



CHAPTER VIII

HOW THE NOBLE BROTHERHOOD OF THE ROSE WAS FOUNDED

'It is virtue, yea virtue, gentlemen, that maketh gentlemen ; that maketh the poor rich, the base-born noble, the subject a sovereign, the deformed beautiful, the sick whole, the weak strong, the most miserable most happy. There are two principal and peculiar gifts in the nature of man, knowledge and reason ; the one commandeth, and the other obeyeth : these things neither the whirling wheel of fortune can change, neither the deceitful cavillings of worldlings separate, neither sickness abate, neither age abolish.'—LILLY'S *Euphues*, 1586.

IT now falls to my lot to write of the foundation of that most chivalrous brotherhood of the Rose, which after a few years made itself not only famous in its native county of Devon, but formidable, as will be related hereafter, both in Ireland and in the Netherlands, in the Spanish Main and the heart of South America. And if this chapter shall seem to any Quixotic and fantastical, let them recollect that the generation who spoke and acted thus in matters of love and honour were, nevertheless, practised and valiant soldiers, and prudent and crafty politicians ; that he who wrote the *Arcadia* was at the same time, in spite of his youth, one of the

subtlest diplomatists of Europe; that the poet of the *Fairy Queen* was also the author of *The State of Ireland*; and if they shall quote against me with a sneer Lilly's *Euphuus* itself, I shall only answer by asking—Have they ever read it? For if they have done so, I pity them if they have not found it, in spite of occasional tediousness and pedantry, as brave, righteous, and pious a book as man need look into: and wish for no better proof of the nobleness and virtue of the Elizabethan age, than the fact that *Euphuus* and the *Arcadia* were the two popular romances of the day. It may have suited the purposes of Sir Walter Scott, in his cleverly-drawn Sir Piercie Shafton, to ridicule the Euphuists, and that *affectatam comitatem* of the travelled English of which Languet complains; but over and above the anachronism of the whole character (for, to give but one instance, the Euphuist knight talks of Sidney's quarrel with Lord Oxford at least ten years before it happened), we do deny that Lilly's book could, if read by any man of common sense, produce such a coxcomb, whose spiritual ancestors would rather have been Gabriel Harvey and Lord Oxford,—if indeed the former has not maligned the latter, and ill-tempered Tom Nash maligned the maligner in his turn.

But, indeed, there is a double anachronism in Sir Piercie; for he does not even belong to the days of Sidney, but to those worse times which began in the latter years of Elizabeth, and after breaking her mighty heart, had full licence to bear their crop of fools' heads in the profligate days of James. Of them, perhaps, hereafter. And in the meanwhile, let those who have not read *Euphuus* believe that, if they could train a son after the fashion of his Ephæbus, to the great saving of their own money and his virtue, all fathers, even in these money-making days, would rise up and call them blessed. Let us rather open our eyes, and see in these old Elizabeth gallants our own ancestors, showing forth with the luxuriant wildness of youth, all the virtues which still go to the making of a true Englishman. Let us not only see in their commercial and military daring, in their political astuteness, in their deep reverence for law,

and in their solemn sense of the great calling of the English nation, the antitypes or rather the examples of our own; but let us confess that their chivalry is only another garb of that beautiful tenderness and mercy which is now, as it was then, the twin sister of English valour; and even in their extravagant fondness for Continental manners and literature, let us recognise that old Anglo-Norman teachableness and wide-heartedness, which has enabled us to profit by the wisdom and civilisation of all ages and of all lands, without prejudice to our own distinctive national character.

And so I go to my story, which, if any one dislikes, he has but to turn the leaf till he finds pasturage which suits him better.

Amyas could not sail the next day, or the day after; for the south-wester freshened, and blew three parts of a gale dead into the bay. So having got the *Mary Grenville* down the river into Appledore pool, ready to start with the first shift of wind, he went quietly home; and when his mother started on a pillion behind the old serving-man to ride to Clovelly, where Frank lay wounded, he went in with her as far as Bideford, and there met, coming down the High Street, a procession of horsemen headed by Will Cary, who, clad cap-à-pie in shining armour, sword on thigh, and helmet at saddle-bow, looked as gallant a young gentleman as ever Bideford dames peeped at from door and window. Behind him, upon country ponies, came four or five stout serving-men, carrying his lances and baggage, and their own long-bows, swords, and bucklers; and behind all, in a horse-litter, to Mrs. Leigh's great joy, Master Frank himself. He deposed that his wounds were only flesh-wounds, the dagger having turned against his ribs; that he must see the last of his brother; and that with her good leave he would not come home to Burrough, but take up his abode with Cary in the Ship Tavern, close to the Bridge-foot. This he did forthwith, and settling himself on a couch, held his levee there in state, mobbed by all the gossips of the town, not without white fibs as to who had brought him into that sorry plight.

