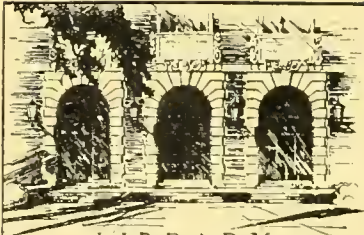




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THE GOLDSMITH'S WIFE.

A Tale.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH,

AUTHOR OF

“PRESTON FIGHT,” “BOSCOBEL,” “MANCHESTER REBELS,” “TOWER
OF LONDON,” “OLD SAINT PAUL’S,” &c. &c. &c.

I met her as returning
In solemn penance from the public cross.
Submissive, sad, and lowly was her look ;
A burning taper in her hand she bore,
Her streaming eyes bent ever on the earth,
Except when in some bitter pang of sorrow,
To heaven she seemed in fervent zeal to raise them,
And beg that mercy man denied her here.

ROWE. *Jane Shore.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE GOLDSMITH'S WIFE.

Book the First.

ALBAN SHORE.

I.

HOW JANE MILVERTON, THE MERCER'S DAUGHTER OF
CHEAPSIDE, WAS ACCOUNTED THE FAIREST DAMSEL IN
LONDON.

WHEN Edward the Fourth was King, there were many fair damsels in the City of London, but none to compare with Jane, only daughter of John Milverton, erstwhile a mercer in Cheapside.

Jane Milverton was in her seventeenth spring when her remarkable beauty first began to attract the attention of the young bachelors of the City; and whenever she walked forth with her mother, she was beset by a host of admirers, who vied with

each other in endeavours to win a smile from her.

Their efforts were vain. Brought up by a very careful mother, and being naturally modest and discreet, Jane took little notice of them. However, the report of her beauty spread far and wide, and caused so much talk, that people came from all parts of the City to look at her.

Opinions differed, and faults were found—of course, chiefly by her own sex, who were unwilling to admit that she was as lovely as represented; but none could deny that her figure was exquisite, and that her features had a most charming expression.

To be more precise, we may say that her figure was slight and graceful; her tresses of a pale yellow; her features delicately and beautifully moulded; her complexion excessively fair, and her eyes of the softest

blue. We ought to add that there was a singular witchery in the glances of those tender blue eyes, experienced by all who came within their influence; while the pearls disclosed when her coral lips were parted, rendered her smile resistless.

Such was Jane Milverton at seventeen.

As we have just intimated, she had been most carefully brought up by her widowed mother, who, since her husband's death, had led a very secluded life. Indeed, if the young damsel had been educated in a convent, she could scarcely have known less of the world. Strange as it may seem, it is, nevertheless, true, that, until lately, she had been quite unconscious of her own marvellous beauty.

Jane's attire was simple, but it suited her well. Generally, a coverchief, or hood, completely concealed her profuse yellow tresses, but, at times, a pretty little coif

allowed them to escape, and flow down her back. A tight-fitting kirtle displayed her slim figure to the greatest advantage, and a girdle, with a chain attached to it, rested on her hips. The long-pointed shoes that disguised her tiny feet were almost hidden by a dark blue gown, and their sharp extremities could only just be seen peeping forth. Beyond the girdle and magnificent gold chain, she wore no sort of ornament—not even a collar round her swan-like throat.

Among Jane's innumerable admirers was a rich goldsmith, of Lombard-street, named Alban Shore. Deeply smitten by her charms, he resolved to make her his wife. He knew he had many rivals, but as the coy damsel had not shown a preference for any one, he persuaded himself he should succeed. He could give his bride a hand-

some dowry, and that was a great recommendation. Moreover, he bore a most honourable character, as his father, Gethelmar Shore, had done before him. Many a wealthy citizen would have been glad to give his daughter to Master Shore, the prosperous goldsmith and banker, but Alban had shown no disposition to marry till he beheld the fair Jane Milverton.

Alban was under thirty, but the long gown of dark red cloth, buttoned from neck to waist, which he wore above his quilted tunic, and his close, dark cap, with a narrow edge of velvet, combined with his grave looks and demeanour, made him appear at least ten years older. The expression of his countenance was agreeable, and indicated great goodness of heart. He was of middle height, well-proportioned, and strongly built ; but his person was

completely hidden by his ample gown. From his girdle hung a red leather pouch. Sword, dagger, or weapon of any kind, would have been unsuitable to his peaceful vocation.

Alban Shore made no change in his sober attire when he presented himself one day to Dame Milverton, with the design of proposing for the hand of her fair daughter.

The widow was alone at the time—Jane being in an inner room. As she was still good-looking, she thought the visit might be intended for herself.

Requesting him to be seated, she very considerately sought to relieve him from the embarrassment under which she perceived he laboured.

“I know you very well by sight, good Master Shore,” she said; “and, indeed, it is strange, seeing we are such near neigh-

bours, that we are not better acquainted. But I trust to see more of you in future. You will always be welcome."

Alban bowed, and the widow went on :

" My ever-lamented husband, John Milverton, was one of your worthy father's customers. Several ornaments, which I still wear on occasions, were purchased at Gethelmar Shore's shop in Lombard-street. Among other matters, there was this ring. I pray you look at it, good Master Shore ;" holding up a very pretty finger, on which the ring was placed. " You will observe that a posy is written outside it :

'This and the giver,
Are thine for ever.'

Touching and tender, is it not? Alack and well-a-day! the giver is gone, and I am left alone! John Milverton has been dead these ten years, Master Shore, and lies in the churchyard of St. Martin's Pomary. I

have placed a monument to his memory in the north aisle of the church. Mayhap you have seen it?"

"Often, madam," he replied; "and a very handsome monument it is."

