

and laving with its clear waters the sedge and willow-tufts that fringe its margin, and sweeps over a sandy eminence into the heart of this wild sylvan solitude. That rivulet, for it is scarcely more, that little hillock, are as it were a barrier of eight hundred years. There we were in the very midst of the much vaunted wealth, the artificial wants, the needless luxuries, the wonders, the improvements of this utilitarian age.—A little space, which a child might race over in a minute!—and we are here in the rude solemn majesty of the tenth century. While all has changed, all been improved around, there is no sign, no vestige of improvement, of change, here!—The widgeon flutters up from the reach of the stream, at the rattling approach of the modern mail, just as she did long centuries ago, scared by the gallop of some proud baronial train—the squirrel rasps his acorn on the same mossy limb—the blue-winged geai flutters and screams in the same tree tops—the great green woodpecker sends forth the same wild laughter as he wings his jerking flight from oak to oak—the mighty stag frays his new antlers against the self same trunk—and the sun pours the same rich yellow light over the velvet turf, chequering it with long blue shadows, and making every dew-drop on the grass gleam like a diamond of Golconda, which he shed there eight hundred years ago. Nor, as the eye loses its way among the vistas formed by the giant boles which stud the upland, or rests on the dense brakes, and bosky dingles thick set with hazel, mountain-ash, and holly, which clothe the side of every glen and hollow, does it require any wide stretch of fancy to people those long aisles and alleys green with characters appropriate to the times, which are recalled so strongly by the nature of the scenery. We pass a moss-grown cross, broken perhaps and headless, and almost wonder that we see not the burly form of the gray friar telling his beads beside the consecrated emblem. We cross the opening of some grassy glade, or bridle road, meandering with its sandy track through the deep forest, and we can almost picture to our eyes the clouds of rising dust, with the bright gleams of knightly armour flashing from out its smokey wreaths, and lance heads twinkling in the sunshine with fluttering penoncelles and banners waving above all—we dive into some darksome glen, the startled deer, which have been lurking in its shadows during the noon-tide heat, flit timidly across our path and vanish in the nearest thickets, and we feel something nigh akin to disappointment that we hear

not the deep bay of the bloodhound, the merry flare of the buglehorn, and the fell whistle of the clothyard arrow, hard on the traces of the quarry. Such are our waking day dreams, nor are we aroused fully from our reverie, before the limits of old Sherwood are behind us, and our road has again emerged from the wide lonely woodlands into the bright and cultivated champaign.

It was a still and breathless morning of July, nearly the middle of the seventeenth century, whereon our tale commences—the newly risen sun was shining cheerfully among the rich green leaves, and filling all the air with light which was itself of an emerald hue: the voice of many birds was singing through the forest, and there was not one breath of wind abroad to shake the dew drops from the branches, or to awake the breezy murmuring voice of the tall tree-tops. No human beings were in sight, but a thin wreath of pale blue smoke might be seen worming itself up in graceful folds among the stems of the great oaks at a small distance from the road, although a sudden rise of the ground, and the rich verdure of a clump of young birch trees, concealed the cottage from which it probably arose. From the same quarter there came frequently the light and frolic laugh of childhood, the playful barking of a dog, and ever and anon the rich, sweet voice of a girl giving vent to the feelings excited in her breast by that delicious summer morning, in bursts of unconnected song. This might have continued for an hour or better, without the appearance of any living thing except a little wryneck, which was busily running up and down the knotty bark of one of the large trees, prying into every cranny in search of its insect prey, and two or three gray rabbits feeding upon the dewy grass, and limping lazily among the mazes of the tufted fern—when suddenly a louder sound, and one entirely different from those, with which the woods were rife, came up the road from the southward—it was the heavy tramp of a horse urged to the top of his speed, mixed with the sharp and angry clash of spur and scabbard. In a moment or two, the cause of the disturbance came into sight;—a young man, of some five or six and twenty years, dressed in the full magnificent costume of the court of Charles the First. He wore the broad blue shoulder scarf and the black feather in his slouched hat, which had been assumed by the Cavaliers, in contradistinction to the Orange shoulderknots which the Parliamentarians had borrowed from the liveries of their leader Essex. But the blue