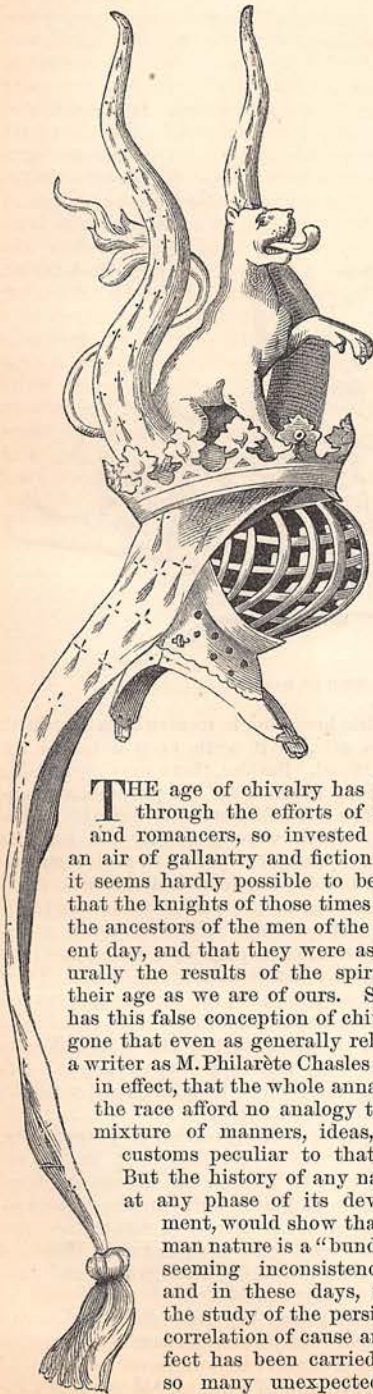


THE TOURNAMENT OF THE MIDDLE AGES.



THE age of chivalry has been, through the efforts of poets and romancers, so invested with an air of gallantry and fiction that it seems hardly possible to believe that the knights of those times were the ancestors of the men of the present day, and that they were as naturally the results of the spirit of their age as we are of ours. So far has this false conception of chivalry gone that even as generally reliable a writer as M. Philarète Chasles says, in effect, that the whole annals of the race afford no analogy to the mixture of manners, ideas, and customs peculiar to that era. But the history of any nation, at any phase of its development, would show that human nature is a "bundle of seeming inconsistencies;" and in these days, when the study of the persistent correlation of cause and effect has been carried into so many unexpected re-

gions of investigation, it is manifestly impossible that the age of chivalry should escape the common fate of so many hitherto inexplicable wonders.

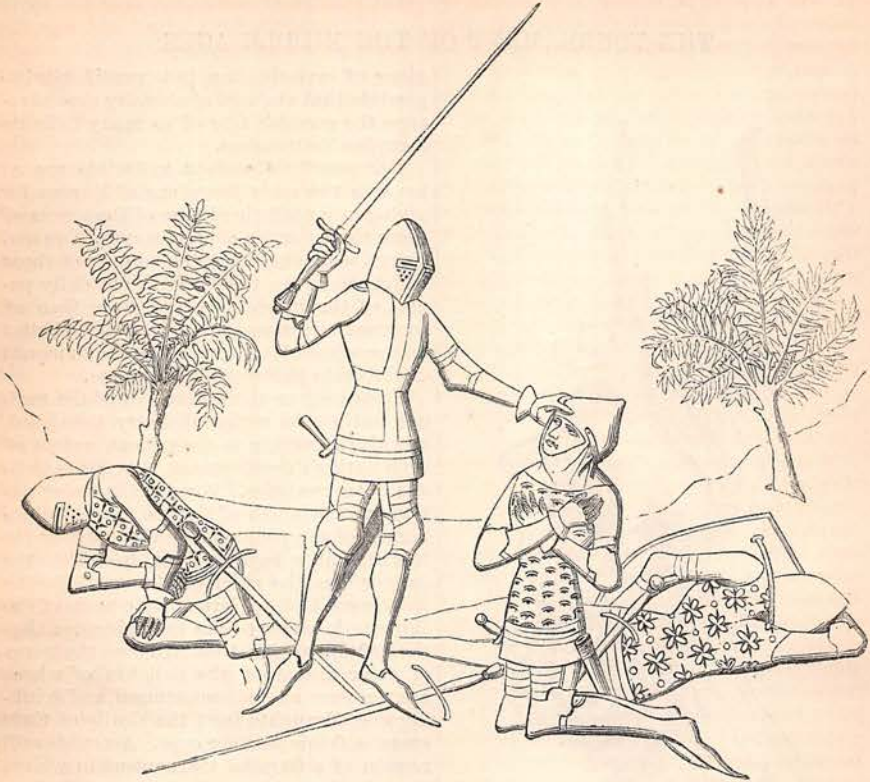
Fortunately abundant materials are at hand in the early literature of Europe for giving us a realistic picture of the scenes of those times; and a simple examination and report, somewhat after the manner of those which make up the news in our daily papers, of the incidents which were then of frequent occurrence, may enable us to better realize what chivalry was than any amount of elaborate philosophic discussion.

