AINSWORTH WILLIAM HARRISON

WINDSOR CASTLE

William Ainsworth
Windsor Castle

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Содержание

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BOOK I. ANNE BOLEYN

I

Of the Earl of Surrey's solitary Ramble in the Home Park—Of the Vision beheld by him in the Haunted Dell—And of his Meeting with Morgan Fenwolf, the Keeper, beneath Herne's Oak.

In the twentieth year of the reign of the right high and puissant King Henry the Eighth, namely, in 1529, on the 21st of April, and on one of the loveliest evenings that ever fell on the loveliest district in England, a fair youth, having somewhat the appearance of a page, was leaning over the terrace wall on the north side of Windsor Castle, and gazing at the magnificent scene before him. On his right stretched the broad green expanse forming the Home Park, studded with noble trees, chiefly consisting of ancient oaks, of which England had already learnt to be proud, thorns as old or older than the oaks, wide-spreading beeches, tall elms, and hollies. The disposition of these trees was picturesque and beautiful in the extreme. Here, at the end of a sweeping

vista, and in the midst of an open space covered with the greenest sward, stood a mighty broad-armed oak, beneath whose ample boughs, though as yet almost destitute of foliage, while the sod beneath them could scarcely boast a head of fern, couched a herd of deer. There lay a thicket of thorns skirting a sand-bank, burrowed by rabbits, on this hand grew a dense and Druid-like grove, into whose intricacies the slanting sunbeams pierced; on that extended a long glade, formed by a natural avenue of oaks, across which, at intervals, deer were passing. Nor were human figures wanting to give life and interest to the scene. Adown the glade came two keepers of the forest, having each a couple of buckhounds with them in leash, whose baying sounded cheerily amid the woods. Nearer the castle, and bending their way towards it, marched a party of falconers with their well-trained birds, whose skill they had been approving upon their fists, their jesses ringing as they moved along, while nearer still, and almost at the foot of the terrace wall, was a minstrel playing on a rebec, to which a keeper, in a dress of Lincoln green, with a bow over his shoulder, a quiver of arrows at his back, and a comely damsel under his arm, was listening.

On the left, a view altogether different in character, though scarcely less beautiful, was offered to the gaze. It was formed by the town of Windsor, then not a third of its present size, but incomparably more picturesque in appearance, consisting almost entirely of a long straggling row of houses, chequered black and white, with tall gables, and projecting storeys skirting the

west and south sides of the castle, by the silver windings of the river, traceable for miles, and reflecting the glowing hues of the sky, by the venerable College of Eton, embowered in a grove of trees, and by a vast tract of well-wooded and well-cultivated country beyond it, interspersed with villages, churches, old halls, monasteries, and abbeys.

Taking out his tablets, the youth, after some reflection, traced a few lines upon them, and then, quitting the parapet, proceeded slowly, and with a musing air, towards the north west angle of the terrace. He could not be more than fifteen, perhaps not so much, but he was tall and well-grown, with slight though remarkably well-proportioned limbs; and it might have been safely predicted that, when arrived at years of maturity, he would possess great personal vigour. His countenance was full of thought and intelligence, and he had a broad lofty brow, shaded by a profusion of light brown ringlets, a long, straight, and finely-formed nose, a full, sensitive, and well-chiselled mouth, and a pointed chin. His eyes were large, dark, and somewhat melancholy in expression, and his complexion possessed that rich clear brown tint constantly met with in Italy or Spain, though but seldom seen in a native of our own colder clime. His dress was rich, but sombre, consisting of a doublet of black satin, worked with threads of Venetian gold; hose of the same material, and similarly embroidered; a shirt curiously wrought with black silk, and fastened at the collar with black enamelled clasps; a cloak of black velvet, passmented with gold, and lined with crimson satin;

a flat black velvet cap, set with pearls and goldsmith's work, and adorned with a short white plume; and black velvet buskins. His arms were rapier and dagger, both having gilt and graven handles, and sheaths of black velvet.

As he moved along, the sound of voices chanting vespers arose from Saint George's Chapel; and while he paused to listen to the solemn strains, a door, in that part of the castle used as the king's privy lodgings, opened, and a person advanced towards him. The new-comer had broad, brown, martial-looking features, darkened still more by a thick coal-black beard, clipped short in the fashion of the time, and a pair of enormous moustachios. He was accoutred in a habergeon, which gleamed from beneath the folds of a russet-coloured mantle, and wore a steel cap in lieu of a bonnet on his head, while a long sword dangled from beneath his cloak. When within a few paces of the youth, whose back was towards him, and who did not hear his approach, he announced himself by a loud cough, that proved the excellence of his lungs, and made the old walls ring again, startling the jackdaws roosting in the battlements.

"What! composing a vesper hymn, my lord of Surrey?" he cried with a laugh, as the other hastily thrust the tablets, which he had hitherto held in his hand, into his bosom. "You will rival Master Skelton, the poet laureate, and your friend Sir Thomas Wyat, too, ere long. But will it please your lord-ship to quit for a moment the society of the celestial Nine, and descend to earth, while I inform you that, acting as your representative, I

have given all needful directions for his majesty's reception to-morrow?"

"You have not failed, I trust, to give orders to the groom of the chambers for the lodging of my fair cousin, Mistress Anne Boleyn, Captain Bouchier?" inquired the Earl of Surrey, with a significant smile.

"Assuredly not, my lord!" replied the other, smiling in his turn. "She will be lodged as royally as if she were Queen of England. Indeed, the queen's own apartments are assigned her."

"It is well," rejoined Surrey. "And you have also provided for the reception of the Pope's legate, Cardinal Campeggio?"

Bouchier bowed.

"And for Cardinal Wolsey?" pursued the other.

The captain bowed again.

"To save your lordship the necessity of asking any further questions," he said, "I may state briefly that I have done all as if you had done it yourself."

"Be a little more particular, captain, I pray you," said Surrey.

"Willingly, my lord," replied Bouchier. "In your lord ship's name, then, as vice-chamberlain, in which character I presented myself, I summoned together the dean and canons of the College of St. George, the usher of the black rod, the governor of the alms-knights, and the whole of the officers of the household, and acquainted them, in a set speech-which, I flatter myself, was quite equal to any that your lordship, with all your poetical talents, could have delivered—that the king's highness, being at

Hampton Court with the two cardinals, Wolsey and Campeggio, debating the matter of divorce from his queen, Catherine of Arragon, proposes to hold the grand feast of the most noble order of the Garter at this his castle of Windsor, on Saint George's Day—that is to say, the day after to-morrow—and that it is therefore his majesty's sovereign pleasure that the Chapel of St. George, in the said castle, be set forth and adorned with its richest furniture; that the high altar be hung with arras representing the patron saint of the order on horseback, and garnished with the costliest images and ornaments in gold and silver; that the pulpit be covered with crimson damask, inwrought with flowers-de-luces of gold, portcullises, and roses; that the royal stall be canopied with a rich cloth of state, with a haut-pas beneath it of a foot high; that the stalls of the knights companions be decked with cloth of tissue, with their scutcheons set at the back; and that all be ready at the hour of tierce-hora tertia vespertina, as appointed by his majesty's own statute—at which time the eve of the feast shall be held to commence."

"Take breath, captain," laughed the earl.

"I have no need," replied Bouchier. "Furthermore, I delivered your lordship's warrant from the lord chamberlain to the usher of the black rod, to make ready and furnish Saint George's Hall, both for the supper to-morrow and the grand feast on the following day; and I enjoined the dean and canons of the college, the alms-knights, and all the other officers of the order, to be in readiness for the occasion. And now, having fulfilled my devoir,

or rather your lordship's, I am content to resign my post as vice-chamberlain, to resume my ordinary one, that of your simple gentleman, and to attend you back to Hampton Court whenever it shall please you to set forth."

"And that will not be for an hour, at the least," replied the earl; "for I intend to take a solitary ramble in the Home Park."

"What I to seek inspiration for a song—or to meditate upon the charms of the fair Geraldine, eh, my lord?" rejoined Bouchier. "But I will not question you too shrewdly. Only let me caution you against going near Herne's Oak. It is said that the demon hunter walks at nightfall, and scares, if he does not injure, all those who cross his path. At curfew toll I must quit the castle, and will then, with your attendants proceed to the Garter, in Thames Street, where I will await your arrival. If we reach Hampton Court by midnight, it will be time enough, and as the moon will rise in an hour, we shall have a pleasant ride."

"Commend me to Bryan Bowntance, the worthy host of the Garter," said the earl; "and bid him provide you with a bottle of his best sack in which to drink my health."

"Fear me not," replied the other. "And I pray your lordship not to neglect my caution respecting Herne the Hunter. In sober sooth, I have heard strange stories of his appearance of late, and should not care to go near the tree after dark."

The earl laughed somewhat sceptically, and the captain reiterating his caution, they separated—Bouchier returning the way he came, and Surrey proceeding towards a small drawbridge

crossing the ditch on the eastern side of the castle, and forming a means of communication with the Little Park. He was challenged by a sentinel at the drawbridge, but on giving the password he was allowed to cross it, and to pass through a gate on the farther side opening upon the park.

Brushing the soft and dewy turf with a footstep almost as light and bounding as that of a fawn, he speeded on for more than a quarter of a mile, when he reached a noble beech-tree standing at the end of a clump of timber. A number of rabbits were feeding beneath it, but at his approach they instantly plunged into their burrows.

Here he halted to look at the castle. The sun had sunk behind it, dilating its massive keep to almost its present height and tinging the summits of the whole line of ramparts and towers, since rebuilt and known as the Brunswick Tower, the Chester Tower, the Clarence Tower, and the Victoria Tower, with rosy lustre.

Flinging himself at the foot of the beech-tree, the youthful earl indulged his poetical reveries for a short time, and then, rising, retraced his steps, and in a few minutes the whole of the south side of the castle lay before him. The view comprehended the two fortifications recently removed to make way for the York and Lancaster Towers, between which stood a gate approached by a drawbridge; the Earl Marshal's Tower, now styled from the monarch in whose reign it was erected, Edward the Third's Tower; the black rod's lodgings; the Lieutenant's—now Henry

the Third's Tower; the line of embattled walls, constituting the lodgings of the alms-knights; the tower tenanted by the governor of that body, and still allotted to the same officer; Henry the Eight's Gateway, and the Chancellor of the Garter's Tower—the latter terminating the line of building. A few rosy beams tipped the pinnacles of Saint George's Chapel, seen behind the towers above-mentioned, with fire; but, with this exception, the whole of the mighty fabric looked cold and grey.

At this juncture the upper gate was opened, and Captain Bouchier and his attendants issued from it, and passed over the drawbridge. The curfew bell then tolled, the drawbridge was raised, the horsemen disappeared, and no sound reached the listener's ear except the measured tread of the sentinels on the ramparts, audible in the profound stillness.

The youthful earl made no attempt to join his followers, but having gazed on the ancient pile before him till its battlements and towers grew dim in the twilight, he struck into a footpath leading across the park towards Datchet, and pursued it until it brought him near a dell filled with thorns, hollies, and underwood, and overhung by mighty oaks, into which he unhesitatingly plunged, and soon gained the deepest part of it. Here, owing to the thickness of the hollies and the projecting arms of other large overhanging timber, added to the uncertain light above, the gloom was almost impervious, and he could scarcely see a yard before him. Still, he pressed on unhesitatingly, and with a sort of pleasurable sensation at the difficulties he

was encountering. Suddenly, however, he was startled by a blue phosphoric light streaming through the bushes on the left, and, looking up, he beheld at the foot of an enormous oak, whose giant roots protruded like twisted snakes from the bank, a wild spectral-looking object, possessing some slight resemblance to humanity, and habited, so far as it could be determined, in the skins of deer, strangely disposed about its gaunt and tawny-coloured limbs. On its head was seen a sort of helmet, formed of the skull of a stag, from which branched a large pair of antlers; from its left arm hung a heavy and rusty-looking chain, in the links of which burnt the phosphoric fire before mentioned; while on its right wrist was perched a large horned owl, with feathers erected, and red staring eyes.

Impressed with the superstitious feelings common to the age, the young earl, fully believing he was in the presence of a supernatural being, could scarcely, despite his courageous nature, which no ordinary matter would have shaken, repress a cry. Crossing himself, he repeated, with great fervency, a prayer, against evil spirits, and as he uttered it the light was extinguished, and the spectral figure vanished. The clanking of the chain was heard, succeeded by the hooting of the owl; then came a horrible burst of laughter, then a fearful wail, and all was silent.

Up to this moment the young earl had stood still, as if spell-bound; but being now convinced that the spirit had fled, he pressed forward, and, ere many seconds, emerged from the brake. The full moon was rising as he issued forth, and

illuminating the glades and vistas, and the calmness and beauty of all around seemed at total variance with the fearful vision he had just witnessed. Throwing a shuddering glance at the haunted dell, he was about to hurry towards the castle, when a large, lightning-scathed, and solitary oak, standing a little distance from him, attracted his attention.

This was the very tree connected with the wild legend of Herne the Hunter, which Captain Bouchier had warned him not to approach, and he now forcibly recalled the caution. Beneath it he perceived a figure, which he at first took for that of the spectral hunter; but his fears were relieved by a shout from the person, who at the same moment appeared to catch sight of him.

Satisfied that, in the present instance, he had to do with a being of this world, Surrey ran towards the tree, and on approaching it perceived that the object of his alarm was a young man of very athletic proportions, and evidently, from his garb, a keeper of the forest.

He was habited in a jerkin of Lincoln green cloth, with the royal badge woven in silver on the breast, and his head was protected by a flat green cloth cap, ornamented with a pheasant's tail. Under his right arm he carried a crossbow; a long silver-tipped horn was slung in his baldric; and he was armed with a short hanger, or wood-knife. His features were harsh and prominent; and he had black beetling brows, a large coarse mouth, and dark eyes, lighted up with a very sinister and malignant expression.

He was attended by a large savage-looking staghound, whom he addressed as Bawsey, and whose fierceness had to be restrained as Surrey approached.

"Have you seen anything?" he demanded of the earl.

"I have seen Herne the Hunter himself, or the fiend in his likeness," replied Surrey.

And he briefly related the vision he had beheld.

"Ay, ay, you have seen the demon hunter, no doubt," replied the keeper at the close of the recital. "I neither saw the light, nor heard the laughter, nor the wailing cry you speak of; but Bawsey crouched at my feet and whined, and I knew some evil thing was at hand. Heaven shield us!" he exclaimed, as the hound crouched at his feet, and directed her gaze towards the oak, uttering a low ominous whine, "she is at the same trick again."

The earl glanced in the same direction, and half expected to see the knotted trunk of the tree burst open and disclose the figure of the spectral hunter. But nothing was visible—at least, to him, though it would seem from the shaking limbs, fixed eyes, and ghastly visage of the keeper, that some appalling object was presented to his gaze.

"Do you not see him?" cried the latter at length, in thrilling accents; "he is circling the tree, and blasting it. There! he passes us now—do you not see him?"

"No," replied Surrey; "but do not let us tarry here longer."

So saying he laid his hand upon the keeper's arm. The touch seemed to rouse him to exertion: He uttered a fearful cry, and

set off at a quick pace along the park, followed by Bawsey, with her tail between her legs. The earl kept up with him, and neither halted till they had left the wizard oak at a considerable distance behind them.

"And so you did not see him?" said the keeper, in a tone of exhaustion, as he wiped the thick drops from his brow.

"I did not," replied Surrey.

"That is passing strange," rejoined the other. "I myself have seen him before, but never as he appeared to-night."

"You are a keeper of the forest, I presume, friend?" said Surrey. "How are you named?"

"I am called Morgan Fenwolf," replied the keeper; "and you?"

"I am the Earl of Surrey;' returned the young noble.

"What!" exclaimed Fenwolf, making a reverence, "the son to his grace of Norfolk?"

The earl replied in the affirmative.

"Why, then, you must be the young nobleman whom I used to see so often with the king's son, the Duke of Richmond, three or four years ago, at the castle?" rejoined Fenwolf "You are altogether grown out of my recollection."

"Not unlikely," returned the earl. "I have been at Oxford, and have only just completed my studies. This is the first time I have been at Windsor since the period you mention."

"I have heard that the Duke of Richmond was at Oxford likewise," observed Fenwolf.

"We were at Cardinal College together," replied Surrey. "But

the duke's term was completed before mine. He is my senior by three years."

"I suppose your lordship is returning to the castle?" said Fenwolf.

"No," replied Surrey. "My attendants are waiting for me at the Garter, and if you will accompany me thither, I will bestow a cup of good ale upon you to recruit you after the fright you have undergone."