"It cost me three hundred crowns, Master Shore — every penny. But the money was well bestowed. Do you recollect my husband, worthy sir?"

"Perfectly, madam. John Milverton was one of the most noted mercers in East Cheap. But he must have been considerably older than yourself."

"Thirty years, Master Shore — thirty years. Some foolish folks used to jest at the disparity of our ages. I always declared it was a match of Our Lady's making, since it turned out so happily."

"So I have always heard, madam. You must have made the worthy mercer an excellent wife."

“I ought not to praise myself,” said the widow, rather flustered; “but I think I did. And if I could have been tempted to take a second husband, I should have been equally anxious to please him. I have had several good offers, Master Shore—very good offers—but I would accept none of them, having a daughter to attend to.”

“Very true, madam; and the greatest credit is due to you for the manner in which you have brought up your daughter.”

“I am very glad to hear you say so, Master Shore. I think I have done my duty by her. Her poor, dear father would be amazed if he could behold her now. I myself never expected she would grow up so fair a creature.”

“Of a truth, she has burst as suddenly into bloom as a flower,” observed the gold-

smith. "But she always promised to be beautiful. With so fair a mother, how could it be otherwise?"

"You flatter me, sir," simpered the widow. "But it is quite true that at Jane's age I was exactly like what she is now."

"I can well believe it, madam," remarked Shore.

"No doubt she is light-complexioned, and I have always been rather dark," said Dame Milverton; "but the features are similar."

"Precisely similar," observed the goldsmith, with a smile, "except that your nose is inclined to be aquiline, and your daughter's is perfectly straight. And now, madam, I am a man of business, as you are aware, and must come to the point. I dare say you can guess my errand?"

“ I have some idea of it, sir,” she replied, casting down her eyes.

“ I have serious thoughts of taking a wife, madam. Your daughter’s charms have produced a great impression upon me.”

“ My daughter’s charms!” exclaimed the widow, looking up. “ I thought——”

“ I love her devotedly, madam!” pursued the goldsmith; “ and if I am fortunate enough to win her, I will do my best to prove how highly I estimate the prize.”

“ I do not doubt it, sir!” replied the widow, in some confusion. “ But you have taken me so much by surprise, that I scarcely know what to say.”

“ You do not discourage my suit, I trust, madam. Mine are no empty promises. I have always been a man of my word.

Jane shall have everything she can desire with me, and I will give her a handsome dowry—ten thousand crowns.”

“ You speak so fairly and kindly, Master Shore,” said the widow, who had now recovered herself, “ that you deserve a direct answer. To me your offer is very agreeable. What it may be to my daughter I cannot say, but we will soon ascertain.”

“ It is everything in my favour that I have your support, madam,” said Shore, joyfully.

“ Not everything,” she replied. “ I will do my best to further your suit, but I cannot force Jane’s inclinations.”

“ Heaven forbid you should, madam!” he exclaimed. “ Unless she can give me her heart, I will not accept her hand.”

“ Ah! here she comes to answer for herself,” cried Dame Milverton, as a light, joyous laugh was heard outside.

Shore's heart sank within him. Another minute would decide his fate.

An inner door opened, and Jane rushed into the room, with a letter in her hand, laughing very heartily.

II.

HOW TWELVE YOUNG BACHELORS FELL IN LOVE WITH JANE,
AND ENTREATED HER TO MAKE CHOICE OF ONE OF
THEM.

How beautiful she looked! her fair cheek flushed, her blue eyes shining with unwonted lustre, and all the pearls in her lovely mouth displayed. What a bright, joyous countenance! Alban felt more in love with her than ever!

Jane's attention being fixed on the letter she had brought to show her mother, she was quite unconscious of the goldsmith's presence.

“Another proposal!” she exclaimed, as

soon as she was able to speak ; “ and from that presumptuous young popinjay, Randal Rubicel, the haberdasher’s son, who stopped us yesterday, and would speak with me. He calls me ‘ his sweetest Jane,’ ‘ the idol of his heart,’ ‘ his life,’ ‘ his joy,’ ‘ his darling,’ and twenty other pretty names, and vows he will kill himself unless I accept him. Well, let him ! There will be one coxcomb the less in Cheapside—ha ! ha ! ”

And she indulged in another fit of merriment.

“ Jane,” said her mother, checking her, “ are you aware that Master Shore is here ? ”

“ No, indeed,” rejoined her daughter, in dismay ; “ I thought you were alone. I beg Master Shore’s pardon for my heedlessness. He must have thought me very stupid.”

“ On the contrary,” remarked the goldsmith, advancing and bowing, while she

returned the salutation. "I have been very much amused. I suppose you often receive such letters?"

"Generally two or three a day—sometimes more," she rejoined, laughing. "But I answer none of them. I had one yesterday from young Simon Muttlebury, the grocer's son, of the Poultry, as full of sweets and dainties as his father's shop. I would read it to you if I had not burnt it."

"Did he think you would condescend to become a grocer's wife?" observed Shore.

"I have had my choice," she continued, "of fishmongers, merchant-tailors, grocers, drapers, skimmers, ironmongers, vintners, cloth-workers, and mercers. Being a mercer's daughter, I ought to have selected the last—but young Humphrey Buckram did not please me."

“ You have not enumerated a goldsmith in your list,” observed Shore.

“ For a very good reason ; no goldsmith has proposed !” she rejoined.

“ The reason exists no longer,” said Shore. “ I have come here for the express purpose of offering you my hand.”

“ You are jesting with me, Master Shore!” she remarked.

“ Nay, it is true,” said her mother. “ The worthy gentleman has just spoken to me on the subject.”

“ I trust I may have better fortune than those who have written to you, sweet Jane,” said Shore, drawing near her. “ Will you accept me as a husband ?”