According to the differences of the various nations in which chivalry flourished, and also according to the various periods of each nation's development, it presents various characteristics. Among the ruder nations of the north of Europe the semi-barbarism of the people made the joust or the tournament a regular fight, in which the danger was the chief excitement. In the *Nibelungen Lied*—a German epic poem of the thirteenth century—are the evidences that the knights of that time still bore the traces of their ancestors, the delights of whose heaven were an endless carousal, and drinking deep draughts from the skulls of their enemies fashioned into cups. Accounts still remain of a German tournament in which, though blunted weapons were used, sixty persons were slaughtered.

In the south of Europe, however, a gentler spirit of culture had, even as early as the eleventh century, influenced even so thoroughly warlike an entertainment as the tournament was in its very nature, and had made fixed laws for the government of these contests, transforming them as much as possible from a series of bloody fights into—if the expression may be used—friendly trials of skill. The business of the knight was war. It was his function in society. He was educated for it, and the tournament was his practice to perfect himself in all its arts and tricks.

Notwithstanding also that chivalry was emphatically an aristocratic institution, and that most of its sentiments and almost all its influence were devoted to maintaining the aristocratic forces in society, yet it was also a very school of democracy, and was often used by the kings as a means for limiting the power of their nobility. Thus Philippe le Bel, in an emergency, made the eldest sons of his peasant subjects knights, and Frederick Barbarossa knighted such of his common soldiers as had displayed great bravery in battle then and there upon the field.

The cut representing this ceremony is taken from a manuscript of the romance of



CONFERRING KNIGHTHOOD ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

Lancelot du Lac, of the thirteenth century, in the National Library at Paris.

The education of the boy, however, whether noble by birth or the son of a commoner, who was destined for knighthood began at an early period of his life. When seven years old he was taken away from the care of the women of the household, and put entirely at the service of the men. As the whole system of feudalism was one of organized obedience to regularly appointed rulers, the most important lesson for the young aspirant to knighthood was considered to be learning subjection. As the "*Ordène de Chevalerie*," a poem by Hugues de Tabarie, which describes all the processes of the times used in the education of knights, says: "It is proper that he should learn to obey before he governs, for otherwise he would not appreciate the nobility of his rank when he became a knight."

That there should be no obstacles in the way of the boy's actually serving, he was generally sent away from home, it being a rule for every knight to place his son in the service of some other knight. It was a general thing for the distinguished heroes of the time, if they were wealthy enough to support a sufficiently important establishment, and had a reputation for courtly and

chivalric breeding, to receive boys into their houses, and, as it were, keep a school for knighthood. Besides, there were regular institutions founded for the purpose, and endowed as our colleges are to-day, the teachers in which were generally old knights who had passed the period of active service or had become impoverished, and who filled the function of the professors in our institutions of learning. Here the young aspirant was called a page or a valet, and was expected to do the most servile duties. They waited on the table, ran on errands, carved the meat and handed the drink, polished the armor, attended on the chase, and, if perchance they were capable, wrote such letters as their more illiterate master might want to have written.