Fenwolf signified his graceful acquiescence, and they walked on in silence, for the earl could not help dwelling upon the vision he had witnessed, and his companion appeared equally abstracted. In this sort they descended the hill near Henry the Eighth's Gate, and entered Thames Street.

II

Of Bryan Bowntance, the Host of the Garter—Of the Duke of Shoreditch—Of the Bold Words uttered by Mark Fytton, the Butcher, and how he was cast into the Vault of the Curfew Tower.

Turning off on the right, the earl and his companion continued to descend the hill until they came in sight of the Garter—a snug little hostel, situated immediately beneath the Curfew Tower.

Before the porch were grouped the earl's attendants, most of whom had dismounted, and were holding their steeds by the bridles. At this juncture the door of the hostel opened, and a fat jolly-looking personage, with a bald head and bushy grey beard, and clad in a brown serge doublet, and hose to match, issued forth, bearing a foaming jug of ale and a horn cup. His appearance was welcomed by a joyful shout from the attendants.

"Come, my masters!" he cried, filling the horn, "here is a cup of stout Windsor ale in which to drink the health of our jolly monarch, bluff King Hal; and there's no harm, I trust, in calling him so."

"Marry, is there not, mine host;" cried the foremost attendant. "I spoke of him as such in his own hearing not long ago, and he laughed at me in right merry sort. I love the royal bully, and will drink his health gladly, and Mistress Anne Boleyn's to boot."

And he emptied the horn.

"They tell me Mistress Anne Boleyn is coming to Windsor with the king and the knights-companions to-morrow—is it so?" asked the host, again filling the horn, and handing it to another attendant.

The person addressed nodded, but he was too much engrossed by the horn to speak.

"Then there will be rare doings in the castle," chuckled the host; "and many a lusty pot will be drained at the Garter. Alack-a-day! how times are changed since I, Bryan Bowntance, first stepped into my father's shoes, and became host of the Garter. It was in 1501—twenty-eight years ago—when King Henry the Seventh, of blessed memory, ruled the land, and when his elder son, Prince Arthur, was alive likewise. In that year the young prince espoused Catherine of Arragon, our present queen, and soon afterwards died; whereupon the old king, not liking—for he loved his treasure better than his own flesh—to part with her dowry, gave her to his second son, Henry, our gracious sovereign, whom God preserve! Folks said then the match wouldn't come to good; and now we find they spoke the truth, for it is likely to end in a divorce."

"Not so loud, mine host!" cried the foremost attendant; "here comes our young master, the Earl of Surrey."

"Well, I care not," replied the host bluffly. "I've spoken no treason. I love my king; and if he wishes to have a divorce, I hope his holiness the Pope will grant him one, that's all."

As he said this, a loud noise was heard within the hostel,

and a man was suddenly and so forcibly driven forth, that he almost knocked down Bryan Bowntance, who was rushing in to see what was the matter. The person thus ejected, who was a powerfully-built young man, in a leathern doublet, with his muscular arms bared to the shoulder, turned his rage upon the host, and seized him by the throat with a grip that threatened him with strangulation. Indeed, but for the intervention of the earl's attendants, who rushed to his assistance, such might have been his fate. As soon as he was liberated, Bryan cried in a voice of mingled rage and surprise to his assailant, "Why, what's the matter, Mark Fytton?—are you gone mad, or do you mistake me for a sheep or a bullock, that you attack me in this fashion? My strong ale must have got into your addle pate with a vengeance.

"The knave has been speaking treason of the king's highness," said the tall man, whose doublet and hose of the finest green cloth, as well as the how and quiverful of arrows at his back, proclaimed him an archer—"and therefore we turned him out!"

"And you did well, Captain Barlow," cried the host.

"Call me rather the Duke of Shoreditch," rejoined the tall archer; "for since his majesty conferred the title upon me, though it were but in jest, when I won this silver bugle, I shall ever claim it. I am always designated by my neighbours in Shoreditch as his grace; and I require the same attention at your hands. To-morrow I shall have my comrades, the Marquises of Clerkenwell, Islington, Hogsden, Pancras, and Paddington, with me, and then you will see the gallant figure we shall cut."

"I crave your grace's pardon for my want of respect," replied the host. "I am not ignorant of the distinction conferred upon you at the last match at the castle butts by the king. But to the matter in hand. What treason hath Mark Fytton, the butcher, been talking?"

"I care not to repeat his words, mine host," replied the duke; "but he hath spoken in unbecoming terms of his highness and Mistress Anne Boleyn."

"He means not what he says," rejoined the host. "He is a loyal subject of the king; but he is apt to get quarrelsome over his cups."

"Well said, honest Bryan," cried the duke; "you have one quality of a good landlord—that of a peacemaker. Give the knave a cup of ale, and let him wash down his foul words in a health to the king, wishing him a speedy divorce and a new queen, and he shall then sit among us again."

"I do not desire to sit with you, you self-dubbed duke," rejoined Mark; "but if you will doff your fine jerkin, and stand up with me on the green, I will give you cause to remember laying hands on me."

"Well challenged, bold butcher!" cried one of Surrey's attendants. "You shall be made a duke yourself."

"Or a cardinal," cried Mark. "I should not be the first of my brethren who has met with such preferment."

"He derides the Church in the person of Cardinal Wolsey!" cried the duke. "He is a blasphemer as well as traitor."

"Drink the king's health in a full cup, Mark," interposed the host, anxious to set matters aright, "and keep your mischievous tongue between your teeth."

"Beshrew me if I drink the king's health, or that of his minion, Anne Boleyn!" cried Mark boldly. "But I will tell you what I will drink. I will drink the health of King Henry's lawful consort, Catherine of Arragon; and I will add to it a wish that the Pope may forge her marriage chains to her royal husband faster than ever."

"A foolish wish," cried Bryan. "Why, Mark, you are clean crazed!"

"It is the king who is crazed, not me!" cried Mark. "He would sacrifice his rightful consort to his unlawful passion; and you, base hirelings, support the tyrant in his wrongful conduct!"

"Saints protect us!" exclaimed Bryan. "Why, this is flat treason. Mark, I can no longer uphold you."

"Not if you do not desire to share his prison, mine host," cried the Duke of Shoreditch. "You have all heard him call the king a tyrant. Seize him, my masters!"

"Let them lay hands upon me if they dare!" cried the butcher resolutely. "I have felled an ox with a blow of my fist before this, and I promise you I will show them no better treatment."

Awed by Mark's determined manner, the bystanders kept aloof.

"I command you, in the king's name, to seize him!" roared Shoreditch. "If he offers resistance he will assuredly be hanged."

"No one shall touch me!" cried Mark fiercely.

"That remains to be seen," said the foremost of the Earl of Surrey's attendants. "Yield, fellow!"

"Never!" replied Mark; "and I warn you to keep off."

The attendant, however, advanced; but before he could lay hands on the butcher he received a blow from his ox-like fist that sent him reeling backwards for several paces, and finally stretched him at full length upon the ground. His companions drew their swords, and would have instantly fallen upon the sturdy offender, if Morgan Fenwolf, who, with the Earl of Surrey, was standing among the spectators, had not rushed forward, and, closing with Mark before the latter could strike a blow, grappled with him, and held him fast till he was secured, and his arms tied behind him.

"And so it is you, Morgan Fenwolf, who have served me this ill turn, eh?" cried the butcher, regarding him fiercely. "I now believe all I have heard of you."

"What have you heard of him?" asked Surrey, advancing.

"That he has dealings with the fiend—with Herne the Hunter," replied Mark. "If I am hanged for a traitor, he ought to be burnt for a wizard."

"Heed not what the villain says, my good fellow," said the Duke of Shoreditch; "you have captured him bravely, and I will take care your conduct is duly reported to his majesty. To the castle with him! To the castle! He will lodge to-night in the deepest dungeon of yon fortification," pointing to the Curfew

Tower above them, “there to await the king’s judgment; and to-morrow night it will be well for him if he is not swinging from the gibbet near the bridge. Bring him along.”

And followed by Morgan Fenwolf and the others, with the prisoner, he strode up the hill.

Long before this Captain Bouchier had issued from the hostel and joined the earl, and they walked together after the crowd. In a few minutes the Duke of Shoreditch reached Henry the Eighth’s Gate, where he shouted to a sentinel, and told him what had occurred. After some delay a wicket in the gate was opened, and the chief persons of the party were allowed to pass through it with the prisoner, who was assigned to the custody of a couple of arquebusiers.

By this time an officer had arrived, and it was agreed, at the suggestion of the Duke of Shoreditch, to take the offender to the Curfew Tower. Accordingly they crossed the lower ward, and passing beneath an archway near the semicircular range of habitations allotted to the petty canons, traversed the space before the west end of Saint George’s Chapel, and descending a short flight of stone steps at the left, and threading a narrow passage, presently arrived at the arched entrance in the Curfew, whose hoary walls shone brightly in the moonlight.

They had to knock for some time against the stout oak door before any notice was taken of the summons. At length an old man, who acted as bellringer, thrust his head out of one of the narrow pointed windows above, and demanded their business.

Satisfied with the reply, he descended, and, opening the door, admitted them into a lofty chamber, the roof of which was composed of stout planks, crossed by heavy oaken rafters, and supported by beams of the same material. On the left a steep ladder-like flight of wooden steps led to an upper room, and from a hole in the roof descended a bell-rope, which was fastened to one of the beams, showing the use to which the chamber was put.

Some further consultation was now held among the party as to the propriety of leaving the prisoner in this chamber under the guard of the arquebusiers, but it was at last decided against doing so, and the old bellringer being called upon for the keys of the dungeon beneath, he speedily produced them. They then went forth, and descending a flight of stone steps on the left, came to a low strong door, which they unlocked, and obtained admission to a large octangular chamber with a vaulted roof, and deep embrasures terminated by narrow loopholes. The light of a lamp carried by the bellringer showed the dreary extent of the vault, and the enormous thickness of its walls.

"A night's solitary confinement in this place will be of infinite service to our prisoner," said the Duke of Shoreditch, gazing around. "I'll be sworn he is ready to bite off the foolish tongue that has brought him to such a pass."

The butcher made no reply, but being released by the arquebusiers, sat down upon a bench that constituted the sole furniture of the vault.

"Shall I leave him the lamp?" asked the bellringer; "he may

beguile the time by reading the names of former prisoners scratched on the walls and in the embrasures."

"No; he shall not even have that miserable satisfaction," returned the Duke of Shoreditch. "He shall be left in the darkness to his own bad and bitter thoughts."

With this the party withdrew, and the door was fastened upon the prisoner. An arquebusier was stationed at the foot of the steps; and the Earl of Surrey and Captain Bouchier having fully satisfied their curiosity, shaped their course towards the castle gate. On their way thither the earl looked about for Morgan Fenwolf, but could nowhere discern him. He then passed through the wicket with Bouchier, and proceeding to the Garter, they mounted their steeds, and galloped off towards Datchet, and thence to Staines and Hampton Court.

III

Of the Grand Procession to Windsor Castle—Of the Meeting of King Henry the Eighth and Anne Boleyn at the Lower Gate-Of their Entrance into the Castle—And how the Butcher was Hanged from the Curfew Tower.

A joyous day was it for Windsor and great were the preparations made by its loyal inhabitants for a suitable reception to their sovereign. At an early hour the town was thronged with strangers from the neighbouring villages, and later on crowds began to arrive from London, some having come along the highway on horseback, and others having rowed in various craft up the river. All were clad in holiday attire, and the streets presented an appearance of unwonted bustle and gaiety. The Maypole in Bachelors' Acre was hung with flowers. Several booths, with flags floating above them, were erected in the same place, where ale, mead, and hypocras, together with cold pasties, hams, capons, and large joints of beef and mutton, might be obtained. Mummers and minstrels were in attendance, and every kind of diversion was going forward. Here was one party wrestling; there another, casting the bar; on this side a set of rustics were dancing a merry round with a bevy of buxom Berkshire lasses; on that stood a fourth group, listening to a youth playing on the recorders. At one end of the Acre large fires were lighted, before which two whole oxen were roasting, provided in

honour of the occasion by the mayor and burgesses of the town; at the other, butts were set against which the Duke of Shoreditch and his companions, the five marquises, were practising. The duke himself shot admirably, and never failed to hit the bulls-eye; but the great feat of the day was performed by Morgan Fenwolf, who thrice split the duke's shafts as they stuck in the mark.

"Well done!" cried the duke, as he witnessed the achievement; "why, you shoot as bravely as Herne the Hunter. Old wives tell us he used to split the arrows of his comrades in that fashion."

"He must have learnt the trick from Herne himself in the forest," cried one of the bystanders.

Morgan Fenwolf looked fiercely round in search of the speaker, but could not discern him. He, however, shot no more, and refusing a cup of hypocras offered him by Shoreditch, disappeared among the crowd.

Soon after this the booths were emptied, the bar thrown down, the Maypole and the butts deserted, and the whole of Bachelors' Acre cleared of its occupants—except those who were compelled to attend to the mighty spits turning before the fires—by the loud discharge of ordnance from the castle gates, accompanied by the ringing of bells, announcing that the mayor and burgesses of Windsor, together with the officers of the Order of the Garter, were setting forth to Datchet Bridge to meet the royal procession.

Those who most promptly obeyed this summons beheld the lower castle gate, built by the then reigning monarch, open, while from it issued four trumpeters clad in emblazoned coats,

with silken bandrols depending from their horns, blowing loud fanfares. They were followed by twelve henchmen, walking four abreast, arrayed in scarlet tunics, with the royal cypher H.R. worked in gold on the breast, and carrying gilt poleaxes over their shoulders. Next came a company of archers, equipped in helm and brigandine, and armed with long pikes, glittering, as did their steel accoutrements, in the bright sunshine. They were succeeded by the bailiffs and burgesses of the town, riding three abreast, and enveloped in gowns of scarlet cloth; after which rode the mayor of Windsor in a gown of crimson velvet, and attended by two footmen, in white and red damask, carrying white wands. The mayor was followed by a company of the town guard, with partisans over the shoulders. Then came the sheriff of the county and his attendants. Next followed the twenty-six alms-knights (for such was their number), walking two and two, and wearing red mantles, with a scutcheon of Saint George on the shoulder, but without the garter surrounding it. Then came the thirteen petty canons, in murrey-coloured gowns, with the arms of Saint George wrought in a roundel on the shoulder; then the twelve canons, similarly attired; and lastly the dean of the college, in his cope.

A slight pause ensued, and the chief officers of the Garter made their appearance. First walked the Black Rod, clothed in a russet-coloured mantle, faced with alternate panes of blue and red, emblazoned with flower-de-luces of gold and crowned lions. He carried a small black rod, the ensign of his office,

surmounted with the lion of England in silver. After the Black Rod came the Garter, habited in a gown of crimson satin, paned and emblazoned like that of the officer who preceded him, hearing a white crown with a sceptre upon it, and having a gilt crown in lieu of a cap upon his head. The Garter was followed by the register, a grave personage, in a black gown, with a surplice over it, covered by a mantelet of furs. Then came the chancellor of the Order, in his robe of murrey-coloured velvet lined with sarcenet, with a badge on the shoulder consisting of a gold rose, enclosed in a garter wrought with pearls of damask gold. Lastly came the Bishop of Winchester, the prelate of the Order, wearing his mitre, and habited in a robe of crimson velvet lined with white taffeta, faced with blue, and embroidered on the right shoulder with a scutcheon of Saint George, encompassed with the Garter, and adorned with cordons of blue silk mingled with gold.

Brought up by a rear guard of halberdiers, the procession moved slowly along Thames Street, the houses of which, as well as those in Peascod Street, were all more or less decorated—the humbler sort being covered with branches of trees, intermingled with garlands of flowers, while the better description was hung with pieces of tapestry, carpets, and rich stuffs. Nor should it pass unnoticed that the loyalty of Bryan Bowntance, the host of the Garter, had exhibited itself in an arch thrown across the road opposite his house, adorned with various coloured ribbons and flowers, in the midst of which was a large shield, exhibiting the letters, b. and h. (in mystic allusion to Henry and Anne Boleyn)

intermingled and surrounded by love-knots.

Turning off on the left into the lower road, skirting the north of the castle, and following the course of the river to Datchet, by which it was understood the royal cavalcade would make its approach, the procession arrived at an open space by the side of the river, where it came to a halt, and the dean, chancellor, and prelate, together with other officers of the Garter, embarked in a barge moored to the bank, which was towed slowly down the stream in the direction of Datchet Bridge—a band of minstrels stationed within it playing all the time.

Meanwhile the rest of the cavalcade, having again set for ward, pursued their course along the banks of the river, proceeding at a foot's pace, and accompanied by crowds of spectators, cheering them as they moved along. The day was bright and beautiful, and nothing was wanting to enhance the beauty of the spectacle. On the left flowed the silver Thames, crowded with craft, filled with richly-dressed personages of both sexes, amid which floated the pompous barge appropriated to the officers of the Garter, which was hung with banners and streamers, and decorated at the sides with targets, emblazoned with the arms of St. George. On the greensward edging the stream marched a brilliant cavalcade, and on the right lay the old woods of the Home Park, with long vistas opening through them, giving exquisite peeps of the towers and battlements of the castle.

Half an hour brought the cavalcade to Datchet Bridge, at the foot of which a pavilion was erected for the accommodation of

the mayor and burgesses. And here, having dismounted, they awaited the king's arrival.

Shortly after this a cloud of dust on the Staines Road seemed to announce the approach of the royal party, and all rushed forth and held themselves in readiness to meet it. But the dust appeared to have been raised by a company of horsemen, headed by Captain Bouchier, who rode up the next moment. Courteously saluting the mayor, Bouchier informed him that Mistress Anne Boleyn was close behind, and that it was the king's pleasure that she should be attended in all state to the lower gate of the castle, there to await his coming, as he himself intended to enter it with her. The mayor replied that the sovereign's behests should be implicitly obeyed, and he thereupon stationed himself at the farther side of the bridge in expectation of Anne Boleyn's arrival.

Presently the sound of trumpets smote his ear, and a numerous and splendid retinue was seen advancing, consisting of nobles, knights, esquires, and gentlemen, ranged according to their degrees, and all sumptuously apparelled in cloths of gold and silver, and velvets of various colours, richly embroidered. Besides these, there were pages and other attendants in the liveries of their masters, together with sergeants of the guard and henchmen in their full accoutrements. Among the nobles were the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk—the king being desirous of honouring as much as possible her whom he had resolved to make his queen. The former was clothed in tissue, embroidered with roses of gold, with a baldric across his body of massive gold, and was mounted

on a charger likewise trapped in gold; and the latter wore a mantle of cloth of silver, pounced in the form of letters, and lined with blue velvet, while his horse was trapped hardwise in harness embroidered with bullion gold curiously wrought. Both also wore the collar of the Order of the Garter. Near them rode Sir Thomas Boleyn, who, conscious of the dignity to which his daughter was to be advanced, comported himself with almost intolerable haughtiness.

Immediately behind Sir Thomas Boleyn came a sumptuous litter covered with cloth of gold, drawn by four white palfreys caparisoned in white damask down to the ground, and each having a page in white and blue satin at its head. Over the litter was borne a canopy of cloth of gold supported by four gilt staves, and ornamented at the corners with silver bells, ringing forth sweet music as it moved along. Each staff was borne by a knight, of whom sixteen were in attendance to relieve one another when fatigued.

In this litter sat Anne Boleyn. She wore a surcoat of white tissue, and a mantle of the same material lined with ermine. Her gown, which, however, was now concealed by the surcoat, was of cloth of gold tissue, raised with pearls of silver damask, with a stomacher of purple gold similarly raised, and large open sleeves lined with chequered tissue. Around her neck she wore a chain of orient pearls, from which depended a diamond cross. A black velvet cap, richly embroidered with pearls and other precious stones, and ornamented with a small white plume, covered her

head; and her small feet were hidden in blue velvet brodequins, decorated with diamond stars.

Anne Boleyn's features were exquisitely formed, and though not regular, far more charming than if they had been so. Her nose was slightly aquiline, but not enough so to detract from its beauty, and had a little retrousse; point that completed its attraction. The rest of her features were delicately chiselled: the chin being beautifully rounded, the brow smooth and white as snow, while the rose could not vie with the bloom of her cheek. Her neck—alas! that the fell hand of the executioner should ever touch it—was long and slender, her eyes large and blue, and of irresistible witchery—sometimes scorching the beholder like a sunbeam, anon melting him with soul-subduing softness.

Of her accomplishments other opportunities will be found to speak; but it may be mentioned that she was skilled on many instruments, danced and sang divinely, and had rare powers of conversation and wit. If to these she had not added the dangerous desire to please, and the wish to hold other hearts than the royal one she had enslaved, in thraldom, all might, perhaps, have been well. But, alas like many other beautiful women, she had a strong tendency to coquetry. How severely she suffered for it, it is the purpose of this history to relate. An excellent description of her has been given by a contemporary writer, the Comte de Chateaubriand, who, while somewhat disparaging her personal attractions, speaks in rapturous terms of her accomplishments: "Anne," writes the Comte, "avait un esprit si deslie qui c'estoit

a qui l'ouiroit desgoiser; et ci venoitelle a poetiser, telle qu' Orpheus, elle eust faict les ours et rochers attentifs: puis saltoit, balloit, et dancoit toutes dances Anglaises ou Estranges, et en imagina nombre qui ont garde son nom ou celluy du galant pour qui les feit: puis scavoit tous les jeux, qu'elle jouoit avec non plus d'heur que d'habilite puis chantoit comme syrene, s'accompagnant de luth; harpoit mieueix que le roy David, et manioit fort gentilment fleuste et rebec; puis s'accoustroit de tant et si merveilleuses facons, que ses inventions, faisoient d'elle le parangon de toutes des dames les plus sucrees de la court; mais nulle n'avoit sa grace, laquelle, au dire d'un ancien, passe venuste'." Such was the opinion of one who knew her well during her residence at the French court, when in attendance on Mary of England, consort of Louis XII., and afterwards Duchess of Suffolk.

At this moment Anne's eyes were fixed with some tenderness upon one of the supporters of her canopy on the right—a very handsome young man, attired in a doublet and hose of black tylsent, paned and cut, and whose tall, well-proportioned figure was seen to the greatest advantage, inasmuch as he had divested himself of his mantle, for his better convenience in walking.

"I fear me you will fatigue yourself, Sir Thomas Wyat," said Anne Boleyn, in tones of musical sweetness, which made the heart beat and the colour mount to the cheeks of him she addressed. "You had better allow Sir Thomas Arundel or Sir John Hulstone to relieve you."

"I can feel no fatigue when near you, madam," replied Wyat, in a low tone.

A slight blush overspread Anne's features, and she raised her embroidered kerchief to her lips.

"If I had that kerchief I would wear it at the next lists, and defy all comers," said Wyat.

"You shall have it, then," rejoined Anne. "I love all chivalrous exploits, and will do my best to encourage them."

"Take heed, Sir Thomas," said Sir Francis Weston, the knight who held the staff on the other side, "or we shall have the canopy down. Let Sir Thomas Arundel relieve you."

"No," rejoined Wyat, recovering himself; "I will not rest till we come to the bridge."

"You are in no haste to possess the kerchief," said Anne petulantly.

"There you wrong me, madam!" cried Sir Thomas eagerly.

"What ho, good fellows!" he shouted to the attendants at the palfreys' heads, "your lady desires you to stop."

"And I desire them to go on—I, Will Sommers, jester to the high and mighty King Harry the Eighth!" cried a voice of mock authority behind the knight. "What if Sir Thomas Wyat has undertaken to carry the canopy farther than any of his companions, is that a reason he should be relieved? Of a surety not—go on, I say!"

The person who thus spoke then stepped forward, and threw a glance so full of significance at Anne Boleyn that she did not care

to dispute the order, but, on the contrary, laughingly acquiesced in it.

Will Sommers—the king's jester, as he described himself—was a small middle-aged personage, with a physiognomy in which good nature and malice, folly and shrewdness, were so oddly blended, that it was difficult to say which predominated. His look was cunning and sarcastic, but it was tempered by great drollery and oddity of manner, and he laughed so heartily at his own jests and jibes, that it was scarcely possible to help joining him. His attire consisted of a long loose gown of spotted crimson silk, with the royal cipher woven in front in gold; hose of blue cloth, guarded with red and black cloth; and red cordovan buskins. A sash tied round his waist served him instead of a girdle, and he wore a trencher-shaped velvet cap on his head, with a white tufted feather in it. In his hand he carried a small horn. He was generally attended by a monkey, habited in a crimson doublet and hood, which sat upon his shoulder, and played very diverting tricks, but the animal was not with him on the present occasion.

Will Sommers was a great favourite with the king, and ventured upon familiarities which no one else dared to use with him. The favour in which he stood with his royal master procured him admittance to his presence at all hours and at all seasons, and his influence, though seldom exerted, was very great. He was especially serviceable in turning aside the edge of the king's displeasure, and more frequently exerted himself

to allay the storm than to raise it. His principal hostility was directed against Wolsey, whose arrogance and grasping practices were the constant subjects of his railing. It was seldom, such was his privileged character, and the protection he enjoyed from the sovereign, that any of the courtiers resented his remarks; but Sir Thomas Wyat's feelings being now deeply interested, he turned sharply round, and said, "How now, thou meddling varlet, what business hast thou to interfere?"

"I interfere to prove my authority, gossip Wyat," replied Sommers, "and to show that, varlet as I am, I am as powerful as Mistress Anne Boleyn—nay, that I am yet more powerful, because I am obeyed, while she is not."

"Were I at liberty," said Sir Thomas angrily, "I would make thee repent thine insolence."

"But thou art not at liberty, good gossip," replied the jester, screaming with laughter; "thou art tied like a slave to the oar, and cannot free thyself from it—ha! ha!" Having enjoyed the knight's discomposure for a few seconds, he advanced towards him, and whispered in his ear, "Don't mistake me, gossip. I have done thee good service in preventing thee from taking that kerchief. Hadst thou received it in the presence of these witnesses, thou wouldst have been lodged in the Round Tower of Windsor Castle to-morrow, instead of feasting with the knights-companions in Saint George's Hall."

"I believe thou art right, gossip," said Wyat in the same tone.

"Rest assured I am," replied Sommers; "and I further more

counsel thee to decline this dangerous gift altogether, and to think no more of the fair profferer, or if thou must think of her, let it be as of one beyond thy reach. Cross not the lion's path; take a friendly hint from the jackal."

And without waiting for a reply, he darted away, and mingled with the cavalcade in the rear.

Immediately behind Anne Boleyn's litter rode a company of henchmen of the royal household, armed with gilt partisans. Next succeeded a chariot covered with red cloth of gold, and drawn by four horses richly caparisoned, containing the old Duchess of Norfolk and the old Marchioness of Dorset. Then came the king's natural son, the Duke of Richmond—a young man formed on the same large scale, and distinguished by the same haughty port, and the same bluff manner, as his royal sire. The duke's mother was the Lady Talboys, esteemed one of the most beautiful women of the age, and who had for a long time held the capricious monarch captive. Henry was warmly attached to his son, showered favours without number upon him, and might have done yet more if fate had not snatched him away at an early age.

Though scarcely eighteen, the Duke of Richmond looked more than twenty, and his lips and chin were clothed with a well-grown though closely-clipped beard. He was magnificently habited in a doublet of cloth of gold of bawdekin, the placard and sleeves of which were wrought with flat gold, and fastened with aiglets. A girdle of crimson velvet, enriched with precious stones, encircled his waist, and sustained a poniard and a Toledo

sword, damascened with gold. Over all he wore a loose robe, or housse, of scarlet mohair, trimmed with minever, and was further decorated with the collar of the Order of the Garter. His cap was of white velvet, ornamented with emeralds, and from the side depended a small azure plume. He rode a magnificent black charger, trapped in housings of cloth of gold, powdered with ermine.

By the duke's side rode the Earl of Surrey attired—as upon the previous day, and mounted on a fiery Arabian, trapped in crimson velvet fringed with Venetian gold. Both nobles were attended by their esquires in their liveries.

Behind them came a chariot covered with cloth of silver, and drawn, like the first, by four horses in rich housings, containing two very beautiful damsels, one of whom attracted so much of the attention of the youthful nobles, that it was with difficulty they could preserve due order of march. The young dame in question was about seventeen; her face was oval in form, with features of the utmost delicacy and regularity. Her complexion was fair and pale, and contrasted strikingly with her jetty brows and magnificent black eyes, of oriental size, tenderness, and lustre. Her dark and luxuriant tresses were confined by a cap of black velvet faced with white satin, and ornamented with pearls. Her gown was of white satin worked with gold, and had long open pendent sleeves, while from her slender and marble neck hung a cordeliere—a species of necklace imitated from the cord worn by Franciscan friars, and formed of crimson silk twisted

with threads of Venetian gold..

This fair creature was the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, daughter of Gerald Fitzgerald, ninth Earl of Kildare, who claimed descent from the Geraldi family of Florence; but she was generally known by the appellation of the Fair Geraldine—a title bestowed upon her, on account of her beauty, by the king, and by which she still lives, and will continue to live, as long as poetry endures, in the deathless and enchanting strains of her lover, the Earl of Surrey. At the instance of her mother, Lady Kildare, the Fair Geraldine was brought up with the Princess Mary, afterwards Queen of England; but she had been lately assigned by the royal order as one of the attendants—a post equivalent to that of maid of honour—to Anne Boleyn.

Her companion was the Lady Mary Howard, the sister of the Earl of Surrey, a nymph about her own age, and possessed of great personal attractions, having nobly-formed features, radiant blue eyes, light tresses, and a complexion of dazzling clearness. Lady Mary Howard nourished a passion for the Duke of Richmond, whom she saw with secret chagrin captivated by the superior charms of the Fair Geraldine. Her uneasiness, however, was in some degree abated by the knowledge, which as confidante of the latter she had obtained, that her brother was master of her heart. Lady Mary was dressed in blue velvet, cut and lined with cloth of gold, and wore a headgear of white velvet, ornamented with pearls.

Just as the cavalcade came in sight of Datchet Bridge, the

Duke of Richmond turned his horse's head, and rode up to the side of the chariot on which the Fair Geraldine was sitting.

"I am come to tell you of a marvellous adventure that befell Surrey in the Home Park at Windsor last night," he said. "He declares he has seen the demon hunter, Herne."

"Then pray let the Earl of Surrey relate the adventure to us himself," replied the Fair Geraldine. "No one can tell a story so well as the hero of it."

The duke signed to the youthful earl, who was glancing rather wistfully at them, and he immediately joined them, while Richmond passed over to the Lady Mary Howard. Surrey then proceeded to relate what had happened to him in the park, and the fair Geraldine listened to his recital with breathless interest.

"Heaven shield us from evil spirits!" she exclaimed, crossing herself. "But what is the history of this wicked hunter, my lord? and why did he incur such a dreadful doom?"

"I know nothing more than that he was a keeper in the forest, who, having committed some heinous crime, hanged himself from a branch of the oak beneath which I found the keeper, Morgan Fenwolf, and which still bears his name," replied the earl. "For this unrighteous act he cannot obtain rest, but is condemned to wander through the forest at midnight, where he wreaks his vengeance in blasting the trees."

"The legend I have heard differs from yours," observed the Duke of Richmond: "it runs that the spirit by which the forest is haunted is a wood-demon, who assumes the shape of the ghostly

hunter, and seeks to tempt or terrify the keepers to sell their souls to him."

"Your grace's legend is the better of the two," said Lady Mary Howard, "or rather, I should say, the more probable. I trust the evil spirit did not make you any such offer, brother of Surrey?"

The earl gravely shook his head.

"If I were to meet him, and he offered me my heart's dearest wish, I fear he would prevail with me," observed the duke, glancing tenderly at the Fair Geraldine.

"Tush!—the subject is too serious for jesting, Richmond," said Surrey almost sternly.

"His grace, as is usual in compacts with the fiend, might have reason to rue his bargain," observed Lady Mary Howard peevishly.

"If the Earl of Surrey were my brother," remarked the Fair Geraldine to the Lady Mary, "I would interdict him from roaming in the park after nightfall."

"He is very wilful," said Lady Mary, smiling, "and holds my commands but lightly."

"Let the Fair Geraldine lay hers upon me, and she shall not have to reproach me with disobedience," rejoined the earl.

"I must interpose to prevent their utterance," cried Richmond, with a somewhat jealous look at his friend, "for I have determined to know more of this mystery, and shall require the earl's assistance to unravel it. I think I remember Morgan Fenwolf, the keeper, and will send for him to the castle, and

question him. But in any case, I and Surrey will visit Herne's Oak to-night."

The remonstrances of both ladies were interrupted by the sudden appearance of Will Sommers.

"What ho! my lords—to your places! to your places!" cried the jester, in a shrill angry voice. "See ye not we are close upon Datchet Bridge? Ye can converse with these fair dames at a more fitting season; but it is the king's pleasure that the cavalcade should make a goodly show. To your places, I say!"

Laughing at the jester's peremptory injunction, the two young nobles nevertheless obeyed it, and, bending almost to the saddle-bow to the ladies, resumed their posts.