“ Nay ; you must not press me for an answer at once,” she rejoined. “ I must have time for consideration. I may, or I may not.”

“ At least you do not dismiss me ?”

“ I do not ask you to come again ; but I shall always be pleased to see you if you do come.”

“ Then I will gladly avail myself of the permission.”

“ 'Tis more than she has accorded to any one else,” remarked Dame Milverton.

“ Then I ought to be content,” said Shore. “ Having received thus much encouragement, I will venture to offer you this carcanet.”

Opening the little case presented to her, Jane beheld a splendid chain of diamonds.

“ O heavens! how exquisite!” she exclaimed. “ May I accept this beautiful diamond chain, mother ?”

“ Assuredly, child,” replied Dame Milverton. “ You will never lack jewels if you become Master Shore’s bride. Besides, I must tell you,” she added, in a half whisper,

“he has promised to settle a handsome dowry upon you.”

The remark was not without effect upon Jane, and Shore's hopes began to revive. Evidently the diamonds had pleaded strongly in his behalf.

Jane was still fascinated by the brilliant chain, when a serving-man entered, his countenance proclaiming that he was charged with some important message.

“How now, Griffith! what is the matter?” inquired the widow.

“An' please you, mistress,” replied the serving-man, with difficulty preserving his gravity, “there are a dozen young bachelors without, who solicit an interview with Mistress Jane.”

“A dozen young bachelors!” exclaimed the gay damsel. “Who and what are they?”

“Suitors, no doubt,” observed Shore, laughing.

“Ay, that’s it, your worship,” said Griffith, who was a privileged person. “Mistress Jane has turned the heads of all the young men in the neighbourhood!”

“Suitors would never come in such numbers!” cried the widow. “Said’st thou not there were a dozen, Griffith?”

“And I said truth, for I counted them, madam,” he replied.

“We will soon ascertain their business,” said the widow. “Pray them to step in; my daughter will receive them in my presence.”

As Griffith went out, Dame Milverton said to the goldsmith, who was preparing to leave:

“Pray do not go, good Master Shore. You may be of assistance to us.”

Next moment, the door was thrown wide

open by Griffith, and admittance given to a large party of young men, arrayed in jerkins and hose of red, blue, brown, and yellow, most of them armed with daggers, and some wearing shoes with long, pointed toes.

As the young bachelors entered, they all doffed their caps, and made a profound salutation to the company, which they repeated after advancing a little further into the room.

Though all were well-favoured, fine-looking young men, their appearance was so grotesque that Jane could scarcely keep her countenance, and Griffith grinned from ear to ear.

The leader of the party, who was no other than Randal Rubicel, the haberdasher's son, described by Jane as a popinjay, then proceeded to explain the object of their visit.

“ You are fortunate, madam,” he said, addressing the widow, but keeping his eye upon Jane as he spoke, “ in possessing a daughter universally allowed to be the fairest damsel in London. You see before you twelve young bachelors, each passionately in love with her, and anxious to obtain her hand. Instead of quarrelling, and settling the difference with the sword, we have agreed to present ourselves in a body to the fair Jane, and entreat her to make choice of one of us for a husband. However great may be the disappointment of those passed over, we have sworn to abide by her decision. The course we have adopted may appear strange, but then it rarely happens that a dozen bachelors fall in love with the same damsel. I need scarcely present my companions to you, since, methinks, you are acquainted with them all.”

“ Yes ; this is Master Simon Muttlebury, the grocer,” said the widow ; “ this is Master Puncheon, the vintner ; this, Master Serge, the cloth-worker ; this, Master Hide, the skinner ; this, Master Buckram, the mercer. But, indeed, you are all well known to me, and there is not one to whom I could object if my daughter’s choice should fall upon him.”

Rubicel then advanced towards Jane, and, bowing lowly, said :

“ You have heard what has just passed, fair mistress. Will it please you to cast your eyes towards us, and make a selection ?”

“ I should feel puzzled,” she replied. “ You are all so much alike, that, were I to choose, it would be at haphazard. I pray you pass before me singly.”

“ Willingly !” said Rubicel.

And, returning to his companions, he communicated her wishes to them.

Thereupon all the young bachelors marched slowly past Jane, each gazing amorously at her as he went by, and two or three slightly lingering in the vain hope of being selected, but she did not stop one of them.

The last to make the essay was Rubicel himself; but though he paused, and cast a supplicating look at her, he failed, like those who had preceded him.

The march ended, they all drew up in front, and the question was put to Jane whether she had made a choice.

She shook her head.

A general groan then burst from the assemblage.

“Gentlemen,” said Shore, “having had your answer, I must pray you to depart peaceably.”

“ We shall not depart at your bidding, Alban Shore!” rejoined Rubicel, angrily. “ You think to carry off the prize because you are richer than any of us; but you are mistaken! Not till you have vanquished us all shall you wed the beautiful Jane Milverton! You have a dozen duels to fight!—a dozen duels! Speak I not for you, as well as for myself, comrades?” he added, to the others.

“ You express our sentiments exactly, Rubicel,” responded Simon Muttlebury. “ This intrusive goldsmith shall fight every one of us, ere we will yield Jane Milverton to him!”

“ Ay; every one of us!” echoed the rest of the party.

“ You give yourselves strange license, young sirs!” cried the widow, sharply. “ You talk of my daughter as if you had the right to dispose of her; but I shall

give her to whom I please, without consulting you! You were allowed admittance on the understanding that you would conduct yourselves decorously, and it is a most unmannerly proceeding on your part to insult a gentleman whom you find in my house!"

"Heed them not, madam," said Shore. "I laugh at their threats!"

"We feel the reproof, madam," said Rubicel, "and will at once retire; but Master Shore shall hear from us."

