ashamed. To treat thee as a man is only to make thee a more heady blown-up ass than thou art already."

"True, most wise uncle. And therefore my still wiser parents are going to treat me like a man indeed, and send me out into the world to seek my fortunes!"

"Eh?"

"They are going to prove how thoroughly they trust me to take care of myself, by outlawing me. Eh? say I in return. Is not that an honor, and a proof that I have not shown myself a fool, though I may have a madman?"

"Outlaw you? O my boy, my darling, my pride! Get off your horse, and don't sit there, hand on hip, like a turbaned Saracen, defying God and man; but come down and talk reason to me, for the sake of St. Peter and all saints."

Hereward threw himself off his horse, and threw his arms round his uncle's neck.

"Pish! Now, uncle, don't cry, do what you will, lest I cry too. Help me to be a man while I live, even if I go to the black place when I die."

"It shall not be!" .... and the monk swore by all the relics in Peterborough minster.

"It must be. It shall be. I like to be outlawed. I want to be outlawed. It makes one feel like a man. There is not an earl in England, save my father, who has not been outlawed in his time. My brother Alfgar will be outlawed before he dies, if he has the spirit of a man in him. It is the fashion, my uncle, and I must follow it. So hey for the merry greenwood, and the long ships, and the swan's bath, and all the rest of it. Uncle, you will lend me fifty silver pennies?"

"I? I would not lend thee one, if I had it, which I have not. And yet, old fool that I am, I believe I would."

"I would pay thee back honestly. I shall go down to Constantinople to the Varangers, get my Polotaswarf[3] out of the Kaiser's treasure, and pay thee back five to one."

"What does this son of Belial here?" asked an austere voice.

3 See "The Heimskringla," Harold Hardraade's Saga, for the meaning of this word.

"Ah! Abbot Leofric, my very good lord. I have come to ask hospitality of you for some three days. By that time I shall be a wolf's head, and out of the law: and then, if you will give me ten minutes' start, you may put your bloodhounds on my track, and see which runs fastest, they or I. You are a gentleman, and a man of honor; so I trust to you to feed my horse fairly the meanwhile, and not to let your monks poison me."

The Abbot's face relaxed. He tried to look as solemn as he could; but he ended in bursting into a very great laughter, and swearing likewise.

"The insolence of this lad passes the miracles of all saints. He robs St. Peter on the highway, breaks into his abbey, insults him to his face, and then asks him for hospitality; and—"

"And gets it," quoth Hereward.

"What is to be done with him, Brand, my friend? If we turn him out—"

"Which we cannot do," said Brand, looking at the well-mailed and armed lad, "without calling in half a dozen of our men-at-arms."

"In which case there would be blood shed, and scandal made in the holy precincts."

"And nothing gained; for yield he would not till he was killed outright, which God forbid!"

"Amen. And if he stay here, he may be persuaded to repentance."

"And restitution."

"As for that," quoth Hereward (who had remounted his horse from prudential motives, and set him athwart the gateway, so that there was no chance of the doors being slammed behind him), "if either of you will lend me sixteen pence, I will pay it back to you and St. Peter before I die, with interest enough to satisfy any Jew, on the word of a gentleman and an earl's son."

The Abbot burst again into a great laughter. "Come in, thou graceless renegade, and we will see to thee and thy horse; and I will pray to St. Peter; and I doubt not he will have patience with thee, for he is very merciful; and after all, thy parents have been exceeding good to us, and the righteousness of the father, like his sins, is sometimes visited on the children."

Now, why were the two ecclesiastics so uncanonically kind to this wicked youth?

Perhaps because both the old bachelors were wishing from their hearts that they had just such a son of their own. And beside, Earl Leofric was a very great man indeed; and the wind might change; for it is an unstable world.

"Only, mind, one thing," said the naughty boy, as he dismounted, and halloed to a lay-brother to see to his horse,—"don't let me see the face of that Herluin."

"And why? You have wronged him, and he will forgive you, doubtless, like a good Christian as he is."

"That is his concern. But if I see him, I cut off his head. And, as Uncle Brand knows, I always sleep with my sword under my pillow."

"O that such a mother should have borne such a son." groaned the Abbot, as they went in.