But in the meanwhile, he and Amyas concocted a scheme which was put into effect the next day (being market-day); first by the inn-keeper, who began under Amyas's orders a bustle of roasting, boiling, and frying, unparalleled in the annals of the Ship Tavern; and next by Amyas himself, who, going out into the market, invited as many of his old schoolfellows, one by one apart, as Frank had pointed out to him, to a merry supper and a 'rowse' thereon consequent; by which crafty scheme, in came each of Rose Salterne's gentle admirers, and found himself, to his considerable disgust, seated at the same table with six rivals, to none of whom had he spoken for the last six months. However, all were too well bred to let the Leighs discern as much; and they (though, of course, they knew all) settled their guests, Frank on his couch lying at the head of the table, and Amyas taking the bottom: and contrived, by filling all mouths with good things, to save them the pain of speaking to each other till the wine should have loosened their tongues and warmed their hearts. In the meanwhile both Amyas and Frank, ignoring the silence of their guests with the most provoking good-humour, chatted, and joked, and told stories, and made themselves such good company, that Will Cary, who always found merriment infectious, melted into a jest, and then into another, and finding good-humour far more pleasant than bad, tried to make Mr. Coffin laugh, and only made him bow, and to make Mr. Fortescue laugh, and only made him frown; and unabashed nevertheless, began playing his light artillery upon the waiters, till he drove them out of the room bursting with laughter.

So far so good. And when the cloth was drawn, and sack and sugar became the order of the day, and 'Queen and Bible' had been duly drunk with all the honours, Frank tried a fresh move, and—

'I have a toast, gentlemen—here it is. "The gentlemen of the Irish wars; and may Ireland never be without a St. Leger to stand by a Fortescue, a Fortescue to stand by a St. Leger, and a Chichester to stand by both."'

Which toast of course involved the drinking the healths

of the three representatives of those families, and their returning thanks, and paying a compliment each to the other's house: and so the ice cracked a little further; and young Fortescue proposed the health of 'Amyas Leigh, and all bold mariners'; to which Amyas replied by a few blunt kindly words, 'that he wished to know no better fortune than to sail round the world again with the present company as fellow-adventurers, and so give the Spaniards another taste of the men of Devon.'

And by this time, the wine going down sweetly, caused the lips of them that were asleep to speak; till the ice broke up altogether, and every man began talking like a rational Englishman to the man who sat next him.

'And now, gentlemen,' said Frank, who saw that it was the fit moment for the grand assault which he had planned all along; 'let me give you a health which none of you, I dare say, will refuse to drink with heart and soul as well as with lips;—the health of one whom beauty and virtue have so ennobled, that in their light the shadow of lowly birth is unseen;—the health of one whom I would proclaim as peerless in loveliness, were it not that every gentleman here has sisters, who might well challenge from her the girdle of Venus: and yet what else dare I say, while those same lovely ladies who, if they but use their own mirrors, must needs be far better judges of beauty than I can be, have in my own hearing again and again assigned the palm to her? Surely, if the goddesses decide among themselves the question of the golden apple, Paris himself must vacate the judgment-seat. Gentlemen, your hearts, I doubt not, have already bid you, as my unworthy lips do now, to drink "The Rose of Torridge."'

If the Rose of Torridge herself had walked into the room, she could hardly have caused more blank astonishment than Frank's bold speech. Every guest turned red, and pale, and red again, and looked at the other, as much as to say, 'What right has any one but I to drink her? Lift your glass, and I will dash it out of your hand'; but Frank, with sweet effrontery, drank, 'The health of the Rose of Torridge,

and a double health to that worthy gentleman, whosoever he may be, whom she is fated to honour with her love !'

'Well done, cunning Frank Leigh!' cried blunt Will Cary; 'none of us dare quarrel with you now, however much we may sulk at each other. For there's none of us, I'll warrant, but thinks that she likes him the best of all; and so we are bound to believe that you have drunk our healths all round.'