The concourse assembled on Datchet Bridge welcomed Anne Boleyn's arrival with loud acclamations, while joyous strains proceeded from sackbut and psaltery, and echoing blasts from the trumpets. Caps were flung into the air, and a piece of ordnance was fired from the barge, which was presently afterwards answered by the castle guns. Having paid his homage to Anne Boleyn, the mayor rejoined the company of bailiffs and burgesses, and the whole cavalcade crossed the bridge, winding their way slowly along the banks of the river, the barge, with the minstrels playing in it, accompanying them the while. In this way they reached Windsor; and as Anne Boleyn gazed up at the lordly castle above which the royal standard now floated, proud and aspiring thoughts swelled her heart, and she longed for the hour when she should approach it as its mistress. Just then her

eye chanced on Sir Thomas Wyat, who was riding behind her amongst the knights, and she felt, though it might cost her a struggle, that love would yield to ambition.

Leaving the barge and its occupants to await the king's arrival, the cavalcade ascended Thames Street, and were welcomed everywhere with acclamations and rejoicing. Bryan Bowntance, who had stationed himself on the right of the arch in front of his house, attempted to address Anne Boleyn, but could not bring forth a word. His failure, how ever, was more successful than his speech might have been, inasmuch as it excited abundance of merriment.

Arrived at the area in front of the lower gateway, Anne Boleyn's litter was drawn up in the midst of it, and the whole of the cavalcade grouping around her, presented a magnificent sight to the archers and arquebusiers stationed on the towers and walls.

Just at this moment a signal gun was heard from Datchet Bridge, announcing that the king had reached it, and the Dukes of Suffolk, Norfolk, and Richmond, together with the Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyat, and a few of their gentle men, rode back to meet him. They had scarcely, however, reached the foot of the hill when the royal party appeared in view, for the king with his characteristic impatience, on drawing near the castle, had urged his attendants quickly forward.

First came half a dozen trumpeters, with silken bandrols fluttering in the breeze, blowing loud flourishes. Then a party of halberdiers, whose leaders had pennons streaming from the tops

of their tall pikes. Next came two gentlemen ushers bareheaded, but mounted and richly habited, belonging to the Cardinal of York, who cried out as they pressed forward, "On before, my masters, on before!—make way for my lord's grace."

Then came a sergeant-of-arms bearing a great mace of silver, and two gentlemen carrying each a pillar of silver. Next rode a gentleman carrying the cardinal's hat, and after him came Wolsey himself, mounted on a mule trapped in crimson velvet, with a saddle covered with the same stuff, and gilt stirrups. His large person was arrayed in robes of the finest crimson satin engrained, and a silk cap of the same colour contrasted by its brightness with the pale purple tint of his sullen, morose, and bloated features. The cardinal took no notice of the clamour around him, but now and then, when an expression of dislike was uttered against him, for he had already begun to be unpopular with the people, he would raise his eyes and direct a withering glance at the hardy speaker. But these expressions were few, for, though tottering, Wolsey was yet too formidable to be insulted with impunity. On either side of him were two mounted attend ants, each caring a gilt poleaxe, who, if he had given the word, would have instantly chastised the insolence of the bystanders, while behind him rode his two cross-bearers upon homes trapped in scarlet.

Wolsey's princely retinue was followed by a litter of crimson velvet, in which lay the pope's legate, Cardinal Campeggio, whose infirmities were so great that he could not move without assistance. Campeggio was likewise attended by a numerous

train.

After a long line of lords, knights, and esquires, came Henry the Eighth. He was apparelled in a robe of crimson velvet furred with ermines, and wore a doublet of raised gold, the placard of which was embroidered with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, large pearls, and other precious stones. About his neck was a baldric of balas rubies, and over his robe he wore the collar of the Order of the Garter. His horse, a charger of the largest size, and well able to sustain his vast weight, was trapped in crimson velvet, purfled with ermines. His knights and esquires were clothed in purple velvet, and his henchmen in scarlet tunics of the same make as those worn by the warders of the Tower at the present day.

Henry was in his thirty-eighth year, and though somewhat overgrown and heavy, had lost none of his activity, and but little of the grace of his noble proportions. His size and breadth of limb were well displayed in his magnificent habiliment. His countenance was handsome and manly, with a certain broad burly look, thoroughly English in its character, which won him much admiration from his subjects; and though it might be objected that the eyes were too small, and the mouth somewhat too diminutive, it could not be denied that the general expression of the face was kingly in the extreme. A prince of a more "royal presence" than Henry the Eighth was never seen, and though he had many and grave faults, want of dignity was not amongst the number.

Henry entered Windsor amid the acclamations of the

spectators, the fanfares of trumpeters, and the roar of ordnance from the castle walls.

Meanwhile, Anne Boleyn, having descended from her litter, which passed through the gate into the lower ward, stood with her ladies beneath the canopy awaiting his arrival.

A wide clear space was preserved before her, into which, however, Wolsey penetrated, and, dismounting, placed himself so that he could witness the meeting between her and the king. Behind him stood the jester, Will Sommers, who was equally curious with himself. The litter of Cardinal Campeggio passed through the gateway and proceeded to the lodgings reserved for his eminence.

Scarcely had Wolsey taken up his station than Henry rode up, and, alighting, consigned his horse to a page, and, followed by the Duke of Richmond and the Earl of Surrey, advanced towards Anne Boleyn, who immediately stepped forward to meet him.

"Fair mistress," he said, taking her hand, and regarding her with a look of passionate devotion, "I welcome you to this my castle of Windsor, and trust soon to make you as absolute mistress of it as I am lord and master."

Anne Boleyn blushed, and cast down her eyes, and Sir Thomas Wyat, who stood at some little distance with his hand upon his saddle, regarding her, felt that any hopes he might have entertained were utterly annihilated.

"Heard you that, my lord cardinal?" said Will Sommers to Wolsey. "She will soon be mistress here. As she comes in, you

go out—mind that!"

The cardinal made no answer further than was conveyed by the deepened colour of his cheeks.

Amid continued fanfares and acclamations, Harry then led Anne Boleyn through the gateway, followed by the ladies in waiting, who were joined by Richmond and Surrey. The prelate, chancellor, register, black rod, and other officers of the Garter, together with the whole of the royal retinue who had dismounted, came after them. A vast concourse of spectators, extending almost as far as the Lieutenant's Tower, was collected in front of the alms-knights' houses; but a wide space had been kept clear by the henchmen for the passage of the sovereign and his train, and along this Henry proceeded with Anne Boleyn, in the direction of the upper ward. Just as he reached the Norman Tower, and passed the entrance to the keep, the Duke of Shoreditch, who was standing beneath the gateway, advanced towards him and prostrated himself on one knee.

"May it please your majesty," said Shoreditch, "I last night arrested a butcher of Windsor for uttering words highly disrespectful of your highness, and of the fair and virtuous lady by your side."

"Ah! God's death!" exclaimed the king. "Where is the traitor? Bring him before us."

"He is here," replied Shoreditch.

And immediately Mark Fytton was brought forward by a couple of halberdiers. He still preserved his undaunted

demeanour, and gazed sternly at the king.

"So, fellow, thou hast dared to speak disrespectfully of us—ha!" cried Henry.

"I have spoken the truth," replied the butcher fearlessly. "I have said you were about to divorce your lawful consort, Catherine of Arragon, and to take the minion, Anne Boleyn, who stands beside you, to your bed. And I added, it was a wrongful act."

"Foul befall thy lying tongue for saying so!" replied Henry furiously. "I have a mind to pluck it from thy throat, and cast it to the dogs. What ho! guards, take this caitiff to the summit of the highest tower of the castle—the Curfew Tower—and hang him from it, so that all my loyal subjects in Windsor may see how traitors are served."

"Your highness has judged him justly," said Anne Boleyn. "You say so now, Mistress Anne Boleyn," rejoined the butcher; "but you yourself shall one day stand in as much peril of your life as I do, and shall plead as vainly as I should, were I to plead at all, which I will never do to this inexorable tyrant. You will then remember my end."

"Away with him!" cried Henry. "I myself will go to the Garter Tower to see it done. Farewell for a short while, sweetheart. I will read these partisans of Catherine a terrible lesson."

As the butcher was hurried off to the Curfew Tower, the king proceeded with his attendants to the Garter Tower, and ascended to its summit.

In less than ten minutes a stout pole, like the mast of a ship, was thrust through the battlements of the Curfew Tower, on the side looking towards the town. To this pole a rope, of some dozen feet in length, and having a noose at one end, was firmly secured. The butcher was then brought forth, bound hand and foot, and the noose was thrown over his neck.

While this was passing, the wretched man descried a person looking at him from a window in a wooden structure projecting from the side of the tower.

"What, are you there, Morgan Fenwolf?" he cried. "Remember what passed between us in the dungeon last night, and be warned! You will not meet your end as firmly as I meet mine?"

"Make thy shrift quickly, fellow, if thou hast aught to say," interposed one of the halberdiers.

"I have no shrift to make," rejoined the butcher. "I have already settled my account with Heaven. God preserve Queen Catherine!"

As he uttered these words, he was thrust off from the battlements by the halberdiers, and his body swung into the abyss amid the hootings and execrations of the spectators below.

Having glutted his eyes with the horrible sight, Henry descended from the tower, and returned to Anne Boleyn.

IV

How King Henry the Eighth held a Chapter of the Garter—How he attended Vespers and Matins in Saint George's Chapel—And how he feasted with the Knights—Companions in Saint George's Hall.

From a balcony overlooking the upper ward, Anne Boleyn beheld the king's approach on his return from the Garter Tower, and waving her hand smilingly to him, she withdrew into the presence-chamber. Hastening to her, Henry found her surrounded by her ladies of honour, by the chief of the nobles and knights who had composed her train from Hampton Court, and by the Cardinals Wolsey and Campeggio; and having exchanged a few words with her, he took her hand, and led her to the upper part of the chamber, where two chairs of state were set beneath a canopy of crimson velvet embroidered with the royal arms, and placed her in the seat hitherto allotted to Catherine of Arragon. A smile of triumph irradiated Anne's lovely countenance at this mark of distinction, nor was her satisfaction diminished as Henry turned to address the assemblage.

"My lords," he said, "ye are right well aware of the scruples of conscience I entertain in regard to my marriage with my brother's widow, Catherine of Arragon. The more I weigh the matter, the more convinced am I of its unlawfulness; and were it possible to blind myself to my sinful condition, the preachers,

who openly rebuke me from the pulpit, would take care to remind me of it. Misunderstand me not, my lords. I have no ground of complaint against the queen. Far otherwise. She is a lady of most excellent character—full of devotion, loyalty, nobility, and gentleness. And if I could divest myself of my misgivings, so far from seeking to put her from me, I should cherish her with the greatest tenderness. Ye may marvel that I have delayed the divorce thus long. But it is only of late that my eyes have been opened; and the step was hard to take. Old affections clung to me—old chains restrained me—nor could I, without compunction, separate myself from one who has ever been to me a virtuous and devoted consort."

"Thou hast undergone a martyrdom, gossip," observed Will Sommers, who had posted himself at the foot of the canopy, near the king, "and shalt henceforth be denominated Saint Henry."

The gravity of the hearers might have been discomposed by this remark, but for the stern looks of the king.

"Ye may make a jest of my scruples, my lords," he continued, "and think I hold them lightly; but my treatise on the subject, which has cost me much labour and meditation, will avouch to the contrary. What would befall this realm if my marriage were called in question after my decease? The same trouble and confusion would ensue that followed on the death of my noble grandfather, King Edward the Fourth. To prevent such mischance I have resolved, most reluctantly, to put away my present queen, and to take another consort, by whom I trust to

raise up a worthy successor and inheritor of my kingdom."

A murmur of applause followed this speech, and the two cardinals exchanged significant glances, which were not unobserved by the king.

"I doubt not ye will all approve the choice I shall make," he pursued, looking fiercely at Wolsey, and taking Anne Boleyn's hand, who arose as he turned to her. "And now, fair mistress," he added to her, "as an earnest of the regard I have for you, and of the honours I intend you, I hereby create you Marchioness of Pembroke, and bestow upon you a thousand marks a year in land, and another thousand to be paid out of my treasury to support your dignity."

"Your majesty is too generous," replied Anne, bending the knee, and kissing his hand.

"Not a whit, sweetheart—not a whit," replied Henry, tenderly raising her; "this is but a slight mark of my goodwill. Sir Thomas Boleyn," he added to her father, "henceforth your style and title will be that of Viscount Rochford, and your patent will be made out at the same time as that of your daughter, the Marchioness of Pembroke. I also elect you a knight-companion of the most honourable Order of the Garter, and your investiture and installation will take place to-day."

Having received the thanks and homage of the newly-created noble, Henry descended from the canopy, and passed into an inner room with the Lady Anne, where a collation was prepared for them. Their slight meal over, Anne took up her lute, and

playing a lively prelude, sang two or three French songs with so much skill and grace, that Henry, who was passionately fond of music, was quite enraptured. Two delightful hours having passed by, almost imperceptibly, an usher approached the king, and whispering a few words to him, he reluctantly withdrew, and Anne retired with her ladies to an inner apartment.

On reaching his closet, the king's attendants proceeded to array him in a surcoat of crimson velvet, powdered with garters embroidered in silk and gold, with the motto—boni soft qui mal y pense—wrought within them. Over the surcoat was thrown a mantle of blue velvet with a magnificent train, lined with white damask, and having on the left shoulder a large garter, wrought in pearls and Venice twists, containing the motto, and encircling the arms of Saint George—argent, a cross gules. The royal habiliments were completed by a hood of the same stuff as the surcoat, decorated like it with small embroidered garters, and lined with white satin. From the king's neck was suspended the collar of the Great George, composed of pieces of gold, fashioned like garters, the ground of which was enamelled, and the letters gold.

While Henry was thus arrayed, the knights-companions, robed in their mantles, hoods, and collars, entered the closet, and waiting till he was ready, marched before him into the presence-chamber, where were assembled the two provincial kings-at-arms, Clarenceux and Norroy, the heralds, and pursuivants, wearing their coats-of-arms, together with the

band of pensioners, carrying gilt poleaxes, and drawn up in two lines. At the king's approach, one of the gentlemen-ushers who carried the sword of state, with the point resting upon the ground, delivered it to the Duke of Richmond,—the latter having been appointed to bear it before the king during all the proceedings of the feast. Meanwhile, the knights-companions having drawn up on either side of the canopy, Henry advanced with a slow and stately step towards it, his train borne by the Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyat, and other nobles and knights. As he ascended the canopy, and faced the assemblage, the Duke of Richmond and the chief officers of the Order drew up a little on his right. The knights-companions then made their salutation to him, which he returned by removing his jewelled cap with infinite grace and dignity, and as soon as he was again covered they put on their caps, and ranging themselves in order, set forward to Saint George's Chapel.

Quitting the royal lodgings, and passing through the gateway of the Norman Tower, the procession wound its way along the base of the Round Tower, the battlements of which bristled with spearmen, as did the walls on the right, and the summit of the Winchester Tower, and crossing the middle ward, skirted the tomb-house, then newly erected by Wolsey, and threading a narrow passage between it and Saint George's Chapel, entered the north-east door of the latter structure.

Dividing, on their entrance into the chapel, into two lines, the attendants of the knights-companions flanked either side of

the north aisle; while between them walked the alms-knights, the verger, the prebends of the college, and the officers-of-arms, who proceeded as far as the west door of the choir, where they stopped. A slight pause then ensued, after which the king, the knights-companions, and the chief officers of the Order, entered the chapter-house—a chamber situated at the north-east corner of the chapel—leaving the Duke of Richmond, the sword-bearer, Lard Rochford, the knight-elect, the train-bearers, and pensioners outside. The door of the chapter-house being closed by the black-rod, the king proceeded to the upper end of the vestments-board—as the table was designated—where a chair, cushions, and cloth of state were provided for him; the knights-companions, whose stalls in the choir were on the same side as his own, seating themselves on his right, and those whose posts were on the prince's side taking their places on the left. The prelate and the chancellor stood at the upper end of the table; the Garter and register at the foot; while the door was kept by the black-rod.

As soon as the king and the knights were seated, intimation was given by an usher to the black-rod that the newly elected knight, Lord Rochford, was without. The intelligence being communicated to the king, he ordered the Dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk to bring him into his presence. The injunction was obeyed, and the knight-elect presently made his appearance, the Garter marching before him to the king. Bowing reverently to the sovereign, Rochford, in a brief speech, expressed his gratitude for the signal honour conferred upon him, and at its close set

his left foot upon a gilt stool, placed for him by the Garter, who pronounced the following admonition:—"My good lord, the loving company of the Order of the Garter have received you as their brother and fellow. In token whereof, they give you this garter, which God grant you may receive and wear from henceforth to His praise and glory, and to the exaltation and honour of the noble Order and yourself."