On the fifth day came Martin Lightfoot, and found Hereward in Prior Brand's private cell.

"Well?" asked Hereward coolly.

"Is he—? Is he—?" stammered Brand, and could not finish his sentence.

Martin nodded.

Hereward laughed,—a loud, swaggering, hysterical laugh.

"See what it is to be born of just and pious parents. Come, Master Trot-alone, speak out and tell us all about it. Thy lean wolf's legs have run to some purpose. Open thy lean wolf's mouth and speak for once, lest I ease thy legs for the rest of thy life by a cut across the hams. Find thy lost tongue, I say!"

"Walls have ears, as well as the wild-wood," said Martin.

"We are safe here," said the Prior; "so speak, and tell us the whole truth."

"Well, when the Earl read the letter, he turned red, and pale again, and then naught but, 'Men, follow me to the King at Westminster.' So we went, all with our weapons, twenty or more, along the Strand, and up into the King's new hall; and a grand hall it is, but not easy to get into, for the crowd of monks and beggars on the stairs, hindering honest folks' business. And there sat the King on a high settle, with

his pink face and white hair, looking as royal as a bell-wether new washed; and on either side of him, on the same settle, sat the old fox and the young wolf."

"Godwin and Harold? And where was the Queen?"

"Sitting on a stool at his feet, with her hands together as if she were praying, and her eyes downcast, as demure as any cat. And so is fulfilled the story, how the sheep-dog went out to get married, and left the fox, the wolf, and the cat to guard the flock."

"If thou hast found thy tongue," said Brand, "thou art like enough to lose it again by slice of knife, talking such ribaldry of dignities. Dost not know"—and he sank his voice—"that Abbot Leofric is Earl Harold's man, and that Harold himself made him abbot?"

"I said, walls have ears. It was you who told me that we were safe. However, I will bridle the unruly one." And he went on. "And your father walked up the hall, his left hand on his sword-hilt, looking an earl all over, as he is."

"He is that," said Hereward, in a low voice.

"And he bowed; and the most magnificent, powerful, and virtuous Godwin would have beckoned him up to sit on the high settle; but he looked straight at the King, as if there were never a Godwin or a Godwinsson on earth, and cried as he stood,—

"'Justice, my Lord the King!'

"And at that the King turned pale, and said, 'Who? What? O miserable world! O last days drawing nearer and nearer! O earth, full of violence and blood! Who has wronged thee now, most dear and noble Earl?'

"'Justice against my own son.'

"At that the fox looked at the wolf, and the wolf at the fox; and if they did not smile it was not for want of will, I warrant. But your father went on, and told all his story; and when he came to your robbing master monk,—'O apostate!' cries the bell-wether, 'O spawn of Beelzebub! excommunicate him, with bell, book, and candle. May he be thrust down with Korah, Balaam, and Iscariot, to the most Stygian pot of the sempiternal Tartarus.'

"And at that your father smiled. 'That is bishops' work,' says he; 'and I want king's work from you, Lord King. Outlaw me this young

rebel's sinful body, as by law you can; and leave his sinful soul to the priests,—or to God's mercy, which is like to be more than theirs.'

"Then the Queen looked up. 'Your own son, noble Earl? Think of what you are doing, and one whom all say is so gallant and so fair. O persuade him, father,—persuade him, Harold my brother,—or, if you cannot persuade him, persuade the King at least, and save this poor youth from exile.'"

"Puss Velvet-paw knew well enough," said Hereward, in a low voice, "that the way to harden my father's heart was to set Godwin and Harold on softening it. They ask my pardon from the King? I would not take it at their asking, even if my father would."

"There spoke a true Leofricsson," said Brand, in spite of himself.

"'By the—'" (and Martin repeated a certain very solemn oath), "said your father, 'justice I will have, my Lord King. Who talks to me of my own son? You put me into my earldom to see justice done and law obeyed; and how shall I make others keep within bound if I am not to keep in my own flesh and blood? Here is this land running headlong to ruin, because every nobleman—ay, every churl who owns a manor, if he dares—must needs arm and saddle, and levy war on his own behalf, and harry and slay the king's lieges, if he have not garlic to his roast goose every time he chooses,'—and there your father did look at Godwin, once and for all;—'and shall I let my son follow the fashion, and do his best to leave the land open and weak for Norseman, or Dane, or Frenchman, or whoever else hopes next to mount the throne of a king who is too holy to leave an heir behind him?'"