"Whenever you please," replied the goldsmith, carelessly.

"Adieu, sweet mistress!" cried Rubicel, kissing the tips of his fingers to Jane. "If you marry, you must marry one of us; we will brook no rivals!"

"I would rather enter a convent than marry any of you!" cried Jane, contemptuously.

“You will change your mind ere long,” fair mistress,” cried Humphrey Buckram. “Recollect there are twelve proper young men from whom you can always choose.”

“Show them to the door, Griffith!—show them to the door!” cried Dame Milverton, impatiently. “We have had enough of this fooling!”

The disappointed bachelors then withdrew, but not one of them left the room without kissing his hand to Jane.

As soon as they were gone, Jane gave vent to the laughter she had hitherto repressed.

“I am glad we are fairly rid of those foolish fops!” she cried. “I hope you will not be troubled on my account, Master Shore.”

“Give yourself no concern about me, fair mistress,” he rejoined. “If I am happy enough to have obtained your con-

sent to my proposal, I shall not heed their opposition."

"But I have not yet accepted you, Master Shore," she rejoined, with a laugh; "and I must be quite certain that I like you ere I do."

"You will never be serious, Jane," said her mother.

"I hope she will always be gay as now," remarked Shore. "If I had my way, her path should be ever strewn with flowers!"

"Then my life would be a perpetual wedding-day," cried Jane, still laughing.

"And a very happy life it would be, were such the case!" said her mother.

Just then Griffith re-entered the room, and said to the goldsmith:

"Your woship must be pleased to tarry here awhile. Those perverse young bachelors are paeing to and fro before the door, evidently awaiting your coming forth."

“Let them cool their heels; ’twill do them good!” cried the widow. “If you have no pressing business to take you hence, good Master Shore, I pray you stay and spend the day with us. We will do our best to entertain you.”

The goldsmith accepted the invitation with delight. His rivals had unintentionally done him great service.

III.

FROM WHICH IT APPEARS THAT AN OLD WOMAN HAD FORE-
TOLD THAT JANE WOULD HAVE A ROYAL LOVER.

OWING to this fortunate circumstance, the enamoured goldsmith saw more of the fair object of his affections than he had ever done before.

Never was such a gay, light-hearted creature as Jane Milverton ! The most trifling matter excited her merriment, and, as her mother had just stated, it seemed quite impossible she could continue serious for more than a minute.

Alban, however, was enchanted, and

would not have had her different for the world. Had he not been already captivated, he could not have resisted her fascinations.

At her mother's request, Jane brought her lute, and sang several merry lays and romances—sang them charmingly.

Alban now felt the full force of her soft blue eyes as they were fixed upon him, while her accents vibrated to his heart. In some of the roundelays he was able to take part, and acquitted himself so well that he obtained her applause, and that was all he desired.

But the blending of their voices had so enthralled him, that, unable to restrain his feelings, he renewed his suit, and vowing to be hers, and hers alone, besought her earnestly to plight her troth to him in her mother's presence.

“I will not engage myself to any one at

present," she said. "In three months you shall have my answer—not before."

"Three months! Must I wait so long?" cried Alban.

"Indeed you must. I must know you better ere I accept you."

"'Tis a sufficient reason, and I submit."

"That is not the reason," remarked Dame Milverton. "She is waiting for a suitor who will never come. Master Shore shall hear the truth. He will think you very silly, but no matter. You must know, then, worthy sir," she continued, addressing the goldsmith, "that when Jane was almost a child, she had her fortune told by an old woman, who passed for a witch."

"Not a word more, I insist!" interrupted her daughter.

"Nay; I will go on! The old woman declared that the child whose little hand

she held in her own was destined to great good fortune, and would have a royal lover."

"A royal lover!" exclaimed Shore. "And do you really believe in the prediction?" he added, to Jane.

"She does!" interposed her mother; "and that is the reason why she declines to accept you."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Jane, blushing.

"I am glad you have no better reason for refusing me than this prophecy," said Alban.

"You laugh at me," rejoined Jane, rather piqued, "but it might come to pass. There is no telling."

"Everything is possible," observed Shore. "Unluckily, the king is married. He must get rid of his queen before he can wed you. I am afraid you will have to put up with one who, though he cannot boast of royal descent, will love you better than any mo-

narch could love you. Indeed, unless he is belied, King Edward is not altogether faithful to the queen."

"But she is very beautiful, is she not?" inquired Jane.

"Not so beautiful as she was, but still very beautiful," rejoined Alban. "As Elizabeth Woodville, daughter of Jacquette of Luxemburg, Duchess of Bedford, and Sir Richard Woodville, subsequently created Earl Rivers by the king, she was accounted the loveliest damsel in the realm. As you are aware, the queen was the widow of Sir John Gray, of Groby, when the king secretly married her. Some people say she bewitched him, but the only sorcery she practised proceeded from her personal charms. Her first meeting with her royal husband was singular, and, no doubt, it was contrived. One day the king was hunting in Whittlebury Forest, near

Grafton Castle, the residence of the Duchess of Bedford, and while riding along a glade, he saw, standing beneath the wide-spreading branches of an oak, a most lovely woman, holding two children by the hand. Struck by her surpassing beauty, he paused to speak with her. Elizabeth Woodville—for she it was—threw herself at his feet, and pleaded for her children, who had been deprived of their inheritance owing to their father's devotion to the House of Lancaster. She did not plead in vain. The king at once granted her suit, and so captivated was he by the charms of the lovely widow, that within a month he made her his bride. Their espousals took place secretly at Grafton Castle, in the presence of the Duchess of Bedford, by whom it was thought the affair had been planned. 'Tis seldom a plot succeeds so well, but the duchess is wondrously clever, and knew that

the king could not resist a pair of beautiful eyes!"

