

mother! The king, they say, is as red as a fox or as——”

And she laughed mischievously as she cast a glance at me, and tossed her head at her sister's reproving face.

“Many a man has cursed this red hair before now,” muttered the old lady—and I remembered James, fifth Earl of Burlesdon.

“But never a woman!” cried the girl.

“Ay, and women, when it was too late,” was the stern answer, reducing the girl to silence and blushes.

“How comes the king here?” I asked, to break an embarrassed silence. “It is the duke's land here, you say.”

“The duke invited him, sir, to rest here till Wednesday. The duke is at Strelsau, preparing the king's reception.”

“Then they're friends?”

“None better,” said the old lady.

But my rosy damsel tossed her head again; she was not to be repressed for long, and she broke out again: