CHAPTER V.

EMPLOYMENT OF ANIMALS IN MEDIEVAL SATIRE.—POPULARITY OF FABLES; ODO DE CIRINGTON.—REYNARD THE FOX.—BURNELLUS AND FAUVEL.—THE CHARIVARI.—LE MONDE BESTORNE.—ENCAUSTIC TILES.—SHOEING THE GOOSE, AND FEEDING PIGS WITH ROSES.—SATIRICAL SIGNS; THE MUSTARD MAKER.

THE people of the middle ages appear to have been great admirers of animals, to have observed closely their various characters and peculiarities, and to have been fond of domesticating them. They soon began to employ their peculiarities as means of satirizing and caricaturing mankind; and among the literature bequeathed to them by the Romans, they received no book more eagerly than the "Fables of Æsop," and the other collections of fables which were published under the empire. We find no traces of fables among the original literature of the German race; but the tribes who took possession of the Roman provinces no sooner became acquainted with the fables of the ancients, than they began to imitate them, and stories in which animals acted the part of men were multiplied immensely, and became a very important branch of mediæval fiction.

Among the Teutonic peoples especially, these fables often assumed very grotesque forms, and the satire they convey is very amusing. One of the earliest of these collections of original fables was composed by an English ecclesiastic named Odo de Cirington, who lived in the time of Henry II. and Richard I. In Odo's fables, we find the animals figuring under the same popular names by which they were afterwards so well known, such as Reynard for the fox, Ifengrin for the wolf, Teburg for the cat, and the like. Thus the subject of one of them is "Ifengrin made Monk" (de Ifengrino monacho). "Once," we are told, "Ifengrin desired to be a monk. By dint of fervent supplications, he obtained the consent of the chapter,