'And so I have: and what better thing can you do, gentlemen, than to drink each other's healths all round likewise: and so show yourselves true gentlemen, true Christians, ay, and true lovers? For what is love (let me speak freely to you, gentlemen and guests), what is love, but the very inspiration of that Deity whose name is Love? Be sure that not without reason did the ancients feign Eros to be the eldest of the gods, by whom the jarring elements of chaos were attuned into harmony and order. How, then, shall lovers make him the father of strife? Shall Psyche wed with Cupid, to bring forth a cockatrice's egg? or the soul be filled with love, the likeness of the immortals, to burn with envy and jealousy, division and distrust? True, the rose has its thorn: but it leaves poison and stings to the nettle. Cupid has his arrow: but he hurls no scorpions. Venus is awful when despised, as the daughters of Prætus found: but her handmaids are the Graces, not the Furies. Surely he who loves aright will not only find love lovely, but become himself lovely also. I speak not to reprehend you, gentlemen; for to you (as your piercing wits have already perceived, to judge by your honourable blushes) my discourse tends; but to point you, if you will but permit me, to that rock which I myself have, I know not by what Divine good hap, attained; if, indeed, I have attained it, and am not about to be washed off again by the next tide.'

Frank's rapid and fantastic oratory, utterly unexpected as it was, had as yet left their wits no time to set their tempers on fire; but when, weak from his wounds, he paused for breath, there was a haughty murmur from more than one young gentleman, who took his speech as an

impertinent interference with each man's right to make a fool of himself; and Mr. Coffin, who had sat quietly bolt upright, and looking at the opposite wall, now rose as quietly, and with a face which tried to look utterly unconcerned, was walking out of the room: another minute, and Lady Bath's prophecy about the feast of the Lapithæ might have come true.

But Frank's heart and head never failed him.

'Mr. Coffin!' said he, in a tone which compelled that gentleman to turn round, and so brought him under the power of a face which none could have beheld for five minutes and borne malice, so imploring, tender, earnest was it. 'My dear Mr. Coffin! If my earnestness has made me forget even for a moment the bounds of courtesy, let me entreat you to forgive me. Do not add to my heavy griefs, heavy enough already, the grief of losing a friend. Only hear me patiently to the end (generously, I know, you will hear me); and then, if you are still incensed, I can but again entreat your forgiveness a second time.'

Mr. Coffin, to tell the truth, had at that time never been to Court; and he was therefore somewhat jealous of Frank, and his Court talk, and his Court clothes, and his Court company; and moreover, being the eldest of the guests, and only two years younger than Frank himself, he was a little nettled at being classed in the same category with some who were scarce eighteen. And if Frank had given the least hint which seemed to assume his own superiority, all had been lost: but when, instead thereof, he sued *in formâ pauperis*, and threw himself upon Coffin's mercy, the latter, who was a true-hearted man enough, and after all had known Frank ever since either of them could walk, had nothing to do but to sit down again, and submit, while Frank went on more earnestly than ever.

'Believe me; believe me, Mr. Coffin, and gentlemen all, I no more arrogate to myself a superiority over you than does the sailor hurled on shore by the surge fancy himself better than his comrade who is still battling with the foam. For I too, gentlemen,—let me confess it, that

by confiding in you I may, perhaps, win you to confide in me,—have loved, ay, and do love, where you love also. Do not start. Is it a matter of wonder that the sun which has dazzled you has dazzled me; that the lodestone which has drawn you has drawn me? Do not frown, either, gentlemen. I have learnt to love you for loving what I love, and to admire you for admiring that which I admire. Will you not try the same lesson: so easy, and, when learnt, so blissful? What breeds more close communion between subjects than allegiance to the same queen? between brothers, than duty to the same father? between the devout, than adoration for the same Deity? And shall not worship for the same beauty be likewise a bond of love between the worshippers? and each lover see in his rival not an enemy, but a fellow-sufferer? You smile and say in your hearts, that though all may worship, but one can enjoy; and that one man's meat must be the poison of the rest. Be it so, though I deny it. Shall we anticipate our own doom, and slay ourselves for fear of dying? Shall we make ourselves unworthy of her from our very eagerness to win her, and show ourselves her faithful knights, by cherishing envy,—most unknighly of all sins? Shall we dream with the Italian or the Spaniard that we can become more amiable in a lady's eyes by becoming hateful in the eyes of God and of each other? Will she love us the better, if we come to her with hands stained in the blood of him whom she loves better than us? Let us recollect ourselves rather, gentlemen; and be sure that our only chance of winning her, if she be worth winning, is to will what she wills, honour whom she honours, love whom she loves. If there is to be rivalry among us, let it be a rivalry in nobleness, an emulation in virtue. Let each try to outstrip the other in loyalty to his Queen, in valour against her foes, in deeds of courtesy and mercy to the afflicted and oppressed; and thus our love will indeed prove its own divine origin, by raising us nearer to those gods whose gift it is. But yet I show you a more excellent way, and that is charity. Why should we not make this common love to her, whom I am unworthy to