"Ahoi! Martin the silent! Where learnt you so suddenly the trade of preaching? I thought you kept your wind for your running this two years past. You would make as good a talker among the Witan as Godwin himself. You give it us all, word for word, and voice and gesture withal, as if you were King Edward's French Chancellor."

Martin smiled. "I am like Falada the horse, my lords, who could only speak to his own true princess. Why I held my tongue of late was only lest they should cut my head off for talking, as they did poor Falada's."

"Thou art a very crafty knave," said Brand, "and hast had clerk-

learning in thy time, I can see, and made bad use of it. I misdoubt very much that thou art some runaway monk."

"That am I not, by St. Peter's chains!" said Martin, in an eager, terrified voice. "Lord Hereward, I came hither as your father's messenger and servant. You will see me safe out of this abbey, like an honorable gentleman!"

"I will. All I know of him, uncle, is that he used to tell me stories, when I was a boy, of enchanters, and knights, and dragons, and such like, and got into trouble for filling my head with such fancies. Now let him tell his story in peace."

"He shall; but I misdoubt the fellow very much. He talks as if he knew Latin; and what business has a foot-running slave to do that?"

So Martin went on, somewhat abashed. "'And,' said your father, 'justice I will have, and leave injustice, and the overlooking of it, to those who wish to profit thereby.'

"And at that Godwin smiled, and said to the King, 'The Earl is wise, as usual, and speaks like a very Solomon. Your Majesty must, in spite of your own tenderness of heart, have these letters of outlawry made out.'

"Then all our men murmured,—and I as loud as any. But old Surturbrand the housecarle did more; for out he stepped to your father's side, and spoke right up before the King.

"'Bonny times,' he said, 'I have lived to see, when a lad of Earl Oslac's blood is sent out of the land, a beggar and a wolf's head, for playing a boy's trick or two, and upsetting a shaveling priest! We managed such wild young colts better, we Vikings who conquered the Danelagh. If Canute had had a son like Hereward—as would to God he had had!—he would have dealt with him as old Swend Forkbeard (God grant I meet him in Valhalla, in spite of all priests!) did by Canute himself when he was young, and kicked and plunged awhile at being first bitted and saddled.'

"'What does the man say?' asked the King, for old Surturbrand was talking broad Danish.

"'He is a housecarle of mine, Lord King, a good man and true; but old age and rough Danish blood has made him forget that he stands before kings and earls.'

"'By ——, Earl!' says Surturbrand, 'I have fought knee to knee beside a braver king than that there, and nobler earls than ever a one here; and was never afraid, like a free Dane, to speak my mind to them, by sea or land. And if the King, with his French ways, does not understand a plain man's talk, the two earls yonder do right well, and I say,—Deal by this lad in the good old fashion. Give him half a dozen long ships, and what crews he can get together, and send him out, as Canute would have done, to seek his fortune like a Viking; and if he comes home with plenty of wounds, and plenty of plunder, give him an earldom as he deserves. Do you ask your Countess, Earl Godwin:—she is of the right Danish blood, God bless her! though she is your wife,—and see if she does not know how to bring a naughty lad to his senses.'

"Then Harold the Earl said: 'The old man is right. King, listen to what he says.' And he told him all, quite eagerly."

"How did you know that? Can you understand French?"

"I am a poor idiot, give me a halfpenny," said Martin, in a doleful voice, as he threw into his face and whole figure a look of helpless stupidity and awkwardness, which set them both laughing.

But Hereward checked himself. "And you think he was in earnest?"

"As sure as there are holy crows in Crowland. But it was of no use. Your father got a parchment, with an outlandish Norman seal hanging to it, and sent me off with it that same night to give to the lawman. So wolf's head you are, my lord, and there is no use crying over spilt milk."

"And Harold spoke for me? It will be as well to tell Abbot Leofric that, in case he be inclined to turn traitor, and refuse to open the gates. Once outside them, I care not for mortal man."