"His majesty is very handsome, is he not?" asked Jane.

"I marvel you have not seen him," replied Shore, evasively. "He is frequently in the City, for it is his business to conciliate the rich burgesses. On more than one occasion he has purchased articles of jewellery from me. Unluckily, he does not always pay for what he buys. However, I must own he is very affable. Some of his attendants—the Lord Howard and Sir John Cheney, for instance, who pay no better than he does—are excessively haughty and supercilious."

"Oh! how I should like to see him!" cried Jane. "I wish you could conceal me in your shop, Master Shore, when he next pays you a visit."

"No, no," said the goldsmith, laughing.

“Were you mine—as I trust you will be—I would keep you carefully out of the way of such a daring and unscrupulous libertine as the king.”

“But he shouldn’t see me,” said Jane.

“You might betray yourself unintentionally,” rejoined Alban.

“You are quite right, good Master Shore,” said the widow. “One cannot be too cautious where a person who puts no bridle on his passions, like the king, is concerned. That is the reason why I will never allow Jane to stand at the window when his majesty and his courtiers pass along Cheapside.”

“If he caught sight of her, he would infallibly be struck by her beauty,” said Shore.

“Suppose he did! what then?” cried Jane. “You seem to fancy I have no power of resistance, and should drop into

his majesty's mouth like a ripe plum. You are both very much mistaken. I have a great curiosity to see the king, and am resolved to gratify it. You look very cross," she added, to her mother. "Where is the harm, I should like to know?"

"There is a great deal of harm," rejoined the widow, angrily. "And I will lock you up in your chamber, whenever the king rides by, unless you promise to attend to my injunctions."

During the foregoing discussion, Alban maintained a cheerful exterior, but he was not quite so easy as he had been in his mind. A feeling of jealousy caused by Jane's ardent desire to see the king, had taken possession of him. But he deemed it ridiculous, and endeavoured — though ineffectually—to shake it off.

The rest of the evening passed very pleasantly. The lute was again introduced, and

an occasional song filled up the intervals of conversation.

At length the great bell of Paul's tolled forth the hour of nine, warning the discreet goldsmith that it was time to depart; and though he could scarcely tear himself away, he felt he must needs go.

While he was taking leave, Dame Milverton expressed some anxiety lest he should be troubled by the insolent youths who had threatened him; but he soon quieted her alarm, and volunteered to come next evening.

In parting with Jane, he strove to snatch a kiss, but was unsuccessful.

Griffith, on whom he bestowed a piece of silver, as an earnest of his goodwill, would fain have attended him with a lantern, but he declined the offer.

IV.

HOW ALBAN SHORE ON THE WAY HOME ENCOUNTERED TWO
COURT KNIGHTS, AND HOW JANE WAS SERENADED.

THE night proved so dark, that Alban regretted he had not brought Griffith and the lantern with him; for though he had laughed at Dame Milverton's fears, he was not altogether without apprehension of an attack by some of his rivals, who might be lying in ambuscade. Moreover, it also occurred to him that he was without a defensive weapon of any kind.

However, he marched on resolutely, and had proceeded about a hundred yards in

the direction of Lombard-street, without encountering any one, when he perceived two persons standing at the corner of Wood-street.

Both were muffled up in long mantles, and their appearance being rather suspicious, he would have avoided them, but it was too late, for one of them—a person of much loftier stature than any of the young bachelors—stepped towards him, and in accents that had something of authority in their tone, said :

“ Save you, friend ! Canst tell us which is Dame Milverton’s dwelling ? ”

Startled by the inquiry, Shore did not immediately answer, and the tall stranger repeated the inquiry, yet more authoritatively.

“ What would you with her ? ” said the goldsmith. “ Dame Milverton receives not visitors at this hour. ”

“Soh! you are acquainted with her,” cried the other. “By Saint George, that is lucky! You shall show us the house, and introduce us to the widow.”

“For whom do you take me, that you venture to make such a proposition?” demanded Shore, controlling his anger.

“I take thee for an honest and estimable burgess,” replied the other. “Nay, if I am not wrong—for I cannot distinguish thy features very clearly—thou art Shore, the goldsmith, of Lombard-street.”

“You have guessed rightly,” said Alban; “I am Shore, the goldsmith. Your voice seems familiar to me; but I cannot give you a name. You belong not to the City—of that I am certain.”

“No, by the mass, I belong to the Court! My companion and myself are knights, attendant upon the king. He is Sir William Chamberlain, and I am Sir Edward de

Longespée. Now you know who we are, will you conduct us to Dame Milverton's habitation? We have heard much of the extraordinary beauty of her daughter Jane, and desire to behold the fair young damsel."

A jealous pang shot through Shore's breast as he listened to the explanation. He had previously suspected their design; but this plain avowal quite staggered him.

"I will not be accessory to any such plan, Sir Edward," he replied. "If you desire to behold Dame Milverton's daughter, you must call at a proper hour."

"My belief is you are in love with her yourself, Master Shore," cried Sir William, advancing, "and are therefore unwilling we should see her."

"Be not alarmed, Shore," said Longespée; "we have no intention of carrying

her off. Very likely her charms have been overrated."

"There is not a damsel at Court who is half so beautiful," cried Alban.

"Said I not thou art in love with her?" exclaimed Sir William, laughing. "Thou hast betrayed thyself, Shore."

"We will not be baffled in our quest," said Longespée. "Since this churlish goldsmith refuses to direct us, we will find out the house without him. Good-night, Shore! Thou wilt regret thy incivility."

And they moved on.