name, the sacrament of a common love to each other? Why should we not follow the heroic examples of those ancient knights, who having but one grief, one desire, one goddess, held that one heart was enough to contain that grief, to nourish that desire, to worship that divinity; and so uniting themselves in friendship till they became but one soul in two bodies, lived only for each other in living only for her, vowing as faithful worshippers to abide by her decision, to find their own bliss in hers, and whomsoever she esteemed most worthy of her love, to esteem most worthy also, and count themselves, by that her choice, the bounden servants of him whom their mistress had condescended to advance to the dignity of her master?—as I (not without hope that I shall be outdone in generous strife) do here promise to be the faithful friend, and, to my ability, the hearty servant, of him who shall be honoured with the love of the Rose of Torridge.'

He ceased, and there was a pause.

At last young Fortescue spoke.

'I may be paying you a left-handed compliment, sir: but it seems to me that you are so likely, in that case, to become your own faithful friend and hearty servant (even if you have not borne off the bell already while we have been asleep), that the bargain is hardly fair between such a gay Italianist and us country swains.'

'You undervalue yourself and your country, my dear sir. But set your mind at rest. I know no more of that lady's mind than you do: nor shall I know. For the sake of my own peace, I have made a vow neither to see her, nor to hear, if possible, tidings of her, 'till three full years are past. *Dixi!*'

Mr. Coffin rose.

'Gentlemen, I may submit to be outdone by Mr. Leigh in eloquence, but not in generosity; if he leaves these parts for three years, I do so also.'

'And go in charity with all mankind,' said Cary. 'Give us your hand, old fellow. If you are a Coffin, you were sawn out of no wishy-washy elm-board, but right heart-of-

oak. I am going, too, as Amyas here can tell, to Ireland away, to cool my hot liver in a bog, like a Jack-hare in March. Come, give us thy neif, and let us part in peace. I was minded to have fought thee this day——'

'I should have been most happy, sir,' said Coffin.

—'But now I am all love and charity to mankind. Can I have the pleasure of begging pardon of the world in general, and thee in particular? Does any one wish to pull my nose; send me an errand; make me lend him five pounds; ay, make me buy a horse of him, which will be as good as giving him ten? Come along! Join hands all round, and swear eternal friendship, as brothers of the sacred order of the—of what? Frank Leigh? Open thy mouth, Daniel, and christen us!'

'The Rose!' said Frank quietly, seeing that his new love-philtre was working well, and determined to strike while the iron was hot, and carry the matter too far to carry it back again.

'The Rose!' cried Cary, catching hold of Coffin's hand with his right, and Fortescue's with his left. 'Come, Mr. Coffin! Bend, sturdy oak! "Woe to the stiffnecked and stout-hearted!" says Scripture.'

And somehow or other, whether it was Frank's chivalrous speech, or Cary's fun, or Amyas's good wine, or the nobleness which lies in every young lad's heart, if their elders will take the trouble to call it out, the whole party came in to terms one by one, shook hands all round, and vowed on the hilt of Amyas's sword to make fools of themselves no more, at least by jealousy: but to stand by each other and by their lady-love, and neither grudge nor grumble, let her dance with, flirt with, or marry with whom she would; and in order that the honour of their peerless dame, and the brotherhood which was named after her, might be spread through all lands, and equal that of Angelica or Isonde of Brittany, they would each go home, and ask their fathers' leave (easy enough to obtain in those brave times) to go abroad wheresoever there were 'good wars,' to emulate there the courage and the courtesy of Walter Manny and

Gonzalo Fernandes, Bayard and Gaston de Foix. Why not? Sidney was the hero of Europe at five-and-twenty; and why not they?