Servile as such a position may seem to us, yet there was no servility in it, and its remains may be seen in the famous endowed schools in England to-day in the custom of "fagging," as it is called, where the new scholars tend upon the older ones, blacking their boots, bringing their water, and running on their errands.

As the young boy grew older and began to display his powers, he began to practice with arms suited to his age, and to assist at the practicing of the knights; and in time

he was allowed to choose from among the ladies of the household a special one whom he admired and desired to serve, swearing to tell her all his thoughts and actions, to devote himself to her service, and to seek to gain her good-will by the devotion which he displayed in imitation of that he saw about him. About the age of fourteen the page was raised to the position of esquire. This change of position was considered so important and serious that the aid of religion was invoked to make it the more impressive. The Church consecrated the knightly function, and hallowed the weapons that were used in it. The young aspirant, standing by the altar, and surrounded by his nearest relations, received the consecrated sword from the hands of a priest, and pledged himself to never use it except in the interest of honor and religion.

When the young esquire had passed through this ceremony he was raised to a higher position in the household, was allowed to be present in the private gatherings of the knights, and take part in the ceremonials which formed so large a part of the routine of feudal life. When noble visitors presented themselves, it was his duty to superintend the ceremonies attendant on their reception. Now, too, he began the more serious gymnastic exercises which were to render him physically capable of enduring the life of a knight. It required no small amount of strength to carry the weight of a suit of armor, to move easily thus encumbered, and at the same time to find it no hinderance in acting either offensively or defensively. To fit one's self for this, with even a natural endowment of sufficient vigor, required constant practice, and was necessarily the work of a lifetime.

That a knight's life was not entirely one of luxuriant gallantry, that all of his time was not spent in learning to

"caper nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute,"

appears clearly from an account given of their exercises by Boucicaut, a Marshal of France in the reign of Charles VI. Speaking of the exercises of the esquires, he says: "Now, cased in armor, he would practice leaping to the back of a horse, anon, to accustom himself to become long-winded and enduring, he would walk and run long distances on foot, or he would practice striking numerous and forcible blows with a battle-axe or a mallet. In order to accustom himself to the weight of his armor, he would turn somersaults while clad in a complete suit of mail, with the exception of his helmet, or would dance vigorously in a shirt of steel; he would place one hand on the saddle-bow of a tall charger and the other on his neck, and vault over him; he would climb up between two perpendicular walls,

that stood four or five feet asunder, by the mere pressure of his arms and legs, and would thus reach the top, even if it were as high as a tower, without resting either in the ascent or descent. When he was at home he would practice with the other young esquires at lance-throwing and other warlike exercises, and this continually."

In the large households, where there were many esquires completing their knightly education, the duties they had to perform were so numerous and so varied that the esquires were divided into classes, to each of which a special department of the work was intrusted, and by changing from one to the other of these classes, each esquire was enabled to obtain a complete knightly education. The first class, as the chief in importance, was the body esquire, or the esquire of honor, who attended to the personal wants of the heads of the household, filling, in fact, the function which to-day in the households of the wealthy is intrusted to the valets or body-servants. The class next in rank was the chamber esquire or chamberlain; then the carving esquire, the stable esquire, the cup-bearing esquire, and others whose various duties were similarly indicated in their names.

As the knights fought always on horseback, the care of the horses, and a thoroughly practical knowledge of horsebreaking, training, grooming, and the whole routine of stable-work, were considered a very important branch of an esquire's education; and so were the care of the arms and armor, and the keeping them in good order. Besides this, as all of the castles and most of the important buildings of those times were really fortresses, and were built to serve as places of defense against attacks which might occur at any time, there was a certain routine of military duty—keeping guard, posting sentinels, and the like, which devolved upon the esquires. These manifold duties gave the esquires a practical industrial education, which was an advantage for the community, even though its application was turned to the destructive art of war, instead of to productive industry.

