

voy might not have stooped to the simple crest of Brandon, but she may not disdain alliance with the noble name of Suffolk, which with its dukedom, thou knowest, the king hath recently bestowed on him."

"And he has proved already, that he knew what source to thank for this distinction," said the lady, "since in the last tournament he wore the colours of his Flemish mistress, and indicated his devotion to her, by the significance of the motto which he wore."

"Hearest thou that Lady Mary?" said Catherine, turning playfully to the Princess, who, pale and supporting herself against the broad trunk of the tree beneath which they sat, had listened in agitated silence to this little dialogue. "This fair maid of Flanders is not such a contemner of hearts as thou art," continued the Queen, without noticing her emotion, "thou who hast ensnared so many, yet scornest them all." Even the Prince of Castile, renowned throughout Christendom for bravery and virtue, is rejected by the daughter of Henry the Seventh, while the daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, disdains not to espouse the subject of an English king."

"And madam," said the Princess, with unwonted haughtiness, "the daughter of Henry the Seventh, has better right to reject an Emperor, than have most queens, to say nay to a subject," and with the blood still mantling on her cheek, she turned and walked slowly from the spot. The Lady Guildford marked and understood her feelings, and instantly rising, followed her. Tears were gushing from Mary's beautiful eyes, when the kind voice of this friend, this more than mother, addressed her in accents of the tenderest affection; but brushing them quickly away, she said with a composed air, and a smile that none could have resisted,

"I pray thee, good mother Guildford, think nothing of this weakness, I am more of a child today, than when I worried thee with crying, because my Lord Rivers refused to bring me the star that burned so brightly in the west. Yet think not I love this faithless Brandon still. Since the tournament, have I not steadfastly refused all his entreaties for an interview, convinced, as I am, of his perfidy and falsehood. But I dread my brother's ambition,—I am doomed to become its victim, and this odious French king—yet no more of him, we are observed—let us to the Queen; she marvels at my humour, and I would not she should penetrate its cause."

They turned and again rejoined the little group beneath the oak, who, busy in the gossip of court incidents, had already forgotten the momentary asperity shewn by the privileged Mary. But she, ever ingenious, and eager to atone for a fault, immediately addressed the Queen—

"I beseech your grace," she said, "to pardon the hasty reply I just now made you. I have in

truth no excuse to offer, unless your goodness will admit the often urged impetuosity of the Tudor blood, as one of sufficient weight to plead in my behalf."

"By my troth, maiden, thou couldst name none weightier," said the Queen, smiling, "for it is one which there is no resisting. I give thee pardon, sister mine, though hadst thou not stirred up my memory by this mention of it, I had quite forgotten that thou didst speak with more than thy wonted heat. But of what were we parlying at the moment? Oh, now I remember me—it was touching the Prince of Castile, my nephew, whose alliance thou didst reject, albeit he is a goodly prince, and a comely, as all who saw his picture were fain to acknowledge. But it matters not now—there are other potentates in Europe who may be as worthy of thee, and better suit thy fancy perchance. Thou knowest my Lord of York has cast thy horoscope and a crown."

She was interrupted by the sound of approaching voices, the crackling of boughs, and a trampling as of many feet. The Queen easily affrighted, shrank behind the huge trunk of the oak for concealment, and her ladies, in equal alarm, gathered silently around her. All, save the lady Mary, who, fond of adventure, and fearless in seeking it, pressed forward to listen, while the intruders came each moment nearer, and these words, sung in bold manly tones, resounded through the greenwood:

"My merry men all,
From cottage and hall,
Come, haste at the call
Of Robin Hood bold!
With arrow and bow,
On fat buck and doe,
His prowess he'll show,
With feats yet untold!

Huzza! for stout Robin Hood, valiant and free!
No king is so lawless, so fearless as he!"

A dozen voices joined in the noisy chorus, and before it was concluded, the revellers burst through the trees and stood in presence of the terrified and astonished ladies. They seemed indeed a band of merry outlaws, and wore the forest garb of Robin Hood and his followers. They were all masked, and their leader, a tall majestic figure, was distinguished by a plume of heron's feathers, carelessly fastened on one side of his cap, by a small silver arrow, while the same appropriate and diminutive ornament, confined about his throat the folds of a short cloak, or scarf, of Lincoln green. The Queen and her ladies stood prepared for flight, but they remained transfixed with astonishment to the spot, uncertain whether those they beheld, were enacting one of the numerous pageants and maskings of the day, or whether, in truth, a new Robin Hood had