"My poor boy, there will be many a one whom thou hast wronged only too ready to lie in wait for thee, now thy life is in every man's hand. If the outlawry is published, thou hadst best start to-night, and get past Lincoln before morning."

"I shall stay quietly here, and get a good night's rest; and then ride out to-morrow morning in the face of the whole shire. No, not a word! You would not have me sneak away like a coward?"

Brand smiled and shrugged his shoulders: being very much of the same mind.

"At least, go north."

"And why north?"

"You have no quarrel in Northumberland, and the King's writ runs very slowly there, if at all. Old Siward Digre may stand your friend."

"He? He is a fast friend of my father's."

"What of that? the old Viking will like you none the less for having shown a touch of his own temper. Go to him, I say, and tell him that I sent you."

"But he is fighting the Scots beyond the Forth."

"So much the better. There will be good work for you to do. And Gislebert of Ghent is up there too, I hear, trying to settle himself among the Scots. He is your mother's kinsman; and as for your being an outlaw, he wants hard hitters and hard riders, and all is fish that comes to his net. Find him out, too, and tell him I sent you."

"You are a good old uncle," said Hereward. "Why were you not a soldier?"

Brand laughed somewhat sadly.

"If I had been a soldier, lad, where would you have looked for a friend this day? No. God has done what was merciful with me and my sins. May he do the same by thee and thine."

Hereward made an impatient movement. He disliked any word which seemed likely to soften his own hardness of heart. But he kissed his uncle lovingly on both cheeks.

"By the by, Martin,—any message from my lady mother?"

"None!"

"Quite right and pious. I am an enemy to Holy Church and therefore to her. Good night, uncle."

"Hey?" asked Brand; "where is that footman,—Martin you call him? I must have another word with him."

But Martin was gone.

"No matter. I shall question him sharply enough to-morrow, I warrant."

And Hereward went out to his lodging; while the good Prior went to his prayers.

When Hereward entered his room, Martin started out of the darkness, and followed him in. Then he shut to the door carefully, and pulled out a bag.

"There was no message from my lady: but there was this."

The bag was full of money.

"Why did you not tell me of this before?"

"Never show money before a monk."

"Villain! would you mistrust my uncle?"

"Any man with a shaven crown. St. Peter is his God and Lord and conscience; and if he saw but the shine of a penny, for St. Peter he would want it."

"And he shall have it," quoth Hereward; and flung out of the room, and into his uncle's.

"Uncle, I have money. I am come to pay back what I took from the Steward, and as much more into the bargain." And he told out eight-and-thirty pieces.

"Thank God and all his saints!" cried Brand, weeping abundantly for joy; for he had acquired, by long devotion, the *donum lachrymarum*,—that lachrymose and somewhat hysterical temperament common among pious monks, and held to be a mark of grace.

"Blessed St. Peter, thou art repaid; and thou wilt be merciful!"

Brand believed, in common with all monks then, that Hereward had robbed, not merely the Abbey of Peterborough, but, what was more, St. Peter himself; thereby converting into an implacable and internecine foe the chief of the Apostles, the rock on which was founded the whole Church.

"Now, uncle," said Hereward, "do me one good deed in return. Promise me that, if you can help it, none of my poor housecarles shall suffer for my sins. I led them into trouble. I am punished. I have made restitution,—at least to St. Peter. See that my father and mother, if they be the Christians they call themselves, forgive and forget all offences except mine."

"I will; so help me all saints and our Lord. O my boy, my boy, thou shouldst have been a king's thane, and not an outlaw!"

And he hurried off with the news to the Abbot.

When Hereward returned to his room, Martin was gone.

"Farewell, good men of Peterborough," said Hereward, as he leapt into the saddle next morning. "I had made a vow against you, and came to try you; to see whether you would force me to fulfil it or

not. But you have been so kind that I have half repented of it; and the evil shall not come in the days of Abbot Leofric, nor of Brand the Prior, though it may come in the days of Herluin the Steward, if he live long enough."

"What do you mean, you incarnate fiend, only fit to worship Thor and Odin?" asked Brand.

"That I would burn Goldenborough, and Herluin the Steward within it, ere I die. I fear I shall do it; I fear I must do it. Ten years ago come Lammas, Herluin bade light the peat-stack under me. Do you recollect?"

