

The bowl is made of the oaken tree,
And so is this ale, of good barley."

The word "Wassail," or "*Wa'as Hail*," was a common term of civility, as the word "*hail*" implies; and when it is to be uttered over strong drink, the answer to it in those days was "*Drink Hail!*" neither of which terms were any more silly than the modern foolish way of saying, "Your Health," and the answer, "I thank you."

On the subject of health-drinking it is also said, that when the Danes had conquered Britain, they greatly oppressed the Saxons; and though the Danes set a very bad example, being great drunkards, if a Saxon presumed to drink in their presence, without leave, they used to put him to death. The "*health*" given by the Danes to the Saxon captives, or dependants, was a *pledge*, that is to say an engagement or promise, that they might drink, without fear of any artful or cruel advantage being taken of them.

It is uncertain at what precise period of our history wines were first introduced into Britain. They are mentioned, however, and the practice of pledging healths spoken of, in the notice of a feast given in the fifth century; and in the reign of Edgar, drinking was so prevalent, and