

such occasions, absurdity only was attained. What the Lord Mayor, who arrived in his familiar blue-and-silver carriage, did inside the wood, I have no idea; but I gathered from the remarks of passers-by that the whole ceremony passed off satisfactorily, for which we should be very thankful, not knowing what might have happened had it been otherwise.

At all events, there the woods still are, as before; only now they are surrounded by a hideous white wooden fence guarded with gates and padlocks, and broad paths now to intersect them (covered with the contents of dust-bins, so it is rumoured). At a hastily-convened meeting of local ratepayers (since declared illegal) it was resolved to buy a further portion of the woods for £25,000. Doubtless the woods are a great boon to the public (on Sundays), but the spectacle of people pompously and elaborately giving away what never belonged to them is worth looking at.

REGINALD A. BECKETT.

A DREAM OF JOHN BALL.

(Continued from p. 267.)

So now I heard John Ball; how he lifted up his voice and said:

“Ho, all ye good people! I am a priest of God, and in my day’s work it cometh that I should tell you what ye should do, and what ye should forbear doing, and to that end I am come hither; yet first if I myself have wronged any man here, let him say wherein my wrongdoing lieth, that I may ask his pardon and his pity.”

A great hum of good-will ran through the crowd as he spoke; then he smiled as in a kind of pride, and again he spoke: “Wherefore did ye take me out of the archbishop’s prison but three days ago, when ye lighted the archbishop’s house for the candle of Canterbury, but that I might speak to you and pray you: therefore I will not keep silence whether I have done ill or whether I have done well. And herein, good fellows and my very brethren, I would have you to follow me; and if there be such here, as I know full well there be some, and may be a good many, who have been robbers of their neighbours (and who is my neighbour? quoth the rich man), or lechers, or spiteful, haters, or talebearers, or fawners on rich men for the hurt of the poor (and that is the worst of all)—Ah, my poor brethren who have gone astray, I say not to you, go home and repent lest you mar our great deeds, but rather come afield and there repent. Many a day have ye been fools, but hearken unto me and I shall make you wise above the wisdom of the earth: and if ye die in your wisdom, as God wot ye well may, since the fields ye wend to bear swords for daisies and spears for bents, then shall ye be, though men call you dead, a part and parcel of the living wisdom of all things, very stones of the pillars that uphold the joyful earth.

“Forsooth, ye have heard it said that ye shall do well in this world that in the world to come ye may live happily for ever: do ye well then, and have your reward both on earth and in heaven; for I say to you that earth and heaven are not two, but one; and this one is that which ye know, and are each one of you a part of, to wit, the Holy Church, and in each one of you dwelleth the life of the church, unless ye slay it. Forsooth, brethren, will ye murder the church any one of you, and go forth a wandering man and lonely even as Cain did who

for his face was stolid and unmoved all the time, till he caught my will, for he then he screwed up the scowling brow,weeping eyes, and smiling mouth, while he dealt me a sounding thump in the ribs with his left elbow, which, though it would have knocked me down but for the crowd, I took as an esquire does the accolade which makes a knight of him.

But while I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name—while I pondered all this, John Ball began to speak again in the same soft and clear voice with which he had left off.

“Good fellows, it was your fellowship and your kindness that took me out of the archbishop’s prison three days ago, though God wot ye had nought to gain by it save outlawry and the gallows; yet lacked I not your fellowship before ye drew near me in the body, and when between me and Canterbury street was yet a stone wall, and the turnkeys and sergeants and bailiffs. For hearken, my friends and helpers; many days ago, while April was yet young, I lay there, and the heart that I had strung up to bear all things because of the fellowship of men and the blessed saints and the angels and those that are and those that are to be, this heart that I had strung up like a strong bow, fell into feebleness, so that I lay there a-longing for the green fields and the white-thorn bushes and the lark singing over the corn, and the talk of good fellows round the ale-house bench, and the babble of the little children, and the team on the road and the beasts afield, and all the life of earth; and I alone all the while, near my foes and afar from my friends, mocked and flouted and starved with cold and hunger; and so-went was my heart that though I longed for all these things, yet I saw them not nor knew them but as names; and I longed so sore to be gone that I chided myself that I had once done well; and I said to myself: ‘Forsooth, hadst thou kept thy tongue between thy teeth thou mightest have been something, if it had been but a parson of a town, and comfortable to many a poor man; and then mightest thou have clad here and there the naked back, and filled the empty belly, and holpen many, and men would have spoken well of thee, and of thyself thou hadst thought well; and all this hast thou lost for lack of a word here and there to some great man, and a little winking of the eyes amidst murder and wrong and un-ruth; and now thou art nought and helpless, and the hemp for thee is sown and grown and heckled and spun, and lo, there the rope for thy gallows-tree!—all for nought, for nought.’ Forsooth, my friends, thus I thought and sorrowed in my feebleness that I had not been a traitor to the fellowship of the church, for e’en so evil was my foolish imagination. Yet, forsooth, as I fell a-pondering over all the comfort and help that I might have been and that I might have had if I been but a little of a trembling cur to creep and crawl before abbot and bishop and baron and bailiff, came the thought over me of the evil of the world wherewith I, John Ball, the rascal hedge-priest, had fought and striven in the fellowship of the saints in heaven and poor men upon earth. Yea, forsooth, once again I saw as of old, the great treading down the little, and the strong beating down the weak, and cruel men fearing not, and kind men daring not, and wise men caring not; and the saints in heaven forbearing and yet bidding me not to forbear; forsooth, I knew once more that he who doeth well in fellowship, and because of fellowship, shall not fail though he seem to fail to-day, but in days hereafter shall be and his