"And so he did, the hound!" quoth Brand. "I had forgotten that."

"Little Hereward never forgets foe or friend. Ever since, on Lammas night,—hold still, horse!—I dream of fire and flame, and of Goldenborough in the glare of it. If it is written in the big book, happen it must; if not, so much the better for Goldenborough, for it is a pretty place, and honest Englishmen in it. Only see that there be not too many Frenchmen crept in when I come back, beside our French friend Herluin; and see, too, that there be not a peat-stack handy: a word is enough to wise men like you. Good by!"

"God help thee, thou sinful boy!" said the Abbot.

"Hereward, Hereward! Come back!" cried Brand.

But the boy had spurred his horse through the gateway, and was far down the road.

"Leofric, my friend," said Brand, sadly, "this is my sin, and no man's else. And heavy penance will I do for it, till that lad returns in peace."

"Your sin?"

"Mine, Abbot. I persuaded his mother to send him hither to be a monk. Alas! alas! How long will men try to be wiser than Him who maketh men?"

"I do not understand thee," quoth the Abbot. And no more he did.

It was four o'clock on a May morning, when Hereward set out to see the world, with good armor on his back, good weapon by his side, good horse between his knees, and good money in his purse. What could a lad of eighteen want more, who under the harsh family rule of those times had known nothing of a father's, and but too little of a mother's, love? He rode away northward through the Bruneswald, over

the higher land of Lincolnshire, through primeval glades of mighty oak and ash, holly and thorn, swarming with game, which was as highly preserved then as now, under Canute's severe forest laws. The yellow roes stood and stared at him knee-deep in the young fern; the pheasant called his hens out to feed in the dewy grass; the blackbird and thrush sang out from every bough; the wood-lark trilled above the high oak-tops, and sank down on them as his song sank down. And Hereward rode on, rejoicing in it all. It was a fine world in the Bruneswald. What was it then outside? Not to him, as to us, a world circular, sailed round, circumscribed, mapped, botanized, zoologized; a tiny planet about which everybody knows, or thinks they know everything: but a world infinite, magical, supernatural,—because unknown; a vast flat plain reaching no one knew whence or where, save that the mountains stood on the four corners thereof to keep it steady, and the four winds of heaven blew out of them; and in the centre, which was to him the Bruneswald, such things as he saw; but beyond, things unspeakable,—dragons, giants, rocs, orcs, witch-whales, griffins, chimeras, satyrs, enchanters, Paynims, Saracen Emirs and Sultans, Kaisers of Constantinople, Kaisers of Ind and of Cathay, and beyond them again of lands as yet unknown. At the very least he could go to Brittany, to the forest of Brocheliaunde, where (so all men said) fairies might be seen bathing in the fountains, and possibly be won and wedded by a bold and dexterous knight after the fashion of Sir Gruelan.[4]

What was there not to be seen and conquered? Where would he go? Where would he not go? For the spirit of Odin the Goer, the spirit which has sent his children round the world, was strong within him. He would go to Ireland, to the Ostmen, or Irish Danes men at Dublin, Waterford, or Cork, and marry some beautiful Irish Princess with gray eyes, and raven locks, and saffron smock, and great gold bracelets from her native hills. No; he would go off to the Orkneys, and join Bruce and Ranald, and the Vikings of the northern seas, and all the hot blood which had found even Norway too hot to hold it;

4 Wace, author of the "Roman de Rou," went to Brittany a generation later, to see those same fairies: but had no sport; and sang,—

"Fol i alai, fol m'en revins;
Folie quis, por fol me tins"

and sail through witch-whales and icebergs to Iceland and Greenland, and the sunny lands which they said lay even beyond, across the all but unknown ocean. He would go up the Baltic to the Jomsburg Vikings, and fight against Lett and Esthonian heathen, and pierce inland, perhaps, through Puleyn and the bison forests, to the land from whence came the magic swords and the old Persian coins which he had seen so often in the halls of his forefathers. No; he would go South, to the land of sun and wine; and see the magicians of Cordova and Seville; and beard Mussulman hounds worshipping their Mahomets; and perhaps bring home an Emir's daughter,—

"With more gay gold about her middle,
Than would buy half Northumberlee."