When the knight went out, either for the chase, or simply to ride for pleasure, or for warlike purposes, the esquires assisted him, one holding his stirrup for him to mount, while others carried the various parts of his armor or his arms, keeping them until the moment came for their use. As a general thing, the knight rode his charger only in action, and at other times a gentler steed, called a palfrey, bore him. When the moment came for him to mount his war-horse, the esquires carefully attended to the duty of buckling his armor, seeing that it was securely fastened and properly arranged. The suit of armor was an intricate and cumbersome covering, and its efficiency as a pro-

tection depended very much upon its proper adjustment.

In the numerous single combats which took place between the knights, the esquires attended their respective masters, and remained quiet, standing behind them until the contest began actively, after the ceremonial preliminaries were finished. But when the fight began, then their duty was to stand ready to assist their master at his slightest sign. It was not allowed them to take any positively offensive part in the contest, but indirectly to give him all the aid they could, and thus assist him in maintaining his position, and in gaining the victory if possible. If, perchance, in the shock he was dismounted, they helped him to rise and mount his steed again, or they brought him a fresh horse, warded off the blows aimed at him when down, or if he was wounded, they saved him from the *mêlée*, and at the risk of their own lives carried him to a place of safety. In warfare the care of the prisoners he captured was given by the knight to his esquires. Though it was entirely contrary to rule for the esquires to take an active part in the contest, yet their zeal, their skill, their courage, and their devotion could be made of the greatest service to their masters.

Having conducted himself with credit through all the duties of his novitiate was still often not enough to enable an esquire to rise to the dignity of knighthood. The preliminary position of a pursuivant-at-arms was often made obligatory before he could reach the full dignity. While he filled this position his duties were to travel about, and complete his education by gathering a knowledge of the world—to-day attending a tournament or being received at the castle of some nobleman, to-morrow a guest in some more lowly cottage. He was expected, in all companies or wherever he might be, to illustrate by his learning and his con-

versation his appreciation of the dignity and importance of the rank he was seeking to attain. In the castles of the nobles, at the tournaments and festivities he there took part in, and in his respectful intercourse with the noble ladies he there met and the distinguished warriors by whom he was surrounded, he had constant examples set before him for imitation of the manners and customs of the society of which he hoped to form a member.

When the esquire had finally made himself sufficiently capable to be received as a full knight, this new dignity was conferred upon him by a symbolical ceremony more serious and solemn than any he had previously undergone. The ceremony of ordination began with the *vigil of arms*. This was a night-watch kept by him over his arms. Then he fasted, and spent three nights alone in a chapel in prayer. Finally, clothed in white, he heard mass upon his knees, witnessed the consecration of his sword before the altar by the bishop, who then gave him the kiss of peace. While hearing the mass the neophyte wore his sword suspended from his neck. When it had been consecrated, the bishop handed it to him, saying, "Receive this sword in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and use it for your own defense and for that of God's holy Church, and for the confusion of the enemies of the cross of Christ and of the Christian faith, and, as far as human frailty may permit, wound no one unjustly with it." The bishop then with the naked blade struck the neophyte gently three times across the shoulders, saying, "Be thou a peaceable, brave, and faithful knight." From the hands then of some noble present, or some lady, he received his spurs, his helmet, his gauntlets, and his cuirass, which were fitted upon him. The illustration representing this scene is taken from a manuscript of the thirteenth century in the Brit-

