A DREAM OF JOHN BALL.

(Continued from p. 29.)

I came to my old place again on the steps of the cross, Will Green beside me and above me John Ball and Jack Straw again. The moon was half-way up the heavens now, and the short summer night had begun, calm and fragrant, with just so much noise outside our silent circle as made one feel the world alive and happy.

We waited silently until we had heard John Ball and the story of what he was to do; and presently he began to tell:

"Good people it is begun, but it is long. Which of you is hardy enough to send the road to London tomorrow?" "All of us!" they shouted. "Yes," said he, "even so I dreamed of you. Yet forthwith hear! London is great and glorious city; and mayhap when ye come thither it shall seem to you over great to deal with when ye remember the small townships and the oaks ye came from. Moreover, when ye dwell here in Kent ye think of your brethren in England and Scotland, and there be lies an end. But I do not have an inkling of all the world, and over burdensome may be that seem to you, a few and a feeble people. Nevertheless I say to you remember the fellowship, in the hope of which ye have this day conquered; and when ye come to London be wise and wary; and that is as much as to say be bold and hearty; for in these days are ye building a house which shall not be overthrown, and the world shall not be too great to hold it; for it might be to the world itself, set free from evil-doers for friends to dwell in it."

He ceased awhile, but they hearkened still as if something more was coming. Then he said:

"To-morrow we shall take the road for Rochester; and might it be well to see what Sir John Newton in the castle may say to us; for the man is no ill man, and hath a tongue well skilful for words; and it well were that we had him out of the castle and away with us, and that we put a word in his mouth to say to the King. And in all due course, well good fellows, that by when we come to Rochester we shall be a good company; and are we come to Blackheath a very great company; and at London Bridge who shall stay our army? Therefore there is nought that can undo us except our own selves and our hearkening to soft words from those who would slay us. They shall bid us go home and abide peacefully with our wives and children while they, the lords and councillors and lawyers, imagine council and remedy for us; and even so shall our own folly bid us; and if we hearken they are indeed; for they shall fall upon our peace with war, and our wives and children they shall take from us, and some of us shall hang and some they shall scourge, and the others shall be yoke-beasts—yea, and worse, for they shall lack meat more. To fools hearken not, whether they be yourselves or your foes, for either shall lead you astray. With the lords parley not, for ye know already what they would say to you, and that is, "Chill, let me strike thee and hale thee, and sett livlihood that thou wintest, and canst hard names because I eat thee up; and for thee, speak not and do not, save as I bid thee." All that is the end of their parleying. Therefore be ye bold, and again bold, and thrice bold! Grip the bow, handle the staff, draw the sword, and set on in the name of the fellowship!"

He ended amid loud shoos; but straightway answering shoos were heard from the others. They all rose, fresh and stern and strong, and let forth a cry that was heard through the silent air, and stirred the very soul and blood of the listeners.
us and tell us the tale. But now, sweeting, listen the mizer and the wine.

"Forsmuth" said John Ball, "if ye laugh not over much now, ye
shall laugh on the mizrose to-morrow, as ye draw nearer to the
play of point and edge."

"That is sooth," said one of the upland guests. "So it was seen in
France when we fought there; and the eye of light was sober, and the
wine was mery."

"Yes," said another, "but there, forsmuth, it was for nothing ye fought; and to-morrow it shall be for a fair reward."

"It was for life we fought," said the first. "Yes," said the second,
"for life and more; and leave to go home and find the lawyer at their fell game.
Ho, Will Green, call a health over the cup!"

For now Will Green had a bowl of wine in his hand. He stood up
and said: "Here, now, I call a health to the wights of Kent who
are turning our ploughshares into swords and our pruning-hooks into
spears! Drink around, my masters!"

Then he drank, and his daughter filled the bowl brimming again
and he passed it to me. As I took it I saw that it was of lighted
wood, curiously spliced, with a band of silver round it, on which
was cut the legend: "In the name of the Trinity fill the cup and drink to
me." And before I drank, it came upon me to say, "To-morrow, and
the fair days afterwards!" Then I drank a great draught of the
strong red wine, and passed it on; and every man said something over
it, as "The road to London Bridge!" "Hob Carter and his mate!"
and so on, till last of all John Ball drank, saying: "Ten years hence,
and the freedom of the fellowship!"

Then he said to Will Green:

"Now you must depart to go and wake the dead both friend and foe in the church yonder; and hence of you will be taken for
him to come to me this night in the morn, nor spare for so little after
surprise as it may be. And this our friend and brother from over
the water of Thames, he hath will to talk with me and I with him; so now I will take him by the hand: and God keep you fellows!"

I rose to meet him as he came round the head of the table, and took
his hand. Will Green turned round to me and said: "Thou wilt come back again timely, old lad; for bothons on the mizrose must we rise if
we shall dine at Rochester."

I stammered as I spoke; as I could hardly understand the speech of John Ball was looking strangely at me with a half smile, and my heart
beating anxiously and fearfully; but we went quietly to the door and set out into the bright moonlight. I lingered a little when we had passed
the threshold, and looked back at the yellow-lit window and the
shapes of the men that I saw therein with a grief and longing that I
could not give a reason for, since I was to come back so soon.

John Ball did not press me to move forward, but held up his hand as
if to bid me hearken. The folk and guests there were already shaken
themselves down since our departure, and were gotten to the
merry it seemed; for one of the guests, he who had spoken of France
before, had fallen to singing a ballad of the war to a wild and
melan-choly tune. I remember the first rhymes of it, which I heard as
I turned away my head and we moved toward the church:

"On a fair field of France we fought on a morning
So lovely as it fell along by the water.
There was many a lord there mound men in the medley,
Amidst the banners of the barons and bold men of the knighthood,
And spearmen and serjeants and hosts of the shaft.

Lowly live and lowly die,
All for mansions in the sky.
Castles here are much too rare;
All may have them—in the air.

T. MAGUIRE.

"Echoes of Truth."