And Frank watched and listened with one of his quiet smiles (his eyes, as some folks do, smiled even when his lips were still), and only said: 'Gentlemen, be sure that you will never repent this day.'

'Repent?' said Cary. 'I feel already as angelical as thou lookest, Saint Silvertongue. What was it that sneezed?—the cat?'

'The lion, rather, by the roar of it,' said Amyas, making a dash at the arras behind him. 'Why, here is a doorway here! and——'

And rushing under the arras, through an open door behind, he returned, dragging out by the head Mr. John Brimblecombe.

Who was Mr. John Brimblecombe?

If you have forgotten him, you have done pretty nearly what every one else in the room had done. But you recollect a certain fat lad, son of the schoolmaster, whom Sir Richard punished for talebearing three years before, by sending him, not to Coventry, but to Oxford? That was the man. He was now one-and-twenty, and a bachelor of Oxford, where he had learnt such things as were taught in those days, with more or less success; and he was now hanging about Bideford once more, intending to return after Christmas and read divinity, that he might become a parson, and a shepherd of souls in his native land.

Jack was in person exceedingly like a pig: but not like every pig: not in the least like the Devon pigs of those days, which, I am sorry to say, were no more shapely than the true Irish greyhound who pays Pat's 'rint' for him; or than the lanky monsters who wallow in German rivulets, while the village swineherd, beneath a shady lime, forgets his fleas in the melody of a Jew's harp—strange mud-coloured creatures, four feet high and four inches thick, which look as if they had passed their lives, as a collar of Oxford brawn is said to do, between two tight boards. Such were then the pigs of

Devon : not to be compared with the true wild descendant of Noah's stock, high-withered, furry, grizzled, game-flavoured little rooklers, whereof many a sownder still grunted about Swinley down and Braunton woods, Clovelly glens and Bursdon moor. Not like these, nor like the tame abomination of those barbarous times, was Jack : but prophetic in face, figure, and complexion, of Fisher Hobbs and the triumphs of science. A Fisher Hobbs' pig of twelve stone, on his hind legs—that was what he was, and nothing else ; and if you do not know, reader, what a Fisher Hobbs is, you know nothing about pigs and deserve no bacon for breakfast. But such was Jack. The same plump mulberry complexion, garnished with a few scattered black bristles ; the same sleek skin, looking always as if it was upon the point of bursting ; the same little toddling legs ; the same dapper bend in the small of the back ; the same cracked squeak ; the same low upright forehead, and tiny eyes ; the same round self-satisfied jowl ; the same charming sensitive little cocked nose, always on the look-out for a savoury smell, —and yet while watching for the best, contented with the worst ; a pig of self-helpful and serene spirit, as Jack was, and therefore, like him, fattening fast while other pigs' ribs are staring through their skins.

Such was Jack ; and lucky it was for him that such he was ; for it was little that he got to fat him at Oxford, in days when a servitor meant really a servant-student ; and wistfully that day did his eyes, led by his nose, survey at the end of the Ship Inn passage the preparations for Amyas's supper. The innkeeper was a friend of his ; for, in the first place, they had lived within three doors of each other all their lives ; and next, Jack was quite pleasant company enough, beside being a learned man and an Oxford scholar, to be asked in now and then to the innkeeper's private parlour, when there were no gentlemen there, to crack his little joke and tell his little story, sip the leavings of the guests' sack, and sometimes help the host to eat the leavings of their supper. And it was, perhaps, with some such hope that Jack trotted off round the corner to the Ship that very

afternoon ; for that faithful little nose of his, as it sniffed out of a back window of the school, had given him warning of Sabean gales, and scents of Paradise, from the inn kitchen below ; so he went round, and asked for his pot of small ale (his only luxury), and stood at the bar to drink it ; and looked inward with his little twinkling right eye and sniffed inward with his little curling right nostril, and beheld, in the kitchen beyond, salad in stacks and faggots : salad of lettuce, salad of cress and endive, salad of boiled coleworts, salad of pickled coleworts, salad of angelica, salad of scurvy-wort, and seven salads more ; for potatoes were not as yet, and salads were during eight months of the year the only vegetable. And on the dresser, and before the fire, whole hecatombs of fragrant victims, which needed neither frankincense nor myrrh ; Clovelly herrings and Torridge salmon, Exmoor mutton and Stow venison, stubble geese and woodcocks, curlew and snipe, hams of Hampshire, chitterlings of Taunton, and botargos of Cadiz, such as Pantagruel himself might have devoured. And Jack eyed them, as a ragged boy eyes the cakes in a pastrycook's window ; and thought of the scraps from the commoner's dinner, which were his wages for cleaning out the hall ; and meditated deeply on the unequal distribution of human bliss.