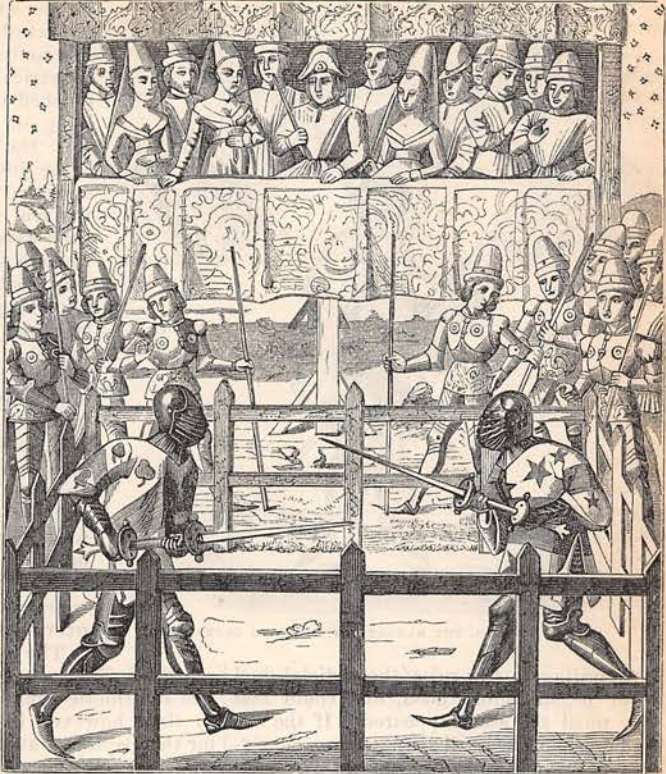


ARMING A KNIGHT.

ish Museum. While the spurs are being placed upon the neophyte, the prince girds on his sword. The ceremony was then completed by the *colé*. The prince, or the investing knight who had girded on the sword, drew it, and struck the neophyte with the flat side of it across the shoulder, greeting him as a brother in the fraternity of knighthood. Then his charger, his shield, and his lance were brought and presented to him, and he was at liberty to commence his knightly career.

Let us follow him through his experience of a judicial duel and a tournament. We have seen that the Church took part in the initiatory ceremonies of knighthood, but, as an institution, she always refused to sanction the custom of tournaments, tilts, and also of judicial duels. From a time long anterior to the advent of Christianity the trial by battle, or the judicial duel, had existed in Germany. It was the natural outgrowth of the belief that might is right, and grew to the prominence it had in chivalry through the phases of trial by ordeal, or by the judgment of God. About the time of Charlemagne trial by ordeal fell into disrepute, and was superseded by the judicial duel, which held its ground for centuries, and was common in all the countries of Europe.

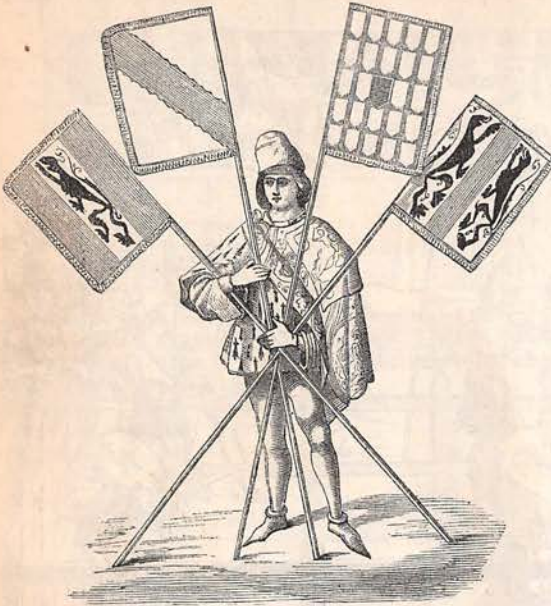
Rude as was the theory upon which it was based, yet the rules and regulations by which it was governed were all formed in accordance with reason. It was allowed only when the crime committed was punishable by death; but as death was so common a penalty, this did not diminish the frequency of the judicial duel. Persons under twenty-one or more than sixty, priests, invalids, and women, were not required to take part in the contest, but could be represented by champions. If the two parties to a dispute belonged to different ranks in the social scale, the defendant was given certain advantages. Thus, if a knight challenged a serf, he was obliged to forego his



THE CONTEST.

knightly weapons, and fight with a shield and a club, wearing a leather jerkin; if, however, the challenge came from the serf, the knight was allowed to fight in armor and on horseback. When the dispute has reached such a point that the parties feel obliged to refer its decision to an appeal to arms, they appear before their feudal lord, state their cases, and the plaintiff throwing down his glove as a gage, his adversary exchanges it for his own. One has his right hand upon the cross, and the other his right hand upon the Bible. The oath they each thus solemnly swear is that he alone is right and that his antagonist is false, and that he has no charm or talisman upon his person.