Meanwhile the garter was girded on the leg of the newly-elected knight, and buckled by the Duke of Suffolk. This done, he knelt before the king, who hung a gold chain, with the image of Saint George attached to it, about his neck, while another admonition was pronounced by the chancellor. Rochford then arose, bowed to the monarch, to the knights-companions, who returned his salutations, and the investiture was complete.

Other affairs of the chapter were next discussed. Certain officers nominated since the last meeting, were sworn; letters from absent knights-companions, praying to be excused from attendance, were read—and their pleas, except in the instance of Sir Thomas Cheney, allowed. After reading the excuse of the latter, Henry uttered an angry oath, declaring he would deprive him of his vote in the chapter-house, banish him from his stall, and mulct him a hundred marks, to be paid at Saint George's altar, when Will Sommers, who was permitted to be present, whispered in his ear that the offender was kept away by the devices of Wolsey, because he was known to be friendly to the divorce, and to the interests of the lady Anne.

"Aha! by Saint Mary, is it so?" exclaimed Henry, knitting his brows. "This shall be looked into. I have hanged a butcher just now. Let the butcher's son take warning by his fate. He has bearded me long enough. See that Sir Thomas Cheney be sent for with all despatch. I will hear the truth from his own lips."

He then arose, and quitting the chapter-house, proceeded with the knights-companions to the choir—the roof and walls of the sacred structure resounding with the solemn notes of the organ as they traversed the aisle. The first to enter the choir were the alms-knights, who passed through the door in a body, and making low obeisances toward the altar and the royal stall, divided into two lines. They were succeeded by the prebends of the College, who, making similar obeisances, stationed themselves in front of the benches before the stalls of the knights-companions. Next followed the pursuivants, heralds, and provincial kings-of-arms, making like reverences, and ranging themselves with the alms-knights. Then came the knights-companions, who performed double reverences like the others, and took their stations under their stalls; then came the black-rod, Garter, and register, who having gone through the same ceremony as the others, proceeded to their form, which was placed on the south side of the choir before the sovereign's stall; then came the chancellor and prelate, whose form was likewise placed before the royal stall, but nearer to it than that allotted to the other officers; and, lastly, Henry himself, with the sword borne before him by the Duke of Richmond, who as he approached the steps of his stall bowed

reverently towards the altar, and made another obeisance before seating himself.

Meanwhile the Duke of Richmond posted himself in front of the royal stall, the Earl of Oxford, as lord chamberlain, taking his station on the king's right, and the Earl of Surrey, as vice-chamberlain, on the left. As these arrangements were made, the two cardinals arrived, and proceeded to the altar.

Mass was then said, and nothing could be more striking than the appearance of the chapel during its performance. The glorious choir with its groined and pendent roof, its walls adorned with the richest stuffs, its exquisitely carved stalls, above which hung the banners of the knights-companions, together with their helmets, crests, and swords, its sumptuously—decorated altar, glittering with costly vessels, its pulpit hung with crimson damask interwoven with gold, the magnificent and varied dresses of the assemblage—all these constituted a picture of surpassing splendour.

Vespers over, the king and his train departed with the same ceremonies and in the same order as had been observed on their entrance to the choir.

On returning to the royal lodgings, Henry proceeded to his closet, where having divested himself of his mantle, he went in search of the Lady Anne. He found her walking with her dames on the stately terrace at the north of the castle, and the attendants retiring as he joined her, he was left at full liberty for amorous converse. After pacing the terrace for some time, he

adjourned with Anne to her own apartments, where he remained till summoned to supper with the knights-companions in Saint George's Hall.

The next morning betimes, it being the day of the Patron Saint of the Order of the Garter, a numerous cavalcade assembled in the upper ward of the castle, to conduct the king to hear matins in Saint George's Chapel. In order to render the sight as imposing as possible, Henry had arranged that the procession should take place on horseback, and the whole of the retinue were accordingly mounted. The large quadrangle was filled with steeds and their attendants, and the castle walls resounded with the fanfares of trumpets and the beating of kettledrums. The most attractive feature of the procession in the eyes of the beholders was the Lady Anne, who, mounted on a snow-white palfrey richly trapped, rode on the right of the king. She was dressed in a rich gown of raised cloth of gold; and had a coronet of black velvet, decorated with orient pearls, on her head. Never had she looked so lovely as on this occasion, and the king's passion increased as he gazed upon her. Henry himself was more sumptuously attired than on the preceding day. He wore a robe of purple velvet, made somewhat like a frock, embroidered with flat damask gold, and small lace intermixed. His doublet was very curiously embroidered, the sleeves and breast being lined with cloth of gold, and fastened with great buttons of diamonds and rubies. His sword and girdle were adorned with magnificent emeralds, and his bonnet glistened with precious

stones. His charger was trapped in cloth of gold, traversed lattice-wise, square, embroidered with gold damask, pearled on every side, and having buckles and pendants of fine gold. By his side ran ten footmen, richly attired in velvet and goldsmith's work. They were followed by the pages of honour, mounted on great horses, trapped in crimson velvet embroidered with new devices and knots of gold.

In this state Henry and his favourite proceeded to the great western door of Saint George's Chapel. Here twelve gentlemen of the privy-chamber attended with a canopy of cloth of gold, which they bore over the king's bead, and that of the Lady Anne, as she walked beside him to the entrance of the choir, where they separated—he proceeding to his stall, and she to a closet at the north-east corner of the choir over the altar, while her ladies repaired to one adjoining it.

Matins then commenced, and at the appointed part of the service the dean of the college took a silver box, containing the heart of Saint George, bestowed upon King Henry the Fifth by the Emperor Sigismund, and after incense had been shed upon it by one of the canons, presented it to the king and the knights-companions to kiss.

After the offertory, a carpet was spread on the steps before the altar, the alms-knights, pursuivants, and heralds stationing themselves on either side of it. The Garter then descended from his seat, and waving his rod, the knights-companions descended likewise, but remained before their stalls. The black-rod next

descended, and proceeding towards the altar, a groom of the wardrobe brought him a small carpet of cloth of gold, and a cushion of the same stuff, which were placed on the larger carpet, the cushion being set on the head of the steps. Taking a large gilt bason to receive the offerings, the prelate stationed himself with one of the prebends in the midst of the altar. The king then rose from his stall, and making a reverence as before, proceeded to the altar, attended by the Garter, register, and chancellor, together with the Duke of Richmond bearing the sword; and having reached the upper step, prostrated himself on the cushion, while the black-rod bending the knee delivered a chain of gold, intended afterwards to be redeemed, to the Duke of Suffolk, who was appointed to make the royal offering, and who placed it in the bason held by the prelate. This ceremony over, the king got up, and with similar reverences returned to his stall. Then the two provincial kings, Clarenceux and Norroy, proceeded along the choir, and making due reverences to the altar and the sovereign, bowed to the two senior knights; who thereupon advanced towards the altar, and kneeling down, made their offering. The other imitated their example, coming forward according to their seniority.

The service ended, the officers and knights-companions quitted the chapel in the same order they had entered it, the king being received under the canopy at the door of the choir, and passing through the west entrance of the chapel, where he waited for the Lady Anne. On her arrival they both mounted their steeds,

and rode up to the royal lodgings amid flourishes of trumpets and acclamations. Dismounting at the great gate, Henry proceeded to the presence-chamber, where the knights-companions had assembled, and having received their salutations, retired to his closet. Here he remained in deep consultation with the Duke of Suffolk for some hours, when it having been announced to him that the first course of the banquet was served, he came forth, and proceeded to the presence-chamber, where he greeted the knights-companions, who were there assembled, and who immediately put themselves in order of procession. After this, the alms-knights, prebends, and officers-of-arms passed on through the guard-chamber into Saint George's Hall. They were followed by the knights-companions, who drew up in double file, the seniors taking the uppermost place; and through these lines the king passed, his train borne up as before, until reaching the table set apart for him beneath a canopy, he turned round and received the knights' reverences. The Earl of Oxford, as vice-chamberlain, then brought him a ewer containing water, the Earl of Surrey a bason, and Lord Rochford a napkin. Henry having performed his ablutions, grace was said by the prelate, after which the king seated himself beneath the canopy in an ancient chair with a curiously carved back representing the exploit of Saint George, which had once belonged to the founder, King Edward the Third, and called up the two cardinals, who by this time had entered the hall, and who remained standing beside him, one on either hand, during the repast.

As soon as the king was seated, the knights-companions put on their caps, and retired to the table prepared for them on the right side of the hall, where they seated themselves according to their degree—the Duke of Richmond occupying the first place, the Duke of Suffolk the second, and the Duke of Norfolk the third. On the opposite side of the hall was a long beaufet covered with flasks of wine, meats, and dishes, for the service of the knights' table. Before this stood the attendants, near whom were drawn up two lines of pensioners bearing the second course on great gilt dishes, and headed by the sewer. In front of the sewer were the treasurer and comptroller of the household, each bearing a white wand; next them stood the officers-of-arms in two lines, headed by the Garter. The bottom of the hall was thronged with yeomen of the guard, halberdiers, and henchmen. In a gallery at the lower end were stationed a band of minstrels, and near them sat the Lady Anne and her dames to view the proceedings.

The appearance of the hall during the banquet was magnificent, the upper part being hung with arras representing the legend of Saint George, placed there by Henry the Sixth, and the walls behind the knights-companions adorned with other tapestries and rich stuffs. The tables groaned with the weight of dishes, some of which may be enumerated for the benefit of modern gastronomers. There were Georges on horseback, chickens in brewis, cygnets, capons of high grease, carpes of venison, herons, calvered salmon, custards planted with garters,

tarts closed with arms, godwits, peafowl, halibut engrailed, porpoise in armour, pickled mullets, perch in foyle, venison pasties, hypocras jelly, and mainemy royal.

Before the second course was served, the Garter, followed by Clarenceux and Norroy, together with the heralds and pursuivants, advanced towards the sovereign's canopy, and cried thrice in a loud voice, "Largesse!"

Upon this, all the knights-companions arose and took off their caps. The Garter then proceeded to proclaim the king's titles in Latin and French, and lastly in English, as follows:—"Of the most high, most excellent, and most mighty monarch, Henry the Eighth, by the grace of God King of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and Sovereign of the most noble Order of the Garter."

This proclamation made, the treasurer of the household put ten golden marks into the Garter's cap, who making a reverence to the sovereign, retired from the hall with his followers.

"Come, my lord legate," said Henry, when this ceremony was at an end, "we will drink to my future queen. What ho! wine!" he added to the Earl of Surrey, who officiated as cup-bearer.

"Your highness is not yet divorced from your present consort," replied Campeggio. "If it please you, I should prefer drinking the health of Catherine of Arragon."

"Well, as your eminence pleases," replied the king, taking the goblet from the hand of Surrey; "I shall not constrain you."

And looking towards the gallery, he fixed his eyes on the Lady

Anne and drained the cup to the last drop.

"Would it were poison," muttered Sir Thomas Wyat, who stood behind the Earl of Surrey, and witnessed what was passing.

"Give not thy treasonable thoughts vent, gossip," said Will Sommers, who formed one of the group near the royal table, "or it may chance that some one less friendly disposed towards thee than myself may overhear them. I tell thee, the Lady Anne is lost to thee for ever. Think'st thou aught of womankind would hesitate between a simple knight and a king? My lord duke," he added sharply to Richmond, who was looking round at him, "you would rather be in yonder gallery than here."

"Why so, knave?" asked the duke.

"Because the Fair Geraldine is there," replied the jester. "And yet your grace is not the person she would most desire to have with her."

"Whom would she prefer?" inquired the duke angrily.

The jester nodded at Surrey, and laughed maliciously.

"You heard the health given by the king just now, my lord," observed the Duke of Suffolk to his neighbour the Duke of Norfolk; "it was a shrewd hint to the lord legate which way his judgment should decline. Your niece will assuredly be Queen of England."

"I did not note what was said, my lord," replied Norfolk; "I pray you repeat it to me."

Suffolk complied, and they continued in close debate until the termination of the banquet, when the king, having saluted the

company, returned to the presence-chamber.

V

Of the Ghostly Chase beheld by the Earl of Surrey and the Duke of Richmond in Windsor Forest.

On that same night, and just as the castle clock was on the stroke of twelve, the Earl of Surrey and the Duke of Richmond issued from the upper gate, and took their way towards Herne's Oak. The moon was shining brightly, and its beams silvered the foliage of the noble trees with which the park was studded. The youthful friends soon reached the blasted tree; but nothing was to be seen near it, and all looked so tranquil, so free from malignant influence, that the Duke of Richmond could not help laughing at his companion, telling him that the supposed vision must have been the offspring of his over-excited fancy. Angry at being thus doubted, the earl walked off, and plunged into the haunted dell. The duke followed, but though they paused for some time beneath the gnarled oak-tree, the spirit did not appear.

"And thus ends the adventure of Herne the Hunter!" laughed the duke, as they emerged from the brake. "By my halidom, Surrey, I am grievously disappointed. You must have mistaken some large stag, caught by its antlers in the branches of the oak-tree, for the demon."

"I have told you precisely what occurred," replied Surrey angrily. "Ha! there he is—look! look!"

And he pointed to a weird figure, mounted on a steed as weird-

looking as itself, galloping through the trees with extraordinary swiftness, at a little distance from them. This ghostly rider wore the antlered helmet described by Surrey, and seemed to be habited in a garb of deer-skins. Before him flew a large owl, and a couple of great black dogs ran beside him. Staring in speechless wonder at the sight, the two youths watched the mysterious being scour a glade brightly illumined by the moon, until, reaching the pales marking the confines of the Home Park, he leaped them and disappeared.

"What think you of that?" cried Surrey, as soon as he had recovered from his surprise, glancing triumphantly at the duke. "Was that the offspring of my fancy?"

"It was a marvellous sight, truly!" exclaimed Richmond. "Would we had our steeds to follow him."

"We can follow him on foot," replied the earl—"he is evidently gone into the forest."

And they set off at a quick pace in the direction taken by the ghostly rider. Clambering the park pales, they crossed the road leading to Old Windsor, and entered that part of the forest which, in more recent times, has been enclosed and allotted to the grounds of Frogmore. Tracking a long vista, they came to a thick dell, overgrown with large oaks, at the bottom of which lay a small pool. Fleeter than his companion, and therefore somewhat in advance of him, the Earl of Surrey, as he approached this dell, perceived the spectral huntsman and his dogs standing at the edge of the water. The earl instantly shouted to him, and the horseman

turning his head, shook his hand menacingly, while the hounds glared fiercely at the intruder, and displayed their fangs, but did not bark. As Surrey, however, despite this caution, continued to advance, the huntsman took a strangely shaped horn that hung by his side, and placing it to his lips, flames and thick smoke presently issued from it, and before the vapour had cleared off, he and his dogs had disappeared.. The witnesses of this marvellous spectacle crossed themselves reverently, and descended to the brink of the pool; but the numerous footprints of deer, that came there to drink, prevented them from distinguishing any marks of the steed of the ghostly hunter.

"Shall we return, Surrey?" asked the duke.

"No," replied the earl. "I am persuaded we shall see the mysterious huntsman again. You can return, if you think proper. I will go on."

"Nay, I will not leave you," rejoined Richmond.

And they set off again at the same quick pace as before. Mounting a hill covered with noble beeches and elms, a magnificent view of the castle burst upon them, towering over the groves they had tracked, and looking almost like the work of enchantment. Charmed with the view, the young men continued to contemplate it for some time. They then struck off on the right, and ascended still higher, until they came to a beautiful grove of beeches cresting the hill where the equestrian statue of George the Third is now placed. Skirting this grove, they disturbed a herd of deer, which started up, and darted into the valley below.

At the foot of two fine beech-trees lay another small pool, and Surrey almost expected to see the spectral huntsman beside it.

From this spot they could discern the whole of the valley beyond, and they scanned it in the hope of perceiving the object of their search. Though not comparable to the view on the nearer side, the prospect was nevertheless exceedingly beautiful. Long vistas and glades stretched out before them, while in the far distance might be seen glittering in the moonbeams the lake or mere which in later days has received the name of Virginia Water.

While they were gazing at this scene, a figure habited like a keeper of the forest suddenly emerged from the trees at the lower end of one of the glades. Persuaded that this person had some mysterious connection with the ghostly huntsman, the earl determined to follow him, and hastily mentioning his suspicions and design to Richmond, he hurried down the hill. But before he accomplished the descent, the keeper was gone.

At length, however, on looking about, they perceived him mounting the rising ground on the left, and immediately started after him, taking care to keep out of sight. The policy of this course was soon apparent. Supposing himself no longer pursued, the keeper relaxed his pace, and the others got nearer to him.

