

350      Every Inch a King

be wooed, and Catherine of Valois, after a restless night, paced her apartment with impatient steps. "Is it not hard, Joan," she cried in French to her favorite lady, "that because I am a princess I must stand by in silence while my royal suitor asks the King, my father, for my hand? Oh, I would that I were a beggar maid and he a peasant, that he might woo me freely with sweet words! By Heaven, methinks he would be eloquent!"

The words had scarcely left her lips when one of her maidens entered in great excitement. "Madam," she stammered, "King Henry himself standeth below and craveth speech with your Grace."

Catherine seized her by the arm. "Hast lost thy wits, girl?" she cried. "What doth he here? Is he attended by his noble train? Cometh he not to see mine honored mother?"

"Nay, madam," answered the lady, "he rode hither with scarce a dozen men-at-arms, and dismounting at the door, entered the hall alone and asked for you."

The Princess sprang to her dressing-table. "Quick, Margery, fetch me my flowered satin trimmed with rubies, and thou, Joan, I prithee unbind my hair. Blanche, hie thee to the King with speed, and tell him that I will be with him anon."

In spite of her desire to appear as charming as possible, the Princess made a very hasty toilet, but to the impatient monarch it seemed an age ere she at last descended, accompanied by the ladies Joan and