When the final oath had been taken, the herald-at-arms gave notice in a loud voice, at each corner of the inclosure, that the contest was about to commence, and warned all the spectators to remain perfectly passive and quiet, making no sound or movement which should encourage or annoy the combatants, under pain of losing a limb themselves, if not their lives. The lists were then cleared, the seconds withdrew, and the marshal of ceremonies, seeing that the combatants were properly placed, cried out three times, "Let them begin!" and the fight began.



HERALD HOLDING THE BANNERS OF THE FOUR REFEREES.

weapons were divided between the marshal and the judges of the contest. In the northern countries of Europe the vanquished champion was either hung or burned alive if he was the principal, and the crime justified it; but if he appeared in the lists to defend the real author of the crime, they were both put to death. Though the judicial trial gave way before the increasing knowledge of the times, yet the laws by which it was established were not repealed in England before the early part of this century. Mr. Rush, the minister of the United States in London, gives an account, in a work he published, of a scene he witnessed when the right of the trial by combat was insisted upon by some one, and the scandal it caused led to the repeal of the laws concerning it, which had been overlooked all this time.

According to the rules, the judicial duel never began before noon, and could last only until the stars appeared. If the defendant held out until then, he was considered to have gained his cause. The vanquished combatant, whether killed or simply wounded, was dragged from the lists by the heels, his armor taken off piece by piece and thrown into the lists, and his horse and

reception was more a gathering for the practice of athletic games than any thing else. In time, however, it became the occasion for the display of all the pomp and circumstance of the time, and was made the chief attraction at such popular festivities as a royal marriage, the entrance of a sovereign into a town, or any other occasion of public rejoicing. There is a tradition that the



KING HENRY II. WOUNDED BY MONTGOMERY IN A TOURNAMENT, 1559.

tournament, properly so called, was first instituted in the tenth century in Brittany by Geoffrey, the lord of Preuilli.

When a tournament was resolved upon, the judges were selected, and the time and place, together with the rules regulating it, were proclaimed publicly by the heralds, *à cor et à cri*, or with the voice and the trumpet, as it was called. The king-at-arms, wearing a gold cloth upon which the arms of the judges were painted, proclaimed the tournament, while the heralds distributed cards upon which the arms were painted to any one who would take them.

The occurrence of a tournament created a great excitement all through the surrounding country. The knights and nobles came with their retinue to attend it, while the dealers, the peddlers, and all the classes who sought such public gatherings for the furtherance of their private gains swarmed to the spot in crowds. Great labor, pains, and expense were involved in the preparation of the lists in which the tournament was to take place, and the temporary accommodations for the actors, the spectators, and the judges.

The lists came finally to be constructed in an oblong form, and were decorated with brilliantly painted and gilded designs and heraldic emblems, and hung with rich tapestries. The first cut on the preceding page shows a herald displaying the banners of the four referees. It is taken from a manuscript of the fifteenth century, entitled, *Tournaments of King René*. Similar banners, bearing heraldic devices, were brought by the various knights who gathered to take part in the celebration, and before the day of the tournament the houses in which they lodged were decorated with them, while in some castle, cloister, or monastery of the vicinity their coats of arms were hung, and the knights, the ladies, and the visitors gathered to inspect them. If among them any lady recognized the banner of a knight against whom she had any cause for complaint, she called the attention of the judges to it; and if, on investigation, he was found unworthy, he was not allowed to take part in the tournament.

Before the opening of the serious business for which the gathering had come together, the esquires practiced in the lists, and the ladies gathered to witness their feats. Frequently in these trials an esquire who distinguished himself was knighted on the spot,



THE CHAMPION OF THE TOURNAMENT.

and allowed to celebrate the occasion by taking part in the ensuing tournament.

The lower engraving on the preceding page is taken from a cut of the sixteenth century representing the tournament in which, in 1559, Henry II. of France was wounded by Montgomery.

Upon the stands built for the spectators were gathered the beauty and fashion of the time. Kings, queens, princes, and the highest nobility of the land gathered to witness the spectacle, and by their presence inspired the contestants to display their prowess. At certain parts of the lists the stands were erected for the camp marshals and the seconds of the knights. Within the lists, or close to them, were the kings-at-arms and the heralds, who were to watch the sports and render a faithful account of them. Crowds of servants were at hand to render assistance if needed. Bands of music added to the festivity of the scene. As their clarion notes sounded, the knights, in full armor, magnificently equipped, with their steeds decorated and armed, entered the lists, followed by their esquires. Sometimes the knights were led into the lists by the ladies they had sworn to serve, fastened with gold or silver chains, from which they were released before the combat began. As a rule, the knight bore, also fastened upon some part of his person, in a conspicuous place, some knot of ribbon or other favor which his lady had bestowed upon him.