'Ah, Mr. Brimblecombe !' said the host, bustling out with knife and apron to cool himself in the passage. 'Here are doings ! Nine gentlemen to supper !'

'Nine ! Are they going to eat all that ?'

'Well, I can't say—that Mr. Amyas is as good as three to his trencher : but still there's crumbs, Mr. Brimblecombe, crumbs ; and Waste not want not is my doctrine ; so you and I may have a somewhat to stay our stomachs, about an eight o'clock.'

'Eight ?' said Jack, looking wistfully at the clock. 'It's but four now. Well, it's kind of you, and perhaps I'll look in.'

'Just you step in now, and look to this venison. There's a breast ! you may lay your two fingers into the say there, and not get to the bottom of the fat. That's Sir Richard's

sending. He's all for them Leighs, and no wonder, they'm brave lads, sure; ; and there's a saddle-o'-mutton! I rode twenty miles for mun yesterday, I did, over beyond Barnstaple; and five year old, Mr. John, it is, if ever five years was; and not a tooth to mun's head, for I looked to that; and smelt all the way home like any apple; and if it don't ate so soft as ever was scald cream, never you call me Thomas Burman.'

'Humph!' said Jack. 'And that's their dinner. Well, some are born with a silver spoon in their mouth.'

'Some be born with roast beef in their mouths, and plum-pudding in their pocket to take away the taste o' mun; and that's better than empty spunces, eh?'

'For them that get it,' said Jack. 'But for them that don't— —' and with a sigh he returned to his small ale, and then lingered in and out of the inn, watching the dinner as it went into the best room, where the guests were assembled.

And as he lounged there, Amyas went in, and saw him, and held out his hand, and said—

'Hillo, Jack! how goes the world? How you've grown!' and passed on;—what had Jack Brimblecombe to do with Rose Salterne?

So Jack lingered on, hovering around the fragrant smell like a fly round a honey-pot, till he found himself invisibly attracted, and, as it were, led by the nose out of the passage into the adjoining room, and to that side of the room where there was a door; and once there he could not help hearing what passed inside; till Rose Salterne's name fell on his ear. So, as it was ordained, he was taken in the fact. And now behold him brought in red-hand to judgment, not without a kick or two from the w'athful foot of Amyas Leigh. Whereat there fell on him a storm of abuse, which, for the honour of that gallant company, I shall not give in detail; but which abuse, strange to say, seemed to have no effect on the impenitent and unabashed Jack, who, as soon as he could get his breath, made answer fiercely, amid much puffing and blowing.

'What business have I here? As much as any of you.

If you had asked me in, I would have come: but as you didn't, I came without asking.'

'You shameless rascal!' said Cary. 'Come if you were asked, where there was good wine? I'll warrant you for that!'

'Why,' said Amyas, 'no lad ever had a cake at school but he would dog him up one street and down another all day for the crumbs, the trencher-scraping spaniel!'

'Patience, masters!' said Frank. 'That Jack's is somewhat of a gnathonic and parasitic soul, or stomach, all Bideford apple-women know; but I suspect more than Deus Venter has brought him hither.'

'Deus cavesdropping, then. We shall have the whole story over the town by to-morrow,' said another; beginning at that thought to feel somewhat ashamed of his late enthusiasm.

'Ah, Mr. Frank! You were always the only one that would stand up for me! Deus Venter, quotha? 'Twas Deus Cupid, it was!'

A roar of laughter followed this announcement.

'What?' asked Frank; 'was it Cupid, then, who sneezed approval to our love, Jack, as he did to that of Dido and Æneas?'

But Jack went on desperately—

'I was in the next room, drinking of my beer. I couldn't help that, could I? And then I heard her name; and I couldn't help listening then. Flesh and blood couldn't.'

'Nor fat either!'

'No, nor fat, Mr. Cary. Do you suppose fat men haven't souls to be saved as well as thin ones, and hearts to burst, too, as well as stomachs? Fat! Fat can feel, I reckon, as well as lean. Do you suppose there's nought inside here but beer?'

