

the course of events, that have led to an issue, which the first princes in Christendom may regard with envy."

As she uttered these words they reached the bower of Robin Hood, and mingled with the train that had preceded them. Suffolk had no opportunity to reply to the princess, and to express his astonishment that she had so far believed the idle rumours in circulation, as to suppose him actually betrothed to another. This then satisfactorily accounted for the persevering coldness and *hauteur* of her manner, which the circumstance of a few knightly gallantries, shown towards Margaret of Savoy, seemed scarcely to justify. The discovery which his last words made of the true cause of her severity, threw not only light but comfort on his heart, for he felt that by a few words of explanation, he could dissipate her anger, and, persuaded that she neither understood his motives, nor the actual situation of his affairs, he resolved to seek an early opportunity for resuming the subject, and obtaining from her own lips, cost him what it might, the long wished for sanction to his fondly cherished hopes.

All were now pressing eagerly forward to gain the bower of Robin Hood, from whence issued strains of dulcet harmony, poured forth by a band of minstrels stationed within. It was scarcely discernable in the greenwood, from the trees among which it stood, being formed of verdant boughs, interlaced with wonderful skill and compactness. But its interior was a marvel to all eyes, for there, the tender branches were interwoven with flowers, and adorned with anagrams and hieroglyphics cut from various bright coloured mosses, in so ingenious a manner, as almost to resemble the tapestried walls of the royal banquetting hall. The floor was carpeted with moss, curiously disposed, and inlaid with lichens and other fungous plants, so as to give it the semblance of a mosaic pavement. It was likewise strewn with sweet scented herbs, mingled with the wild flowers of the forest, and embellished with many choice and rare exotics, from the king's own garden. In the centre of this tasteful and beautiful bower stood a table laden with every dainty which the period could furnish—foreign wines sparkled in the goblets, and the rich odour of spices, almost overpowered the more delicate perfume of fruit and flowers. At the head of the band stood Robin Hood, awaiting with impatience the assembling of his guests; and on his right hand was the Queen, her colour heightened by exercise, and the unusual animation of her countenance, lending new charms to its serene and quiet beauty. No sooner had all gathered around the table, than the leader of the revels gave the signal to unmask, by plucking the vizor from his face, and disclosing, as was anticipated, the gay and handsome features of the king. All present immediately followed his example, and

the ladies looked around with eager curiosity, to see who formed this gallant band of outlaws. There was the Earl of Worcester, Sir Edward Neville, and all the favourite courtiers of the king, and greetings and jests were interchanged with a gaiety and wit, that gave a zest of no common kind, to this novel entertainment.

Such as this, were the sports and pastimes of Henry's court, in which none more greatly delighted than the monarch himself. At this early period of his reign, he was not the jealous and imperious tyrant that he afterwards became, when he successively sacrificed one queen after another to the violence of unrestrained and vicious passion. At the time of which we write, he was young, handsome, and the most gallant man of the age. Graceful in the dance, chivalrous in the tournament, a lover of popularity, a patron of letters, and magnificent to a degree, which, although it impoverished his coffers, yielded him the satisfaction of seeing himself unrivalled in splendour by any prince in Christendom.

The banquet passed merrily away, with all save Suffolk, and the princess. He, though not sad, was too full of emotion, too anxious for the future, too impatient to obtain that hearing which was to decide his fate, to share the buoyant gaiety of those around him. Yet he forced himself to wear a lip of smiles, and with his wonted graceful gallantry, ministered to the enjoyment of all within his influence. Mary thought his brow radiant with happiness, and sighed that she should so love one, who could unfeelingly desert her, and yield himself a victim to ambition. Before the party rose from table, the king filled a goblet, and quaffed it to the memory of bold Robin Hood and his band, then turning with an arch smile to the Lady Guildford:

"And what think'st thou now, fair dame," he said, "of the daring outlaw who bore himself so arrogantly in presence of thy royal mistress?"

"That it is well, your grace is not minded to turn outlaw in good earnest," she answered; "else would the queen and her ladies quit bower and hall to follow in the train of the gallant forester, and share his merry life in the green wood."

"Cunningly answered, my lady," said the king; "and with a rare seasoning of woman's ready wit, and may thy queen, in seasons of real danger, find as zealous and faithful a defender, as thou hast to-day proved thyself in boldly confronting those, who, for aught thou knew'st, were, as they seemed, a band of rude and lawless wassailers. We give thee hearty thanks, and free pardon, albeit thou wast not sparing of hard names towards our own royal person. And now fair dames, and ladies all, the day wears apace, and it is the queen's good pleasure that ye mount your palfreys, and away with us towards London. My lord Ratcliffe, we accept the offered hospitality of thy castle tonight, but early on the morn we must resume our progress to our fair