Greatly disturbed, the goldsmith was considering what he should do, when the door of the "Mitre," a famous tavern close at hand, was suddenly opened, and forth issued the whole of the young bachelors, who had been carousing together. From the noise they made, and their unsteady gait, it was evident their potations had been deep.

The light streaming from the entrance of the tavern revealed Shore to them, and setting up a loud shout, they hurried towards him.

“By Saint Martin! this is a rare piece of luck!” cried Rubicel. “Who would have thought of finding our goldsmith here? Since Fate has delivered thee into our hands, thou shalt not escape till thou hast sworn to resign all pretensions to the fair Jane.”

“Thou hearest, Shore?” cried Simon Muttlebury. “The oath shall be dictated to thee.”

“I will take no oath on compulsion,” said Alban. “Detain me at your peril!”

“At our peril!” cried Muttlebury, with a scornful laugh, and drawing his sword as he spoke. “That is good! Thou hadst best comply without more ado.”

“Swear to resign the damsel, and thou art free,” said Rubicel.

“Never!” cried Shore. “You seek in vain to intimidate me,” he added, as swords were flourished in his face. “Help! help!”

“Cease this clamour,” exclaimed Muttlebury, “or we will silence thee effectually!”

But the goldsmith called out more loudly.

His cries reached the ears of the courtiers, and they hurried back to the spot.

Recognising Shore’s voice, and finding him beset by numbers, they whipped out their blades, and ordered his captors to set him free.

Instead of obeying, the valorous young citizens turned upon them; but after a few blows had been exchanged with their powerful adversaries, their swords were knocked

from their grasp, and they were compelled to let the captive go.

While the discomfited bachelors picked up their weapons, the goldsmith tendered his best thanks to his deliverers.

“What offence hast thou given these varlets, Master Shore, that they should thus maltreat thee?” demanded Longespée.

“That they themselves can best explain, Sir Edward,” replied Alban.

“We bear him no ill will,” said Rubicel. “He is our rival for the hand of the fairest damsel in the City. By reason of his wealth, his chance is greater than ours, so we have been trying to persuade him to retire.”

“Go to, rascal!” cried Longespée, laughing. “Thy mode of persuasion savours of force. But thou speakest of the fairest damsel in the City. That should be Jane Milverton.”

“Your worship hath made a good guess,” replied Rubicel. “’Tis she, in sooth.”

“Then ye are all her suitors?”

“All!” cried the bachelors, with one voice.

Longespée and his companion laughed heartily.

“We are not Jane’s only admirers,” said Muttlebury. “For that matter, half the young men in London are in love with her. Doubtless her charms have been heard of at Court, and may even have reached the king’s ears.”

“Thou art right, good fellow — they have,” said Longespée. “I should like to judge of this paragon of perfection. I may not think so highly of her as thou dost. What suits thy taste may not suit mine.”

“There cannot be two opinions as to Jane Milverton’s beauty,” said Rubicel. “She dwells hereabouts. A serenade might

bring her to the window, and you could then obtain a glimpse of her. Unluckily, we are not provided with lute or cittern."

"But you have voices worth listening to, I'll be sworn," said Longespée, pleased with the notion.

"Now I bethink me, there is a minstrel in the 'Mitre,'" continued Rubicel. "We might take him with us."

"Excellent!" cried Longespée. "Pri-thee, fetch him!"

And as Rubicel departed on the errand, he added to the goldsmith, "I shall have my wish, and without trouble."

Shore was too much vexed to make a reply.

A couple of silver groats induced the minstrel to accompany the party. The young bachelors led the way to the widow's domicile, which was at no great distance, and the two courtiers followed.

Shore went with them, resolved to see the end of the adventure.

Like all the adjoining habitations, Dame Milverton's house was built of lath and plaster, and had bay windows, and pointed gables of carved oak.

A light was visible in the lower room, but the window - curtains were drawn. Everybody felt certain, however, that those inside the apartment were Jane and her mother.

As soon as the young bachelors had arranged themselves, the minstrel struck up a tender love-song—all the youths joining in chorus at the end of each couplet.

At first, very little notice was taken of the serenaders, but by-and-by there were indications that the song was listened to; and before it concluded, the curtains were drawn back, and Jane and her mother could be seen.

As the damsel held a taper in her hand, her fair features were clearly distinguishable.

Never was a creature more charming seen than was presented to the lookers-on. The two courtiers were enraptured.

“ ’Tis she!—’tis Jane Milverton herself!” said Rubicel. “What think you of her? Is her beauty overrated?”

“Not a whit,” rejoined Longespée. “By my halidome! she is the loveliest creature I ever beheld. I should never tire of gazing at her.”

“You are crazed, like all the rest,” said his companion, laughing at his enthusiasm.

“I must not lose this opportunity,” said Longespée. “I will speak to her.”

“Nay, I beseech you, do not!” cried the other.

Unaccustomed, however, to put any restraint upon himself, and regardless of con-

sequences, the tall knight derided the counsel, and marching up to the window, tapped against it.

Startled by the noise, Jane looked in the direction whence it proceeded, but could only discern a lofty figure.

Longespée tapped again.

“A word with you, fair damsel, I entreat,” he cried.

“Who is it?” asked Jane. “I hold no converse with a stranger.”

“Open the window, and you shall learn who I am,” said the knight.

“Whoever you are, I owe you no thanks for bringing those troublesome youths here,” she rejoined. “Begone, and take them with you. They have disturbed me sufficiently.”

“Deny me not!” implored the knight. “I have something important to say to you.”

“How tiresome he is!” exclaimed Jane.
“Well, I must get rid of him.”

And she was stepping towards the window, when some one amid the throng collected outside, called out in a loud voice, “Beware!”

In an instant the taper was extinguished, and Jane vanished.

Immediately afterwards, the curtains were again drawn, and nothing more could be seen of the inmates of the house.