And he laid his hand, as Drayton might have said, on that stout bastion, hornwork, ravelin, or demilune, which formed the outworks to the citadel of his purple isle of man.

'Nought but beer?—Cheese, I suppose?'

‘Bread?’

‘Beef?’

‘Love!’ cried Jack. ‘Yes, Love!—Ay, you laugh; but my eyes are not so grown up with fat but what I can see what’s fair as well as you.’

‘Oh, Jack, naughty Jack, dost thou heap sin on sin, and luxury on gluttony?’

‘Sin? If I sin, you sin: I tell you, and I don’t care who knows it, I’ve loved her these three years as well as e’er a one of you, I have. I’ve thought o’ nothing else, prayed for nothing else, God forgive me! And then you laugh at me, because I’m a poor parson’s son, and you fine gentlemen: God made us both, I reckon. You?—you make a deal of giving her up to-day. Why, it’s what I’ve done for three miserable years as ever poor sinner spent; ay, from the first day I said to myself, “Jack, if you can’t have that pearl, you’ll have none; and that you can’t have, for it’s meat for your masters: so conquer or die.” And I couldn’t conquer. I can’t help loving her, worshipping her, no more than you; and I will die: but you needn’t laugh meanwhile at me that have done as much as you, and will do again.’

‘It is the old tale,’ said Frank to himself; ‘whom will not love transform into a hero?’

And so it was. Jack’s squeaking voice was firm and manly, his pig’s eyes flashed very fire, his gestures were so free and earnest, that the ungainliness of his figure was forgotten; and when he finished with a violent burst of tears, Frank, forgetting his wounds, sprang up and caught him by the hand.

‘John Brimblecombe, forgive me! Gentlemen, if we are gentlemen, we ought to ask his pardon. Has he not shown already more chivalry, more self-denial, and therefore more true love, than any of us! My friends, let the fierceness of affection, which we have used as an excuse for many a sin of our own, excuse his listening to a conversation in which he well deserved to bear a part.’

‘Ah,’ said Jack, ‘you make me one of your brotherhood; and see if I do not dare to suffer as much as any of you!’

You laugh? Do you fancy none can use a sword unless he has a baker's dozen of quarterings in his arms, or that Oxford scholars know only how to handle a pen?'

'Let us try his metal,' said St. Leger. 'Here's my sword, Jack; draw, Coffin! and have at him.'

'Nonsense!' said Coffin, looking somewhat disgusted at the notion of fighting a man of Jack's rank; but Jack caught at the weapon offered to him.

'Give me a buckler, and have at any of you!'

'Here's a chair bottom,' cried Cary; and Jack, seizing it in his left, flourished his sword so fiercely, and called so loudly to Coffin to come on, that all present found it necessary, unless they wished blood to be spilt, to turn the matter off with a laugh: but Jack would not hear of it.

'Nay: if you will let me be of your brotherhood, well and good: but if not, one or other I will fight: and that's flat.'

'You see, gentlemen,' said Amyas, 'we must admit him, or die the death; so we needs must go when Sir Urian drives. Come up, Jack, and take the oaths. You admit him, gentlemen?'

'Let me but be your chaplain,' said Jack, 'and pray for your luck when you're at the wars. If I do stay at home in a country curacy, 'tis not much that you need be jealous of me with her, I reckon,' said Jack, with a pathetic glance at his own stomach.

'Sia!' said Cary: 'but if he be admitted, it must be done according to the solemn forms and ceremonies in such cases provided. Take him into the next room, Amyas, and prepare him for his initiation.'

'What's that?' asked Amyas, puzzled by the word. But judging from the corner of Will's eye that initiation was Latin for a practical joke, he led forth his victim behind the arras again, and waited five minutes while the room was being darkened, till Frank's voice called to him to bring in the neophyte.

'John Brimblecombe,' said Frank, in a sepulchral tone, 'you cannot be ignorant, as a scholar and bachelor of

Oxford, of that dread Sacrament by which Catiline bound the soul of his fellow-conspirators, in order that both by the daring of the deed he might have proof of their sincerity, and by the horror thereof astringe their souls by adamantine fetters, and Novem-Stygian oaths, to that wherefrom hereafter the weakness of the flesh might shrink. Wherefore, O Jack! we too have determined, following that ancient and classical example, to fill, as he did, a bowl with the life-blood of our most heroic selves, and to pledge each other therein, with vows whereat the stars shall tremble in their spheres, and Luna, blushing, veil her silver cheeks. Your blood alone is wanted to fill up the goblet. Sit down, John Brimblecombe, and bare your arm!