Or he would go up the Straits, and on to Constantinople and the great Kaiser of the Greeks, and join the Varanger Guard, and perhaps, like Harold Hardraade in his own days, after being cast to the lion for carrying off a fair Greek lady, tear out the monster's tongue with his own hands, and show the Easterns what a Viking's son could do. And as he dreamed of the infinite world and its infinite wonders, the enchanters he might meet, the jewels he might find, the adventures he might essay, he held that he must succeed in all, with hope and wit and a strong arm; and forgot altogether that, mixed up with the cosmogony of an infinite flat plain called the Earth, there was joined also the belief in a flat roof above called Heaven, on which (seen at times in visions through clouds and stars) sat saints, angels, and archangels, forevermore harping on their golden harps, and knowing neither vanity nor vexation of spirit, lust nor pride, murder nor war;—and underneath a floor, the name whereof was Hell; the mouths whereof (as all men knew) might be seen on Hecla and Aetna and Stromboli; and the fiends heard within, tormenting, amid fire, and smoke, and clanking chains, the souls of the eternally lost.

As he rode on slowly though cheerfully, as a man who will not tire his horse at the beginning of a long day's journey, and knows not where he shall pass the night, he was aware of a man on foot coming up behind him at a slow, steady, loping, wolf-like trot, which in spite

of its slowness gained ground on him so fast, that he saw at once that the man could be no common runner.

The man came up; and behold, he was none other than Martin Lightfoot.

"What! art thou here?" asked Hereward, suspiciously, and half cross at seeing any visitor from the old world which he had just cast off. "How gottest thou out of St. Peter's last night?"

Martin's tongue was hanging out of his mouth like a running hound's, but he seemed, like a hound, to perspire through his mouth, for he answered without the least sign of distress, without even pulling in his tongue,—

"Over the wall, the moment the Prior's back was turned. I was not going to wait till I was chained up in some rat's-hole with a half-hundred of iron on my leg, and flogged till I confessed that I was what I am not,—a runaway monk."

"And why art here?"

"Because I am going with you."

"Going with me?" said Hereward; "what can I do for thee?"

"I can do for you," said Martin.

"What?"

"Groom your horse, wash your shirt, clean your weapons, find your inn, fight your enemies, cheat your friends,—anything and everything. You are going to see the world. I am going with you."

"Thou canst be my servant? A right slippery one, I expect," said Hereward, looking down on him with some suspicion.

"Some are not the rogues they seem. I can keep my secrets and yours too."

"Before I can trust thee with my secrets, I shall expect to know some of thine," said Hereward.

Martin Lightfoot looked up with a cunning smile. "A servant can always know his master's secrets if he likes. But that is no reason a master should know his servant's."

"Thou shalt tell me thine, man, or I shall ride off and leave thee."

"Not so easy, my lord. Where that heavy horse can go, Martin Lightfoot can follow. But I will tell you one secret, which I never told to living man. I can read and write like any clerk."

"Thou read and write?"

"Ay, good Latin enough, and Irish too, what is more. And now, because I love you, and because you I will serve, willy nilly, I will tell you all the secrets I have, as long as my breath lasts, for my tongue is rather stiff after that long story about the bell-wether. I was born in Ireland, in Waterford town. My mother was an English slave, one of those that Earl Godwin's wife—not this one that is now, Gyda, but the old one, King Canute's sister—used to sell out of England by the score, tied together with ropes, boys and girls from Bristol town. Her master, my father that was (I shall know him again), got tired of her, and wanted to give her away to one of his kernes. She would not have that; so he hung her up hand and foot, and beat her that she died. There was an abbey hard by, and the Church laid on him a penance,—all that they dared get out of him,—that he should give me to the monks, being then a seven-years' boy. Well, I grew up in that abbey; they taught me my fa fa mi fa: but I liked better conning of ballads and hearing stories of ghosts and enchanters, such as I used to tell you. I'll tell you plenty more whenever you're tired. Then they made me work; and that I never could abide at all. Then they beat me every day; and that I could abide still less; but always I stuck to my book, for one thing I saw,—that learning is power, my lord; and that the reason why the monks are masters of the land is, they are scholars, and you fighting men are none. Then I fell in love (as young blood will) with an Irish lass, when I was full seventeen years old; and when they found out that, they held me down on the floor and beat me till I was wellnigh dead. They put me in prison for a month; and between bread-and-water and darkness I went nigh foolish. They let me out, thinking I could do no more harm to man or lass; and when I found out how profitable folly was, foolish I remained, at least as foolish as seemed good to me. But one night I got into the abbey church, stole therefrom that which I have with me now, and which shall serve you and me in good stead yet,—out and away aboard a ship among the buscarles, and off into the Norway sea. But after a voyage or two, so it befell, I was wrecked in the Wash by Botulfston Deeps, and, begging my way inland, met with your father, and took service with him, as I have taken service now with you."