Feeling that his chance was over, the knight drew back.

“Who called out?” he angrily demanded.

No one could tell him. But he suspected it must have been Shore, for the goldsmith could not be discovered.

“Are you now ready to depart?” inquired his companion, approaching him.

Longespée answered in the affirmative.

The other then placed a whistle to his lips, and blew a call.

The young bachelors were filled with wonderment, but their surprise increased when two grooms appeared, each leading a horse.

The knights instantly mounted, and, bidding "Good night" to the youths, rode off in the direction of Ludgate.

"Those must be great personages," remarked Rubicel to his companion. "Marked you not that their grooms wore the royal livery?"

V.

IN WHAT MANNER JANE'S CONSENT WAS WON BY ALBAN.

NEARLY three months had passed by, and during this period of probation Alban was constant in his attendance upon Jane.

On each evening he came to her mother's house, and was always well received, but he could not flatter himself that he made much progress in the young damsel's affections.

She did not dislike his society, but appeared indifferent to him; and he felt her coldness deeply. Sometimes he fancied she loved another, but he was utterly unable to discover his rival. It could not be one of

the twelve young bachelors; for though they still persecuted Jane with their addresses, she would listen to none of them. It could scarcely be Sir Edward de Longespée, for nothing more had been seen of him since the night when he accompanied the serenaders, and tapped against the window.

Alban was perplexed. He mentioned his suspicions to Dame Milverton, but she told him he was mistaken. She was certain he had no secret rival.

Notwithstanding these assurances, he was far from easy, and suffered so much from Jane's coldness, that he resolved to bring the matter to an issue one way or the other.

Generally, Dame Milverton was with them when they met; but on the evening in question she had been induced, by a sign from Alban, to leave them alone together.

No sooner had she quitted the room, than taking Jane's small white hand in his own, he pressed it to his lips. Nor did he part with it as he addressed her.

“I beseech you to abridge the term you have imposed upon me, sweetest Jane,” he said. “I find I am not equal to so severe a trial. Besides, why should we wait so long? You know me now as well as you will ever know me, for I have no concealment from you. How fondly I love you I need not say; but I desire to prove my love by the devotion of a husband. Your mother has given her consent to the marriage—why withhold yours? My house is ready for you; my servants are anxious to call you mistress; all that money can procure shall be yours!”

“I know you can give me wealth, Alban,” she rejoined. “But you cannot give me rank.”

He looked at her for a moment in surprise, and then said in a half-reproachful tone :

“That silly prophecy still dwells on your mind, I perceive, Jane. I would I were a prince, for your sake!”

“Would you were!” she exclaimed.

Then seeing how much she had pained him, she added, “I am very foolish—very ungrateful. ’Tis a poor return for your love and kindness to wish you were some one else. Nevertheless, I must own I should like you better if you were a prince.”

“If these are your real sentiments, Jane,” he remarked coldly, and letting go her hand, “it will be better that all should be at an end between us.”

“Be it so, if you wish it,” she rejoined. “I have spoken frankly. As Alban Shore, the goldsmith, I love you; but I should

love you better if you were a noble—still better if you were a prince.”

“If this is jesting, I do not like it,” he said. “Be serious for a moment, if you can. Do you love me well enough to wed me?”

“I can’t tell.”

“But you must decide.”

“Suppose I say ‘No?’”

“In that case, I shall instantly take my departure, and shall not return.”

Uttered in a firm, sad tone, these words produced an impression upon Jane.

Suddenly changing her manner, she replied :

“Then, I must needs say ‘Yes.’”

An instantaneous revulsion took place in Alban’s feelings.

Catching her in his arms, and pressing her rapturously to his breast, he exclaimed :

“Our marriage shall take place to-morrow.”

“Why so much haste?” she asked.

“Because I have waited too long already — because I am afraid of losing you.”

“How distrustful you are!” she cried.

“Have I not reason for distrust?” he rejoined.

Just then Dame Milverton entered the room, and seeing how matters stood, called out: “So all is settled at last, I perceive. I am right glad of it.”

“Yes; Jane has agreed that our marriage shall take place to-morrow,” cried Alban, joyfully.

“To-morrow!” exclaimed the widow. “That is allowing but scant time for preparation.”

“So I think,” observed Jane. “I am in no such hurry. Next week, or next month, will please me just as well.”

“But it won't please me,” cried her mother. “We will have no postponement. All can be managed without difficulty,” she added, glancing at Alban.

“Yes, there need be no delay,” he exclaimed. “We will be married at Paul's. I will go and make all needful arrangements. I leave you to invite the wedding guests, madam,” he said to Dame Milverton.

“Stay,” cried Jane, as he was hurrying off. “I have something to say to you.”

“I'll hear it when I come back,” he cried.

“I want to catch Father Bellasius.”

Jane again attempted to remonstrate, but he stopped her mouth with a kiss, and rushed out of the room.

“My consent has been wrested from me,” she cried, as soon as he was gone. “I hope I shall not repent.”

VI.

HOW ALBAN SHORE WAS WEDDED TO THE BEAUTIFUL JANE MILVERTON IN SAINT PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, AND HOW THE KING SALUTED THE BRIDE AT THE PORCH.

SHORTLY before noon, on the day appointed for Alban Shore's marriage with the beautiful Jane Milverton, it chanced that the king, who had signified his intention of holding a conference with the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, at Guildhall, entered the City on horseback.

Accompanied by his chief favourites, Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, who filled the office of High Constable, and the

Lord Hastings, Grand Chamberlain, his majesty was preceded by a small party of mounted archers, and followed by half a dozen henchmen in doublets of blue satin, richly embroidered, murrey-coloured silk hose, and black velvet caps.