In this way both parties went on, the keeper still hurrying forward, every now and then turning his head to see whether any one was on his track, until he came to a road cut through the trees that brought him to the edge of a descent leading to the lake.

Just at this moment a cloud passed over the moon, burying all in comparative obscurity. The watchers, however, could perceive the keeper approach an ancient beech-tree of enormous growth, and strike it thrice with the short hunting-spear which he held in his grasp.

The signal remaining unanswered, he quitted the tree, and shaped his course along the side of a hill on the right. Keeping under the shelter of the thicket on the top of the same hill, Surrey and Richmond followed, and saw him direct his steps towards another beech-tree of almost double the girth of that he had just visited. Arrived at this mighty tree, he struck it with his spear, while a large owl, seated on a leafless branch, began to hoot; a bat circled the tree; and two large snakes, glistening in the moonlight, glided from its roots. As the tree was stricken for the third time, the same weird figure that the watchers had seen ride along the Home Park burst from its riften trunk, and addressed its summoner in tones apparently menacing and imperious, but whose import was lost upon the listeners. The curiosity of the beholders was roused to the highest pitch, but an undefinable awe prevented them from rushing forward.

Suddenly the demon hunter waved a pike with which he was armed, and uttered a peculiar cry, resembling the hooting of an owl. At this sound, and as if by magic, a couple of steeds, accompanied by the two hounds, started from the brake. In an instant the demon huntsman vaulted upon the hack of the horse nearest to him, and the keeper almost as quickly mounted the

other. The pair then galloped off through the glen, the owl flying before them, and the hounds coursing by their side.

The two friends gazed at each other, for some time, in speechless wonder. Taking heart, they then descended to the haunted tree, but could perceive no traces of the strange being by whom it had been recently tenanted. After a while they retraced their course towards the castle, hoping they might once more encounter the wild huntsman. Nor were they disappointed. As they crossed a glen, a noble stag darted by. Close at its heels came the two black hounds, and after them the riders hurrying forward at a furious pace, their steeds appearing to breathe forth flame and smoke.

In an instant the huntsmen and hounds were gone, and the trampling of the horses died away in the distance. Soon afterwards a low sound, like the winding of a horn, broke upon the ear, and the listeners had no doubt that the buck was brought down. They hurried in the direction of the sound, but though the view was wholly unobstructed for a considerable distance, they could see nothing either of horsemen, hounds, or deer.

VI

How the Fair Geraldine bestowed a Relic upon her Lover —How Surrey and Richmond rode in the Forest at Midnight —And where they found the Body of Mark Fytton, the Butcher.

Surrey and Richmond agreed to say nothing for the present of their mysterious adventure in the forest; but their haggard looks, as they presented themselves to the Lady Anne Boleyn in the reception-chamber on the following morning, proclaimed that something had happened, and they had to undergo much questioning from the Fair Geraldine and the Lady Mary Howard.

"I never saw you so out of spirits, my lord," remarked the Fair Geraldine to Surrey; "you must have spent the whole night in study—or what is more probable, you have again seen Herne the Hunter. Confess now, you have been in the forest."

"I will confess anything you please," replied Surrey evasively.

"And what have you seen?—a stranger vision than the first?" rejoined the Fair Geraldine.

"Since your ladyship answers for me, there is no need for explanation on my part," rejoined Surrey, with a faint laugh. "And know you not, that those who encounter super natural beings are generally bound to profound secrecy?"

"Such, I hope, is not your case, Henry?" cried the Lady Mary Howard, in alarm;—"nor yours, my lord?" she added to the Duke

of Richmond.

"I am bound equally with Surrey," returned the duke mysteriously.

"You pique my curiosity, my lords," said the Fair Geraldine; "and since there is no other way of gratifying it, if the Lady Mary Howard will accompany me, we will ourselves venture into the forest, and try whether we cannot have a meeting with this wild huntsman. Shall we go to-night?

"Not for worlds," replied the Lady Mary, shuddering; "were I to see Herne, I should die of fright."

"Your alarm is groundless," observed Richmond gallantly. "The presence of two beings, fair and pure as yourself and the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, would scare away aught of evil."

The Lady Mary thanked him with a beaming smile, but the Fair Geraldine could not suppress a slight laugh.

"Your grace is highly flattering," she said. "But, with all faith in beauty and purity, I should place most reliance in a relic I possess—the virtue of which has often been approved against evil spirits. It was given by a monk—who had been sorely tempted by a demon, and who owed his deliverance to it—to my ancestor, Luigi Geraldi of Florence; and from him it descended to me."

"Would I had an opportunity of proving its efficacy!" exclaimed the Earl of Surrey.

"You shall prove it, if you choose," rejoined the Fair Geraldine. "I will give you the relic on condition that you never

part with it to friend or foe."

And detaching a small cross of gold, suspended by a chain from her neck, she presented it to the Earl of Surrey.

"This cross encloses the relic," she continued; "wear it, and may it protect you from all ill!"

Surrey's pale cheek glowed as he took the gift. "I will never past with it but with life," he cried, pressing the cross to his lips, and afterwards placing it next his heart.

"I would have given half my dukedom to be so favoured," said Richmond moodily.

And quitting the little group, he walked towards the Lady Anne. "Henry," said the Lady Mary, taking her brother aside, "you will lose your friend."

"I care not," replied Surrey.

"But you may incur his enmity," pursued the Lady Mary. "I saw the glance he threw at you just now, and it was exactly like the king's terrible look when offended."

"Again I say I care not," replied Surrey. "Armed with this relic, I defy all hostility."

"It will avail little against Richmond's rivalry and opposition," rejoined his sister.

"We shall see," retorted Surrey. "Were the king himself my rival, I would not resign my pretensions to the Fair Geraldine."

"Bravely resolved, my lord," said Sir Thomas Wyat, who, having overheard the exclamation, advanced towards him. "Heaven grant you may never be placed in such jeopardy!"

"I say amen to that prayer, Sir Thomas," rejoined Surrey "I would not prove disloyal, and yet under such circumstances—"

"What would you do?" interrupted Wyat.

"My brother is but a hasty boy, and has not learned discretion, Sir Thomas," interposed the Lady Mary, trying by a significant glance to impose silence on the earl.

"Young as he is, he loves well and truly," remarked Wyat, in a sombre tone.

"What is all this?" inquired the Fair Geraldine, who had been gazing through the casement into the court below.

"I was merely expressing a wish that Surrey may never have a monarch for a rival, fair lady," replied Wyat.

"It matters little who may be his rival," rejoined Geraldine, "provided she he loves be constant."

"Right, lady, right," said Wyat, with great bitterness. At this moment Will Sommers approached them. "I come to bid you to the Lady Anne's presence, Sir Thomas, and you to the king's, my lord of Surrey," said the jester. "I noticed what has just taken place," he remarked to the latter, as they proceeded towards the royal canopy, beneath which Henry and the Lady Anne Boleyn were seated; "but Richmond will not relinquish her tamely, for all that."

Anne Boleyn had summoned Sir Thomas Wyat, in order to gratify her vanity by showing him the unbounded influence she possessed over his royal rival; and the half-suppressed agony displayed by the unfortunate lover at the exhibition afforded her

a pleasure such as only the most refined coquette can feel.

Surrey was sent for by the king to receive instructions, in his quality of vice-chamberlain, respecting a tilting-match and hunting-party to be held on successive days—the one in the upper quadrangle of the castle, the other in the forest.

Anxious, now that he was somewhat calmer, to avoid a rupture with Richmond, Surrey, as soon as he had received the king's instructions, drew near the duke; and the latter, who had likewise reasoned himself out of his resentment, was speedily appeased, and they became, to all appearance, as good friends as ever.

Soon afterwards the Lady Anne and her dames retired, and the court breaking up, the two young nobles strolled forth to the stately terrace at the north of the castle, where, while gazing at the glorious view it commanded, they talked over the mysterious event of the previous night.

"I cannot help suspecting that the keeper we beheld with the demon hunter was Morgan Fenwolf," remarked the earl. "Suppose we make inquiry whether he was at home last night. We can readily find out his dwelling from Bryan Bowntance, the host of the Garter."

Richmond acquiesced in the proposal, and they accordingly proceeded to the cloisters of Saint George's Chapel, and threading some tortuous passages contrived among the canons' houses, passed through a small porch, guarded by a sentinel, and opening upon a precipitous and somewhat dangerous flight of steps, hewn out of the rock and leading to the town.

None except the more important members of the royal household were allowed to use this means of exit from the castle, but, of course, the privilege extended to Richmond and Surrey. Here in later times, and when the castle was not so strictly guarded, a more convenient approach was built, and designated, from the number of its stairs, "The Hundred Steps."

Having accomplished the descent in safety, and given the password to the sentinel at the foot of the steps, the two young nobles emerged into the street, and the first object they beheld was the body of the miserable butcher swinging from the summit of the Curfew Tower, where it was left by order of the king.

Averting their gaze from this ghastly spectacle, they took their way up Thames Street, and soon reached the Garter. Honest Bryan was seated on a bench before the dwelling, with a flagon of his own ale beside him, and rising as he saw the others approach, he made them a profound salutation.

Upon leaning what they sought, he told them that Morgan Fenwolf dwelt in a small cottage by the river-side not far from the bridge, and if it pleased them, he would guide them to it himself —an offer which they gladly accepted.

"Do you know anything of this Fenwolf?" asked Surrey, as they proceeded on their way.

"Nothing particular," replied Bryan, with some hesitation. "There are some strange reports about him, but I don't believe 'em."

"What reports are they, friend?" asked the Duke of Richmond.

"Why, your grace, one ought to be cautious what one says, for fear of bringing an innocent man into trouble," returned the host. "But if the truth must be spoken, people do say that Morgan Fenwolf is in league with the devil—or with Herne the Hunter, which is the same thing."

Richmond exchanged a look with his friend.

"Folks say strange sights have been seen in the forest of late," pursued Bryan—"and it may be so. But I myself have seen nothing—but then, to be sure, I never go there. The keepers used to talk of Herne the Hunter when I was a lad, but I believe it was only a tale to frighten deer-stealers; and I fancy it's much the same thing now."

Neither Surrey nor Richmond made any remark, and they presently reached the keeper's dwelling.

It was a small wooden tenement standing, as the host had stated, on the bank of the river, about a bow-shot from the bridge. The door was opened by Bryan, and the party entered without further ceremony. They found no one within except an old woman, with harsh, wrinkled features, and a glance as ill-omened as that of a witch, whom Bryan Bowntance told them was Fenwolf's mother. This old crone regarded the intruders uneasily.

"Where is your son, dame?" demanded the duke.

"On his walk in the forest," replied the old crone bluntly.

"What time did he go forth?" inquired Surrey.

"An hour before daybreak, as is his custom," returned the

woman, in the same short tone as before.

"You are sure he slept at home last night, dame?" said Surrey.

"As sure as I am that the question is asked me," she replied. "I can show you the very bed on which he slept, if you desire to see it. He retired soon after sunset—slept soundly, as he always sleeps—and arose as I have told you. I lighted a fire, and made him some hot pottage myself."

"If she speaks the truth, you must be mistaken," observed Richmond in a whisper to his friend.

"I do not believe her," replied Surrey, in the same tone. "Show us his chamber, dame."

The old crone sullenly complied, and, throwing open a side door, disclosed an inner apartment, in which there was a small bed. There was nothing noticeable in the room except a couple of fishing-nets, a hunting-spear, and an old cross-bow. A small open casement looked upon the river, whose clear sparkling waters flowed immediately beneath it.

Surrey approached the window, and obtained a fine view of the Brocas meads on the one hand, and the embowered college of Eton on the other. His attention, however, was diverted by a fierce barking without, and the next moment, in spite of the vociferations of the old woman, a large black staghound, which Surrey recognised as Fenwolf's dog, Bawsey, burst through the door, and rushed furiously towards him. Surrey drew his dagger to defend himself from the hound's attack, but the precaution was needless. Bawsey's fierceness changed suddenly to the most

abject submission, and with a terrified howl, she retreated from the room with' her tail between her legs. Even the old woman uttered a cry of surprise.

"Lord help us!" exclaimed Bryan; "was ever the like o' that seen? Your lordship must have a strange mastery over dogs. That hound," he added, in a whisper, "is said to be a familiar spirit."

"The virtue of the relic is approved," observed Surrey to Richmond, in an undertone.

"It would seem so," replied the duke.

The old woman now thought proper to assume a more respectful demeanour towards her visitors, and inquired whether her son should attend upon them on his return from the forest, but they said it was unnecessary.

"The king is about to have a grand hunting-party the day after to-morrow," observed Surrey, "and we wished to give your son some instructions respecting it. They can, however, be delivered to another keeper."

And they departed with Bryan, and returned to the castle. At midnight they again issued forth. Their steeds awaited them near the upper gate, and, mounting, they galloped across the greensward in the direction of Herne's Oak. Discerning no trace of the ghostly huntsman, they shaped their course towards the forest.

Urging their steeds to their utmost speed, and skirting the long avenue, they did not draw the rein till they reached the eminence beyond it; having climbed which, they dashed down the farther

side at the same swift pace as before. The ride greatly excited them, but they saw nothing of the wild huntsman; nor did any sound salute their ears except the tramp of their own horses, or the occasional darting forth of a startled deer.

Less than a quarter of an hour brought them to the haunted beech-tree; but all was as silent and solitary here as at the blasted oak. In vain Surrey smote the tree. No answer was returned to the summons; and, finding all efforts to evoke the demon fruitless, they quitted the spot, and, turning their horses' heads to the right, slowly ascended the hill-side.

Before they had gained the brow of the hill the faint blast of a horn saluted their ears, apparently proceeding from the valley near the lake. They instantly stopped and looked in that direction, but could see nothing. Presently, however, the blast was repeated more loudly than before, and, guided by the sound, they discerned the spectral huntsman riding beneath the trees at some quarter of a mile's distance.

Striking spurs into their steeds, they instantly gave him chase; but though he lured them on through thicket and over glade—now climbing a hill, now plunging into a valley, until their steeds began to show symptoms of exhaustion—they got no nearer to him; and at length, as they drew near the Home Park, to which he had gradually led them, he disappeared from view.

"I will take my station near the blasted oak," said Surrey, galloping towards it: "the demon is sure to revisit his favourite tree before cock-crowing."

“What is that?” cried the Earl of Surrey, pointing to a strange and ghastly-looking object depending from the tree. “Some one has hanged himself! It may be the caitiff, Morgan Fenwolf.”

With one accord they dashed forward, and as they drew nearer the tree, they perceived that the object that had attracted their attention was the body of Mark Fytton, the butcher, which they had so recently seen swinging from the summit of the Curfew Tower. It was now suspended from an arm of the wizard oak.

A small scroll was stuck upon the breast of the corpse, and, taking it off, Surrey read these words, traced in uncouth characters—“Mark Fytton is now one of the band of Herne the Hunter.”

“By my fay, this passes all comprehension,” said Richmond, after a few moments’ silence. “This castle and forest seem under the sway of the powers of darkness. Let us return. I have had enough of adventure for to-night.”

And he rode towards the castle, followed more slowly by the earl.

VII

How the Earl of Surrey and the Fair Geraldine plighted their troth in the Cloisters of Saint George's Chapel.

Barriers were erected on the following day in the upper ward of the castle, and the Lady Anne and her dames assembled in the balcony in front of the royal lodgings, which was decorated with arras, costly carpets, and rich stuffs, to view the spectacle.

Perfect in all manly accomplishments, Henry splintered several lances with his brother-in-law, the Duke of Suffolk, who formed an admirable match for him in point of weight and strength; and at last, though he did not succeed in unhorsing the duke, he struck off his helmet, the clasp of which, it was whispered, was left designedly unfastened; and being thereupon declared the victor, he received the prize—a scarf embroidered by her own hands—from the fair Anne herself.

He then retired from the lists, leaving them free for the younger knights to run a course at the ring. The first to enter the arena was Sir Thomas Wyat; and as he was known to be a skilful jouster, it was expected he would come off triumphantly. But a glance from the royal balcony rendered his arm unsteady, and he missed the mark.

Next came the Duke of Richmond, superbly accoutred. Laughing at Wyat's ill success, he bowed to the Fair Geraldine, and taking a lance from his esquire, placed it in the rest, and rode

gallantly forward. But he was equally unsuccessful, and retired, looking deeply chagrined.

The third knight who presented himself was Surrey. Mounted on his favourite black Arabian—a steed which, though of fiery temper, obeyed his slightest movement—his light symmetrical figure was seen to the greatest advantage in his close-fitting habiliments of silk and velvet. Without venturing a look at the royal balcony, the earl couched his lance, and bounding forward, bore away the ring on its point.