‘But, Mr. Frank!—’ said Jack; who was as superstitious as any old wife, and, what with the darkness and the discourse, already in a cold perspiration.

‘But me no buts! or depart as recreant, not by the door like a man, but up the chimney like a flittermouse.’

‘But, Mr. Frank!’

‘Thy vital juice, or the chimney! Choose!’ roared Cary in his ear.

‘Well, if I must,’ said Jack; ‘but it’s desperate hard that because you can’t keep faith without these barbarous oaths, I must take them too, that have kept faith these three years without any.’

At this pathetic appeal Frank nearly melted: but Amyas and Cary had thrust the victim into a chair and all was prepared for the sacrifice.

‘Bind his eyes, according to the classic fashion,’ said Will.

‘Oh no, dear Mr. Cary; I’ll shut them tight enough, I warrant: but not with your dagger, dear Mr. William—sure, not with your dagger? I can’t afford to lose blood, though I do look lusty—I can’t indeed; sure, a pin would do—I’ve got one here, to my sleeve, somewhere—Oh!’

‘See the fount of generous juice! Flow on, fair stream. How he bleeds!—pints, quarts! Ah, this proves him to be in earnest!’

'A true lover's blood is always at his fingers' ends.'

'He does not grudge it; of course not. Eh, Jack? What matters an odd gallon for her sake?'

'For her sake? Nothing, nothing! Take my life, if you will: but—oh, gentlemen, a surgeon, if you love me! I'm going off—I'm fainting!'

'Drink, then, quick; drink and swear! Pat his back, Cary. Courage, man! it will be over in a minute. Now, Frank!—'

And Frank spoke—

'If plighted troth I fail, or secret speech reveal,
May Cocytan ghosts around my pillow squeal;
While Ate's brazen claws dstringe my spleen in sunder,
And drag me deep to Pluto's keep, 'mid brimstone, smoke,
and thunder!'

'Placetne, domine?'

'Placet!' squeaked Jack, who thought himself at the last gasp, and gulped down full three-quarters of the goblet which Cary held to his lips.

'Ugh—Ah—Puh! Mercy on us! It tastes mighty like wine!'

'A proof, my virtuous brother,' said Frank, 'first, of thy abstemiousness, which has thus forgotten what wine tastes like; and next, of thy pure and heroic affection, by which thy carnal senses being exalted to a higher and supra-lunar sphere, like those Platonical dæmonizomenoi and enthusiazomenoi (of whom Jamblichus says that they were insensible to wounds and flame, and much more, therefore, to evil savours), doth make even the most nauseous draught redolent of that celestial fragrance, which proceeding, O Jack! from thine own inward virtue, assimilates by sympathy even outward accidents unto its own harmony and melody; for fragrance is, as has been said well, the song of flowers, and sweetness, the music of apples—Ahem! Go in peace, thou hast conquered!'

'Put him out of the door Will,' said Amyas, 'or he will swoon on our hands.'

'Give him some sack,' said Frank.

'Not a blessed drop of yours, sir,' said Jack. 'I like good wine as well as any man on earth, and see as little of it; but not a drop of yours, sirs, after your frumps and flouts about hanging-on and trencher-scraping. When I first began to love her, I bid good-bye to all dirty tricks; for I had some one then for whom to keep myself clean.'

And so Jack was sent home, with a pint of good red Alicant wine in him (more, poor fellow, than he had tasted at once in his life before); while the rest, in high glee with themselves and the rest of the world, relighted the candles, had a right merry evening, and parted like good friends and sensible gentlemen of Devon, thinking (all except Frank) Jack Brimblecombe and his vow the merriest jest they had heard for many a day. After which they all departed: Amyas and Cary to Winter's squadron; Frank (as soon as he could travel) to the Court again; and with him young Basset, whose father Sir Arthur, being in London, procured for him a page's place in Leicester's household. Fortescue and Chichester went to their brothers in Dublin; St. Leger to his uncle the Marshal of Munster; Coffin joined Champernoun and Norris in the Netherlands; and so the Brotherhood of the Rose was scattered far and wide, and Mistress Salterne was left alone with her looking-glass.