The illustration of the champion of the tournament is taken from a design by Albert Dürer for his famous composition, the "Triumph of the Emperor Maximilian." While the combat continued, the musicians sounded their trumpets; the heralds encouraged the knights by loud cries of admiration at each successful stroke, and the crowd applauded their favorites. When it was ended, and the victor was reported by the heralds, the prize was given with great ceremony, either by the judges or by the ladies who were present, and the victor was conducted in triumph to the banquet, which

ended the festivities. The prize was not sought for its intrinsic value—frequently it was some object of no great worth—but to gain it was the honor which every one coveted. The happy victor had the chief place at the banquet, and his praises were sung by the wandering minstrels attracted by the occasion. So fully was the tournament in the spirit of the times that its scenes were reproduced every where. One illustration of the tournament was found upon an ivory looking-glass lid, carved in the thirteenth century, and which was probably used as a decoration for some lady's dressing-room.

THE SONG OF DEBORAH AND BARAK.*

THAT the leaders in Israel led on,
That the people willingly offered themselves,
Praise ye Jehovah!

Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes;
I, I will sing unto Jehovah;
I will sing praise to Jehovah, God of Israel.

When thou wentest forth, Jehovah, out of Seir,
When thou didst march out of the field of Edom,
Earth trembled and the skies dropped,
Yea, the clouds dropped with water.
The mountains trembled before Jehovah—
That Sinai before Jehovah, God of Israel.

In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath,
In the days of Jael, the highways rested,
And the travelers walked through by-ways.
Rulers ceased, they ceased in Israel,
Until that I, Deborah, arose,
That I arose, a mother in Israel.

They chose new gods;
Then was war in the gates;
A shield was not seen, nor spear,
Among forty thousand in Israel.

My heart is toward the governors of Israel,
That willingly offered themselves among the people.
Bless ye Jehovah!

Ye that ride on white asses,
Ye that sit in judgment,
And ye that walk by the way,
Join in the song.

From amid the shouting of them that divide the spoils
among the watering-troughs,
There shall they rehearse the righteous acts of
Jehovah,
The righteous acts of his rule in Israel.

* This wonderful lyric, produced 800 years before Pindar, and the very model and type of triumphal song, is here given with some variations from the King James version. These variations, for which, as well as for the arrangement of the ode, we are indebted to the Rev. Thomas J. Conant, D.D., not only more correctly render the original Hebrew, but also more effectively interpret its poetry.—ED. HARPER.

Then let them go down to the gates, the people of
Jehovah.

Awake, awake, Deborah!
Awake, awake, utter a song!
Arise, Barak, and lead thy captured captive,
Thou son of Abinoam!

Then came down a remnant of nobles of the people;
Jehovah came down to me among the heroes;
Out of Ephraim those whose root is in Amalek,
After thee, Benjamin, among thy people;
Out of Machir came down rulers,
And out of Zebulun they that hold the musterer's
staff.

And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;
And as Issachar so was Barak;
He rushed on foot into the valley.

By the streams of Reuben
Great were the resolves of heart.
Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds
To hear the bleatings of the flocks?
By the streams of Reuben
Great were the searchings of heart.

Gilead abode beyond the Jordan;
And why did Dan remain in ships?
Asher continued on the sea-shore,
And abode in his havens.

Zebulun, a people that jeopardized their lives unto
the death,
And Naphtali, in the high places of the field.

There came kings, they fought;
Then fought the kings of Canaan,
At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
Spoil of silver they took not away.

From heaven they fought;
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
The river Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon.
O my soul, thou shalt tread down the mighty!
Then stamped the horses' hoofs
In the rush, the rush of their mighty ones.

Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of Jehovah;
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;