Amid the plaudits of the spectators, he then careered around the arena, and approaching the royal balcony, raised his lance, and proffered the ring to the Fair Geraldine, who blushingly received it. Henry, though by no means pleased with Surrey's success, earned as it was at the expense of his son, complimented him upon his skill, and Anne Boleyn joined warmly in his praises.

The lists were then closed, and the royal party retired to partake of refreshments; after which they proceeded to the butts erected in the broad mead at the north of the castle, where the Duke of Shoreditch and his companions shot a well-contested match with the long-bow.

During these sports, Surrey placed himself as near as he could to the Fair Geraldine, and though but few opportunities occurred of exchanging a syllable with her, his looks spoke a sufficiently intelligible language. At last, just as they were about to return to the palace, he breathed in an imploring tone in her ear—

"You will attend vespers at Saint George's Chapel this

evening. Return through the cloisters. Grant me a moment's interview alone there."

"I cannot promise," replied the Fair Geraldine. And she followed in the train of the Lady Anne.

The earl's request had not been unheard. As the royal train proceeded towards the castle, Will Sommers contrived to approach the Duke of Richmond, and said to him, in a jeering tone "You ran but indifferently at the ring to-day, gossip. The galliard Surrey rode better, and carried off the prize."

"Pest on thee, scurril knave—be silent!" cried Richmond angrily; "failure is bad enough without thy taunts."

"If you had only missed the ring, gossip, I should have thought nothing of it," pursued Will Sommers; "but you lost a golden opportunity of ingratiating yourself with your lady-love. All your hopes are now at an end. A word in your ear—the Fair Geraldine will meet Surrey alone this evening."

"Thou liest, knave!" cried the duke fiercely.

"Your grace will find the contrary, if you will be at Wolsey's tomb-house at vesper-time," replied the jester.

"I will be there," replied the duke; "but if I am brought on a bootless errand, not even my royal father shall save thee from chastisement."

"I will bear any chastisement your grace may choose to inflict upon me, if I prove not the truth of my assertion," replied Sommers. And he dropped into the rear of the train.

The two friends, as if by mutual consent, avoided each other

during the rest of the day—Surrey feeling he could not unburden his heart to Richmond, and Richmond brooding jealously over the intelligence he had received from the jester.

At the appointed hour the duke proceeded to the lower ward, and stationed himself near Wolsey's tomb-house. Just as he arrived there, the vesper hymn arose from the adjoining fane, and its solemn strains somewhat soothed his troubled spirit. But they died away; and as the jester came not, Richmond grew impatient, and began to fear he had been duped by his informant. At length the service concluded, and, losing all patience, he was about to depart, when the jester peered round the lower angle of the tomb-house, and beckoned to him. Obeying the summons, the duke followed his conductor down the arched passage leading to the cloisters.

"Tread softly, gossip, or you will alarm them," said Sommers, in a low tone.

They turned the corner of the cloisters; and there, near the entrance of the chapel, stood the youthful pair—the Fair Geraldine half reclining upon the earl's breast, while his arm encircled her slender waist.

"There!" whispered the jester, chuckling maliciously, "there! did I speak falsely—eh, gossip?"

Richmond laid his hand upon his sword.

"Hist!" said the jester; "hear what the Fair Geraldine has to say."

"We must meet no more thus, Surrey," she murmured:

"I feel I was wrong in granting the interview, but I could not help it. If, when a few more years have flown over your head, your heart remains unchanged."

"It will never change!" interrupted Surrey. "I here solemnly pledge my troth to you."

"And I return the pledge," replied the Fair Geraldine earnestly. "I vow to be yours, and yours only."

"Would that Richmond could hear your vow!" said Surrey; "it would extinguish his hopes."

"He has heard it!" cried the duke, advancing. "But his hopes are not yet extinguished."

The Fair Geraldine uttered a slight scream, and disengaged herself from the earl.

"Richmond, you have acted unworthily in thus playing the spy," said Surrey angrily.

"None but a spy can surprise interviews like these," rejoined Richmond bitterly. "The Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald had better have kept her chamber, than come here to plight her troth with a boy, who will change his mind before his beard is grown."

"Your grace shall find the boy man enough to avenge an insult," rejoined Surrey sternly.

"I am glad to hear it," returned the duke. "Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, I must pray you to return to your lodgings. The king's jester will attend you. This way, my lord."

Too much exasperated to hesitate, Surrey followed the duke down the passage, and the next moment the clashing of swords

was heard. The Fair Geraldine screamed loudly, and Will Sommers began to think the jest had been carried too far.

"What is to be done?" he cried. "If the king hears of this quarrel, he will assuredly place the Earl of Surrey in arrest. I now repent having brought the duke here."

"You acted most maliciously," cried the Fair Geraldine; "but fly, and prevent further mischief."

Thus urged, the jester ran towards the lower ward, and finding an officer of the guard and a couple of halberdiers near the entrance of St. George's Chapel, told them what was taking place, and they immediately hastened with him to the scene of the conflict.

"My lords!" cried the officer to the combatants, "I command you to lay down your weapons."

But finding no respect paid to his injunctions, he rushed between them, and with the aid of the halberdiers, forcibly separated them.

"My lord of Surrey," said the officer, "you are my prisoner. I demand your sword."

"On what plea, sir?" rejoined the other.

"You have drawn it against the king's son—and the act is treason," replied the officer. "I shall take you to the guard house until the king's pleasure is known."

"But I provoked the earl to the conflict," said Richmond: "I was the aggressor."

"Your grace will represent the matter as you see fit to your

royal father," rejoined the officer. "I shall fulfil my duty. My lord, to the guard-house!"

"I will procure your instant liberation, Surrey," said Richmond.

The earl was then led away, and conveyed to a chamber in the lower part of Henry the Eighth's gate, now used as a place of military punishment, and denominated the "black hole."

VIII

Of Tristram Lyndwood, the old Forester, and his Granddaughter Mabel—Of the Peril in which the Lady Anne Boleyn was placed during the chase—And by whom she was rescued.

In consequence of the announcement that a grand hunting party would be held in the forest, all the verderers, rangers, and keepers assembled at an early hour on the fourth day after the king's arrival at Windsor in an open space on the west side of the great avenue, where a wooden stand was erected, canopied over with green boughs and festooned with garlands of flowers, for the accommodation of the Lady Anne Boleyn and her dames, who, it was understood, would be present at the chase.

At a little distance from the stand an extensive covert was fenced round with stout poles, to which nets were attached so as to form a haye or preserve, where the game intended for the royal sport was confined; and though many of the animals thus brought together were of hostile natures, they were all so terrified, and seemingly so conscious of the danger impending over them, that they did not molest each other. The foxes and martins, of which there were abundance, slunk into the brushwood with the hares and rabbits, but left their prey untouched. The harts made violent efforts to break forth, and, entangling their horns in the nets, were with difficulty extricated and driven back; while the timid does,

not daring to follow them, stood warily watching the result of the struggle.

Amongst the antlered captives was a fine buck, which, having been once before hunted by the king, was styled a "hart royal," and this noble animal would certainly have effected his escape if he had not been attacked and driven back by Morgan Fenwolf, who throughout the morning's proceedings displayed great energy and skill. The compliments bestowed on Fenwolf for his address by the chief verderer excited the jealousy of some of his comrades, and more than one asserted that he had been assisted in his task by some evil being, and that Bawsey herself was no better than a familiar spirit in the form of a hound.

Morgan Fenwolf scouted these remarks; and he was supported by some others among the keepers, who declared that it required no supernatural aid to accomplish what he had done—that he was nothing more than a good huntsman, who could ride fast and boldly—that he was skilled in all the exercises of the chase, and possessed a stanch and well-trained hound.

The party then sat down to breakfast beneath the trees, and the talk fell upon Herne the Hunter, and his frequent appearance of late in the forest (for most of the keepers had heard of or encountered the spectral huntsman); and while they were discussing this topic, and a plentiful allowance of cold meat, bread, ale, and mead at the same time, two persons were seen approaching along a vista on the right, who specially attracted their attention and caused Morgan Fenwolf to drop the hunting-

knife with which he was carving his viands, and start to his feet.

The new-comers were an old man and a comely young damsel. The former, though nearer seventy than sixty, was still hale and athletic, with fresh complexion, somewhat tanned by the sun, and a keen grey eye, which had lost nothing of its fire. He was habited in a stout leathern doublet, hose of the same material, and boots rudely fashioned out of untanned ox-hide, and drawn above the knee. In his girdle was thrust a large hunting-knife; a horn with a silver mouthpiece depended from his shoulder, and he wore a long bow and a quiver full of arrows at his back. A flat bonnet, made of fox-skin and ornamented with a raven's wing, covered his hair, which was as white as silver.

But it was not upon this old forester, for such his attire proclaimed him, that the attention of the beholders, and of Morgan Fenwolf in especial, was fixed, but upon his companion. Amongst the many lovely and high-born dames who had so recently graced the procession to the castle were few, if any, comparable to this lowly damsel. Her dress—probably owing to the pride felt in her by her old relative was somewhat superior to her station. A tightly-laced green kirtle displayed to perfection her slight but exquisitely-formed figure A gown of orange-coloured cloth, sufficiently short to display her small ankles, and a pair of green buskins, embroidered with silver, together with a collar of the whitest and finest linen, though shamed by the neck it concealed, and fastened by a small clasp, completed her attire. Her girdle was embroidered with silver, and her sleeves

were fastened by aiglets of the same metal.

"How proud old Tristram Lyndwood seems of his granddaughter," remarked one of the keepers.

"And with reason," replied another. "Mabel Lyndwood is the comeliest lass in Berkshire."

"Ay, marry is she," rejoined the first speaker; "and, to my thinking, she is a fairer and sweeter flower than any that blooms in yon stately castle—the flower that finds so much favour in the eyes of our royal Hal not excepted."

"Have a care, Gabriel Lapp," observed another keeper. "Recollect that Mark Fytton, the butcher, was hanged for speaking slightingly of the Lady Anne Boleyn; and you may share his fate if you disparage her beauty."

"Na I meant not to disparage the Lady Anne," replied Gabriel. "Hal may marry her when he will, and divorce her as soon afterwards as he pleases, for aught I care. If he marries fifty wives, I shall like him all the better. The more the merrier, say I. But if he sets eyes on Mab Lyndwood it may somewhat unsettle his love for the Lady Anne."

"Tush, Gabriel!" said Morgan Fenwolf, darting an angry look at him. "What business have you to insinuate that the king would heed other than the lady of his love?"

"You are jealous, Morgan Fenwolf," rejoined Gabriel, with a malignant grin. "We all know you are in love with Mabel yourself."

"And we all know, likewise, that Mabel will have nothing to

say to you!" cried another keeper, while the others laughed in chorus. "Come and sit down beside us, Morgan, and finish your breakfast."

But the keeper turned moodily away, and hied towards Tristram Lyndwood and his granddaughter. The old forester shook him cordially by the hand, and after questioning him as to what had taken place, and hearing how he had managed to drive the hart royal into the haye, clapped him on the shoulder and said, "Thou art a brave huntsman, Morgan. I wish Mab could only think as well of thee as I do."

To this speech Mabel not only paid no attention, but looked studiously another way.

"I am glad your grandfather has brought you out to see the chase to-day, Mabel," observed Morgan Fenwolf.

"I dame not to see the chase, but the king," she replied, somewhat petulantly.

"It is not every fair maid who would confess so much," observed Fenwolf, frowning.

"Then I am franker than some of my sex," replied Mabel. "But who is the strange man looking at us from behind that tree, grandfather!

"I see no one," replied the old forester.

"Neither do I," added Morgan Fenwolf, with a shudder. "You are wilfully blind," rejoined Mabel. "But see, the person I mentioned stalks forth. Now, perhaps, he is visible to you both."

And as she spoke, a tall wild-looking figure, armed with a

hunting-spear, emerged from the trees and advanced towards them. The garb of the newcomer somewhat resembled that of a forester; but his arms and lower limbs were destitute of covering, and appeared singularly muscular, while his skin was swarthy as that of a gipsy. His jet-black hair hung in elf-locks over his savage-looking features.

In another moment he was beside them, and fixed his dark piercing eyes on Mabel in such a manner as to compel her to avert her gaze.

"What brings you here this morning, Tristram Lyndwood?" he demanded, in a hoarse imperious tone.

"The same motive that brought you, Valentine Hagthorne," replied the old forester—"to see the royal chase."

"This, I suppose, is your granddaughter?" pursued Hagthorne.

"Ay," replied Tristram bluntly.

"Strange I should never have seen her before," rejoined the other. "She is very fair. Be ruled by me, friend Tristram—take her home again. If she sees the king, ill will come of it. You know, or should know, his character."

"Hagthorne advises well," interposed Fenwolf. "Mabel will be better at home."

"But she has no intention of returning at present," replied Mabel. "You brought me here for pastime, dear grandfather, and will not take me back at the recommendation of this strange man?"

"Content you, child—content you," replied Tristram kindly.

"You shall remain where you are."

"You will repent it!" cried Hagthorne.

And hastily darting among the trees, he disappeared from view.

Affecting to laugh at the occurrence, though evidently annoyed by it, the old forester led his granddaughter towards the stand, where he was cordially greeted by the keepers, most of whom, while expressing their pleasure at seeing him, strove to render themselves agreeable in the eyes of Mabel.

From this scene Morgan Fenwolf kept aloof, and remained leaning against a tree, with his eyes riveted upon the damsel. He was roused from his reverie by a slight tap upon the shoulder; and turning at the touch, beheld Valentine Hagthorne. Obedient to a sign from the latter, he followed him amongst the trees, and they both plunged into a dell.

An hour or two after this, when the sun was higher in the heavens, and the dew dried upon the greensward, the king and a large company of lords and ladies rode forth from the upper gate of the castle, and taking their way along the great avenue, struck off on the right when about half-way up it, and shaped their course towards the haye.

A goodly sight it was to see this gallant company riding beneath the trees; and pleasant was it, also, to listen to the blithe sound of their voices, amid which Anne Boleyn's musical laugh could be plainly distinguished. Henry was attended by his customary band of archers and yeomen of the guard, and by the

Duke of Shoreditch and his followers. On reaching the haye, the king dismounted, and assisting the Lady Anne from her steed, ascended the stand with her.

He then took a small and beautifully fashioned bow from an attendant, and stringing it, presented it to her.

"I trust this will not prove too strong for your fair hands," he said.

"I will make shift to draw it," replied Anne, raising the bow, and gracefully pulling the string. "Would I could wound your majesty as surely as I shall hit the first roe that passes."

"That were a needless labour," rejoined Henry, "seeing that you have already stricken me to the heart. You should cure the wound you have already made, sweetheart-not inflict a new one."

At this juncture the chief verderer, mounted on a powerful steed, and followed by two keepers, each holding a couple of stag-hounds in leash, rode up to the royal stand, and placing his horn to his lips, blew three long mootes from it. At the same moment part of the network of the haye was lifted up, and a roebuck set free.

By the management of the keepers, the animal was driven past the royal stand; and Anne Boleyn, who had drawn an arrow nearly to the head, let it fly with such good aim that she pierced the buck to the heart. A loud shout from the spectators rewarded the prowess of the fair huntress; and Henry was so enchanted, that he bent the knee to her, and pressed her hand to his lips. Satisfied, however, with the' achievement, Anne prudently

declined another shot. Henry then took a bow from one of the archers, and other roes being turned out, he approved upon them his unerring skill as a marksman.

Meanwhile, the hounds, being held in leash, kept up a loud and incessant baying; and Henry, wearying of his slaughterous sport, turned to Anne, and asked her whether she was disposed for the chase. She answered in the affirmative, and the king motioned his henchmen to bring forward the steeds.

In doing this, he caught sight of Mabel, who was standing with her grandsire among the keepers, at a little distance from the stand, and, struck with her extraordinary beauty, he regarded her for a moment intently, and then called to Gabriel Lapp, who chanced to be near him, and demanded her name.

"It is Mabel Lyndwood, an't please your majesty," replied Gabriel. "She is granddaughter to old Tristram Lyndwood, who dwells at Black Nest, near the lake, at the farther extremity of Windsor Forest, and who was forester to your royal father, King Henry the Seventh, of blessed memory."

"Ha! is it so?" cried Henry.

But he was prevented from further remark by Anne Boleyn, who, perceiving how his attention was attracted, suddenly interposed.

"Your majesty spoke of the chase," she said impatiently. "But perhaps you have found other pastime more diverting?"

"Not so—not so, sweetheart," he replied hastily.

"There is a hart royal in the haye," said Gabriel Lapp. "Is it

your majesty's pleasure that I set him free?

"It is, good fellow—it is," replied the king.

And as Gabriel hastened to the netted fencework, and prepared to drive forth the hart, Henry assisted Anne Boleyn, who could not help exhibiting some slight jealous pique, to mount her steed, and having sprung into his own saddle, they waited the liberation of the buck, which was accomplished in a somewhat unexpected manner.