"Now, what has made thee take service with me?"

"Because you are you."

"Give me none of your parables and dark sayings, but speak out like a man. What canst see in me that thou shouldest share an outlaw's fortune with me?"

"I had run away from a monastery, so had you; I hated the monks, so did you; I liked to tell stories,—since I found good to shut my mouth I tell them to myself all day long, sometimes all night too. When I found out you liked to hear them, I loved you all the more. Then they told me not to speak to you; I held my tongue. I bided my time. I knew you would be outlawed some day. I knew you would turn Viking and kempery-man, and kill giants and enchanters, and win yourself honor and glory; and I knew I should have my share in it. I knew you would need me some day; and you need me now, and here I am; and if you try to cut me down with your sword, I will dodge you, and follow you, and dodge you again, till I force you to let me be your man, for with you I will live and die. And now I can talk no more."

"And with me thou shalt live and die," said Hereward, pulling up his horse, and frankly holding out his hand to his new friend.

Martin Lightfoot took his hand, kissed it, licked it almost as a dog would have done. "I am your man," he said, "amen; and true man I will prove to you, if you will prove true to me." And he dropped quietly back behind Hereward's horse, as if the business of his life was settled, and his mind utterly at rest.

"There is one more likeness between us," said Hereward, after a few minutes' thought. "If I have robbed a church, thou hast robbed one too. What is this precious spoil which is to serve me and thee in such mighty stead?"

Martin drew from inside his shirt and under his waistband a small battle-axe, and handed it up to Hereward. It was a tool the like of which in shape Hereward had seldom seen, and never its equal in beauty. The handle was some fifteen inches long, made of thick strips of black whalebone, curiously bound with silver, and butted with narwhal ivory. This handle was evidently the work of some cunning Norseman of old. But who was the maker of the blade? It was some

eight inches long, with a sharp edge on one side, a sharp crooked pick on the other; of the finest steel, inlaid with strange characters in gold, the work probably of some Circassian, Tartar, or Persian; such a battle-axe as Rustum or Zohrab may have wielded in fight upon the banks of Oxus; one of those magic weapons, brought, men knew not how, out of the magic East, which were hereditary in many a Norse family and sung of in many a Norse saga.

"Look at it," said Martin Lightfoot. "There is magic on it. It must bring us luck. Whoever holds that must kill his man. It will pick a lock of steel. It will crack a mail corslet as a nut-hatch cracks a nut. It will hew a lance in two at a single blow. Devils and spirits forged it,—I know that; Virgilius the Enchanter, perhaps, or Solomon the Great, or whosoever's name is on it, graven there in letters of gold. Handle it, feel its balance; but no,—do not handle it too much. There is a devil in it, who would make you kill me. Whenever I play with it I long to kill a man. It would be so easy,—so easy. Give it me back, my lord, give it me back, lest the devil come through the handle into your palm, and possess you."

Hereward laughed, and gave him back his battle-axe. But he had hardly less doubt of the magic virtues of such a blade than had Martin himself.

"Magical or not, thou wilt not have to hit a man twice with that, Martin, my lad. So we two outlaws are both well armed; and having neither wife nor child, land nor beeves to lose, ought to be a match for any six honest men who may have a grudge against us, and sound reasons at home for running away."

And so those two went northward through the green Bruneswald, and northward again through merry Sherwood, and were not seen in that land again for many a year.