Separated from the rest of the herd, the noble animal made a sudden dart towards Gabriel, and upsetting him in his wild career, darted past the king, and made towards the upper part of the forest. In another instant the hounds were un coupled and at his heels, while Henry and Anne urged their steeds after him, the king shouting at the top of his lusty voice. The rest of the royal party followed as they might, and the woods resounded with their joyous cries.

The hart royal proved himself worthy of his designation. Dashing forward with extraordinary swiftness, he rapidly gained upon his pursuers—for though Henry, by putting his courser to his utmost speed, could have kept near him, he did not choose to quit his fair companion.

In this way they scoured the forest, until the king, seeing they should be speedily distanced, commanded Sir Thomas Wyat, who, with the Dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk, was riding close behind him, to cross by the lower ground on the left, and turn the stag. Wyat instantly obeyed, and plunging his spurs deeply into

his horse's sides, started off at a furious pace, and was soon after seen shaping his rapid course through a devious glade.

Meanwhile, Henry and his fair companion rode on without relaxing their pace, until they reached the summit of a knoll, crowned by an old oak and beech-tree, and commanding a superb view of the castle, where they drew in the rein.

From this eminence they could witness the progress of the chase, as it continued in the valley beyond. An ardent lover of hunting, the king watched it with the deepest interest, rose in his saddle, and uttering various exclamations, showed, from his impatience, that he was only restrained by the stronger passion of love from joining it.

Ere long, stag, hounds, and huntsmen were lost amid a thicket, and nothing could be distinguished but a distant baying and shouts. At last even these sounds died away.

Henry, who had ill brooked the previous restraint, now grew so impatient, that Anne begged him to set off after them, when suddenly the cry of hounds burst upon their ears, and the hart was seen issuing from the dell, closely followed by his pursuers.

The affrighted animal, to the king's great satisfaction, made his way directly towards the spot where he was stationed; but on reaching the side of the knoll, and seeing his new foes, he darted off on the right, and tried to regain the thicket below. But he was turned by another band of keepers, and again driven towards the knoll.

Scarcely had Sir Thomas Wyat reined in his steed by the side

of the king, than the hart again appeared bounding up the hill. Anne Boleyn, who had turned her horse's head to obtain a better view of the hunt, alarmed by the animal's menacing appearance, tried to get out of his way. But it was too late. Hemmed in on all sides, and driven to desperation by the cries of hounds and huntsmen in front, the hart lowered his horns, and made a furious push at her.

Dreadfully alarmed, Anne drew in the rein so suddenly and sharply, that she almost pulled her steed back upon his haunches; and in trying to avoid the stag's attack, caught hold of Sir Thomas Wyat, who was close beside her. In all probability she would have received some serious injury from the infuriated animal, who was just about to repeat his assault and more successfully, when a bolt from a cross-bow, discharged by Morgan Fenwolf, who suddenly made his appearance from behind the beech-tree, brought him to the ground.

But Anne Boleyn escaped one danger only to encounter another equally serious. On seeing her fling herself into the arms of Sir Thomas Wyat, Henry regarded her in stern displeasure for a moment, and then calling angrily to his train, without so much as deigning to inquire whether she had sustained any damage from the accident, or making the slightest remark upon her conduct, rode sullenly towards the castle.

IX

By what means Sir Thomas Wyat obtained an Interview with Anne Boleyn—And how the Earl of Surrey saved them from the King's anger.

The incident above related gave new life to the adherents of Catherine of Arragon, while it filled those devoted to Anne Boleyn with alarm. Immediately on Anne's return to the castle Lord Rochford had a private interview with her, and bitterly reproached her for endangering her splendid prospects. Anne treated the matter very lightly—said it was only a temporary gust of jealousy—and added that the king would be at her feet again before the day was past.

"You are over-confident, mistress!" cried Rochford angrily. "Henry is not an ordinary gallant."

"It is you who are mistaken, father," replied Anne. "The king differs in no respect from any of his love-smitten subjects. I have him in my toils, and will not let him escape."

"You have a tiger in your toils, daughter, and take heed he breaks not forcibly through them," rejoined Rochford. "Henry is more wayward than you suppose him. Once let him take up a notion, and nothing can shake him from it. He has resolved upon the divorce as much from self-will as from any other consideration. If you regain your position with him, of which you seem so confident, do not consider yourself secure—not even

when you are crowned queen—but be warned by Catherine of Arragon."

"Catherine has not the art to retain him," said Anne. "Henry will never divorce me."

"Take care he does not rid himself of you in a more summary manner, daughter," rejoined Rochford. "If you would stand well with him, you must study his lightest word, look, and action—humour him in every whim—and yield to every caprice. Above all, you must exhibit no jealousy."

"You are wrong in all but the last, father," returned Anne. "Henry is not to be pleased by such nice attention to his humours. It is because I have shown myself careless of them that I have captivated him. But I will take care not to exhibit jealousy, and, sooth to say, I do not think I shall have cause."

"Be not too sure of that," replied Rochford. "And at all events, let not the king have cause to be jealous of you. I trust Wyat will be banished from court. But if he is not, do not let him approach you more."

"Poor Sir Thomas!" sighed Anne. "He loved me very dearly."

"But what is his love compared to the king's?" cried Rochford. "Tut, tut, girl! think no more of him."

"I will not, my lord," she rejoined; "I see the prudence of your counsel, and will obey it. Leave me, I pray you. I will soon win back the affections of the king."

No sooner had Rochford quitted the chamber than the arras at the farther end was raised, and Wyat stepped from behind it.

His first proceeding was to bar the door.

"What means this, Sir Thomas?" cried Anne in alarm. "How have you obtained admittance here?"

"Through the secret staircase," replied Wyat, bending the knee before her.

"Rise, sir!" cried Anne, in great alarm. "Return, I beseech you, as you came. You have greatly endangered me by coming here. If you are seen to leave this chamber, it will be in vain to assert my innocence to Henry. Oh, Sir Thomas! you cannot love me, or you would not have done this."

"Not love you, Anne!" he repeated bitterly; "not love you I Words cannot speak my devotion. I would lay down my head on the scaffold to prove it. But for my love for you, I would throw open that door, and walk forth so that all might see me—so that Henry might experience some part of the anguish I now feel."

"But you will not do so, good Sir Thomas—dear Sir Thomas," cried Anne Boleyn, in alarm.

"Have no fear," rejoined Wyat, with some contempt; "I will sacrifice even vengeance to love."

"Sir Thomas, I had tolerated this too long," said Anne. "Begone—you terrify me."

"It is my last interview with you, Anne," said Wyat imploringly; "do not abridge it. Oh, bethink you of the happy hours we have passed together—of the vows we have interchanged—of the protestations you have listened to, and returned—ay, returned, Anne. Are all these forgotten?"

"Not forgotten, Sir Thomas," replied Anne mournfully; "but they must not be recalled. I cannot listen to you longer. You must go. Heaven grant you may get hence in safety!"

"Anne," replied Wyat in a sombre tone, "the thought of Henry's happiness drives me mad. I feel that I am grown a traitor —that I could slay him."

"Sir Thomas!" she exclaimed, in mingled fear and anger.

"I will not go," he continued, flinging himself into a seat. "Let them put what construction they will upon my presence. I shall at least wring Henry's heart. I shall see him suffer as I have suffered; and I shall be content."

"This is not like you, Wyat," cried Anne, in great alarm. "You were wont to be noble, generous, kind. You will not act thus disloyally?

"Who has acted disloyally, Anne?" cried Wyat, springing to his feet, and fixing his dark eyes, blazing with jealous fury, upon her—"you or I? Have you not sacrificed your old affections at the shrine of ambition? Are you not about to give yourself to one to whom—unless you are foresworn—you cannot give your heart? Better had you been the mistress of Allington Castle—better the wife of a humble knight like myself, than the queen of the ruthless Henry."

"No more of this, Wyat," said Anne.

"Better far you should perish by his tyranny for a supposed fault now than hereafter," pursued Wyat fiercely. "Think not Henry will respect you more than her who had been eight-and-

twenty years his wife. No; when he is tired of your charms—when some other dame, fair as yourself, shall enslave his fancy, he will cast you off, or, as your father truly intimated, will seek a readier means of ridding himself of you. Then you will think of the different fate that might have been yours if you had adhered to your early love."

"Wyat! Wyat! I cannot bear this—in mercy spare me!" cried Anne.

"I am glad to see you weep," said Wyat; "your tears make you look more like your former self."

"Oh, Wyat, do not view my conduct too harshly!" she said. "Few of my sex would have acted other than I have done."

"I do not think so," replied Wyat sternly; "nor will I forego my vengeance. Anne, you shall die. You know Henry too well to doubt your fate if he finds me here."

"You cannot mean this," she rejoined, with difficulty repressing a scream; "but if I perish, you will perish with me."

"I wish to do so," he rejoined, with a bitter laugh.

"Wyat," cried Anne, throwing herself on her knees before him, "by your former love for me, I implore you to spare me! Do not disgrace me thus."

But Wyat continued inexorable.

"O God!" exclaimed Anne, wringing her hands in agony. A terrible silence ensued, during which Anne regarded Wyat, but she could discern no change in his countenance.

At this juncture the tapestry was again raised, and the Earl of

Surrey issued from it.

"You here, my lord?" said Anne, rushing towards him.

"I am come to save you, madame," said the earl. "I have been just liberated from arrest, and was about to implore your intercession with the king, when I learned he had been informed by one of his pages that a man was in your chamber. Luckily, he knows not who it is, and while he was summoning his attendants to accompany him, I hurried hither by the secret staircase. I have arrived in time. Fly—fly! Sir Thomas Wyat!"

But Wyat moved not.

At this moment footsteps were heard approaching the door—the handle was tried—and the stern voice of the king was heard commanding that it might be opened.

"Will you destroy me, Wyat?" cried Anne.

"You have destroyed yourself," he rejoined.

"Why stay you here, Sir Thomas?" said Surrey, seizing his arm. "You may yet escape. By heaven! if you move not, I will stab you to the heart!"

"You would do me a favour, young man," said Wyat coldly; "but I will go. I yield to love, and not to you, tyrant!" he added, shaking his hand at the door. "May the worst pangs of jealously rend your heart!" And he disappeared behind the arras.

"I hear voices," cried Henry from without. "God's death! madam, open the door—or I will burst it open!"

"Oh, heaven! what is to be done?" cried Anne Boleyn, in despair.

"Open the door, and leave all to me, madam," said Surrey; "I will save you, though it cost me my life!"

Anne pressed his hand, with a look of ineffable gratitude, and Surrey concealed himself behind the arras.

The door was opened, and Henry rushed in, followed by Richmond, Norfolk, Suffolk, and a host of attendants.

"Ah! God's death! where is the traitor?" roared the king, gazing round.

"Why is my privacy thus broken upon?" said Anne, assuming a look of indignation.

"Your privacy!" echoed Henry, in a tone of deep derision —"Your privacy! —ha!—ha! You bear yourself bravely, it must be confessed. My lords, you heard the voices as well as myself. Where is Sir Thomas Wyat?"

"He is not here," replied Anne firmly.

"Aha! we shall see that, mistress," rejoined Henry fiercely. "But if Sir Thomas Wyat is not here, who is? for I am well assured that some one is hidden in your chamber."

"What if there be?" rejoined Anne coldly.

"Ah! by Saint Mary, you confess it!" cried the king. "Let the traitor come forth."

"Your majesty shall not need to bid twice," said Surrey, issuing from his concealment.

"The Earl of Surrey!" exclaimed Henry, in surprise. "How come you here, my lord? Methought you were under arrest at the guard-house."

"He was set free by my orders," said the Duke of Richmond.

"First of all I must entreat your majesty to turn your resentment against me," said the earl. "I am solely to blame, and I would not have the Lady Anne suffer for my fault. I forced myself into her presence. She knew not of my coming."

"And wherefore did you so, my lord?" demanded Henry sternly.

"Liberated from the guard-house at the Duke of Richmond's instance, my liege, I came to entreat the Lady Anne to mediate between me and your majesty, and to use her influence with your highness to have me betrothed to the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald."

"Is this so, madam?" asked the king.

Anne bowed her head.

"But why was the door barred?" demanded Henry, again frowning suspiciously.

"I barred it myself," said Surrey, "and vowed that the Lady Anne should not go forth till she had granted my request."

"By our lady you have placed yourself in peril, my lord," said Henry sternly.

"Your majesty will bear in mind his youth," said the Duke of Norfolk anxiously.

"For my sake overlook the indiscretion," cried the Duke of Richmond.

"It will not, perhaps, avail him to hope that it may be overlooked for mine," added Anne Boleyn.

"The offence must not pass unpunished," said Henry

musingly. “My lord of Surrey, you must be content to remain for two months a prisoner in the Round Tower of this castle.”

“Your majesty!” cried Richmond, bending the knee in supplication.

“The sentence is passed,” replied Henry coldly; “and the earl may thank you it is not heavier. Richmond, you will think no more of the fair Geraldine; and it is my pleasure, Lady Anne, that the young dame withdraw from the court for a short while.”

“Your majesty shall be obeyed,” said Anne; “but—”

“But me no buts, sweetheart,” said the king peremptorily. “Surrey’s explanation is satisfactory so far as it goes, but I was told Sir Thomas Wyat was here.”

“Sir Thomas Wyat is here,” said Will Sommers, pointing out the knight, who had just joined the throng of courtiers at the door.

“I have hurried hither from my chamber, my liege,” said Wyat, stepping forward, “hearing there was some inquiry concerning me.”

“Is your majesty now satisfied?” asked Anne Boleyn.

“Why, ay, sweetheart, well enough,” rejoined Henry. “Sir Thomas Wyat, we have a special mission for you to the court of our brother of France. You will set out to-morrow.”

Wyat bowed.

“You have saved your head, gossip,” whispered Will Sommers in the knight’s ear. “A visit to Francis the First is better than a visit to the Tower.”

"Retire, my lords," said Henry to the assemblage; "we owe some apology to the Lady Anne for our intrusion, and desire an opportunity to make it."

Upon this the chamber was instantly cleared of its occupants, and the Earl of Surrey was conducted, under a guard, to the Round Tower.

Henry, however, did not find it an easy matter to make peace with the Lady Anne. Conscious of the advantage she had gained, she determined not to relinquish it, and, after half an hour's vain suing, her royal lover proposed a turn in the long gallery, upon which her apartments opened. Here they continued conversing —Henry pleading in the most passionate manner, and Anne maintaining a show of offended pride.

At last she exhibited some signs of relenting, and Henry led her into a recess in the gallery, lighted by a window filled with magnificent stained glass. In this recess was a seat and a small table, on which stood a vase filled with flowers, arranged by Anne's own hand; and here the monarch hoped to adjust his differences with her.

Meanwhile, word having reached Wolsey and Campeggio of the new cause of jealousy which the king had received, it was instantly resolved that the former should present to him, while in his present favourable mood, a despatch received that morning from Catherine of Arragon.

Armed with the letter, Wolsey repaired to the king's closet. Not finding him there, and being given to understand by an usher

that he was in the great gallery, he proceeded thither. As he walked softly along the polished oak floor, he heard voices in one of the recesses, and distinguished the tones of Henry and Anne Boleyn.

Henry was clasping the snowy fingers of his favourite, and gazing passionately at her, as the cardinal approached.

"Your majesty shall not detain my hand," said Anne, "unless you swear to me, by your crown, that you will not again be jealous without cause."

"I swear it," replied Henry.

"Were your majesty as devoted to me as you would have me believe, you would soon bring this matter of the divorce to an issue," said Anne.

"I would fain do so, sweetheart," rejoined Henry; "but these cardinals perplex me sorely."

"I am told by one who overheard him, that Wolsey has declared the divorce shall not be settled these two years," said Anne; "in which case it had better not be settled at all; for I care not to avow I cannot brook so much delay. The warmth of my affection will grow icy cold by that time."

"It were enough to try the patience of the most forbearing," rejoined the king, smiling—"but it shall not be so—by this lily hand it shall not! And now, sweetheart, are we entirely reconciled?

"Not yet," replied Anne. "I shall claim a boon from your majesty before I accord my entire forgiveness."

“Name it,” said the king, still clasping her hand tenderly, and intoxicated by the witchery of her glance.

“I ask an important favour,” said Anne, “but as it is one which will benefit your majesty as much as myself, I have the less scruple in requesting it. I ask the dismissal of one who has abused your favour, who, by his extortion and rapacity, has in some degree alienated the affections of your subjects from you, and who solely opposes your divorce from Catherine of Arragon because he fears my influence may be prejudicial to him.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.