Edward the Fourth was then in the very prime of manhood, and justly accounted the handsomest man of his day. His figure was a remarkable combination of strength and elegance — his limbs being very gracefully formed, yet full of vigour. Trained from early youth in all manly exercises, he became so skilful that, as Earl of March, in his nineteenth year, he overthrew every knight he encountered in the tilt-yard.

As the king wore neither beard nor moustaches, the fine classical outline of his features could be fully distinguished. His

complexion was fair, his eyes blue, and his chestnut locks were worn thickly at the back of the head. Yet there was nothing effeminate in his expression; and although good nature seemed stamped upon his handsome lineaments, he had a very courageous and determined look.

Edward's extreme affability and easy manner rendered him popular with all classes, while his gallantry and good looks gained him the goodwill of the fairer portion of his subjects.

Brave, courteous, handsome, chivalrous, accomplished, he seemed the very model of a king; but we are bound to say that he had many faults. Though good-natured, he was quick to take offence, unforgiving when offended, sanguinary in the field, and a confirmed voluptuary.

Elegant in his tastes, the handsome monarch was exceedingly fond of rich attire.

Cloth of silver and gold, and velvet lined with the most precious furs, were his constant wear.

On the present occasion an embroidered doublet, of murrey-coloured velvet, fitting tightly to the shape, and having pinked sleeves, so as to show the fine linen beneath it, displayed his figure to the greatest advantage, while blue silk hose set off his shapely limbs. The points of his yellow morocco boots, then called poulaines, and more than an ell in length, were fastened to the knee by chains of gold. His mantle was of purple velvet lined with the most precious fur. Round his neck was a collar of suns and roses, with the white lion of the House of March appended. A magnificent girdle, studded with gems, and placed above the hips, sustained his sword and dagger, both of which had splendid

hilt. His purple velvet cap was without a plume, and ornamented with pearls.

A consummate horseman, Edward was never seen to greater advantage than in the saddle, and the noble steed he now bestrode seemed proud of his princely burden. The charger was caparisoned in blue cloth of gold, embroidered with the royal badge, a flaming sun.

The two nobles by whom the king was attended were fine-looking men, but could not for a moment be compared with their royal master.

Buckingham had a doublet of tawny satin, with a surcoat of violet, ingrained; and Hastings wore a green satin pourpoint, embroidered with gold, and a velvet surcoat of the same colour. Each was decked with a magnificent chain and girdle, and had a collar of suns and roses like the king.

Though Edward's visits to the City were of frequent occurrence, crowds always collected to gaze at him, and welcome him with shouts, while fair, smiling faces could be seen at all the open windows. On the owners of these fair faces the debonnair monarch failed not to bestow an admiring glance as he rode along.

On the morning in question, he had a good many buxom dames and comely damsels to greet; and as he was careful not to neglect any of them, his progress from Ludgate to Saint Paul's was necessarily rather slow.

But he appeared in high good humour, and not unfrequently jested with Buckingham and Hastings, who laughed heartily, as beseemed them, at the king's pleasantries.

Occasionally, also, he would call their attention to some fair maiden, speaking of

her in terms of praise, so loudly uttered as to summon a blush to her cheeks.

Just as the royal cavalcade arrived at Saint Paul's, a great number of persons issued from the cathedral, and ranged themselves on either side of the steps, evidently expecting that some one they were anxious to behold would speedily come forth.

So engrossed were they by this object that they scarcely noticed the king, who, not wishing to interfere with them, reined in his charger, and signed to the attendant guard to halt.

Scarcely was the command obeyed, when the great portal was thrown open, and forth came a bridal party.

The marriage between Alban Shore and the lovely Jane Milverton had just been solemnised in Saint Etheldreda's chapel, in the presence of an immense number of spec-

tators, amongst whom were the twelve disappointed bachelors.

Jane looked exquisitely beautiful in her bridal costume. A wreath encircled her fair brow, and her sunny locks, being entirely unbound, flowed down her back. The long white veil, that covered her almost from head to foot, was removed by the bridesmaids as she knelt at the altar.

The ceremony was performed by Father Bellasius, a canon of the cathedral. It was remarked by the bridesmaids that Jane's accents were scarcely audible; and when the nuptial rites had been performed, and Dame Milverton embraced her daughter, she perceived that Jane trembled.

Alban, however, was now the happiest of men; and when his discomfited rivals, who had gathered round him, strove to provoke him by their looks, he regarded them with supreme disdain.

The scene within the cathedral as the bridal party moved along the aisle was extraordinary. Hundreds of spectators, eager to obtain a glimpse of the beautiful bride, pressed upon the newly-wedded pair; and as Jane had not resumed her veil, the curiosity of these persons was gratified.

All who beheld her declared she looked charming, and it was universally thought that she was the loveliest bride that had ever been seen in the ancient cathedral.

At length, after several interruptions, the little procession reached the portal; and as the newly-married pair came forth, Jane's gaze passed rapidly over the vast throng collected outside, and alighted upon a splendid-looking personage on horseback, who, with the two nobles in attendance upon him, was stationed at a little distance from the portal.

“'Tis the king!” observed Alban.

The information was unneeded. The sumptuous apparel and majestic demeanour of the horseman, combined with the deference paid him by his attendants, proclaimed his exalted rank.

Nor could she, for a moment, doubt to whom that stately figure and noble countenance belonged. 'Twas he whom she had so ardently desired to behold.

But her surprise increased when he spoke, and she recognised the voice of the presumptuous stranger who had addressed her at the window of her mother's dwelling.

What strange emotions were excited in her breast by the discovery!

After gazing at her for a moment with looks of undisguised admiration, Edward pressed forward his charger, while the archers kept back the crowd.

"By my troth, Master Shore," he cried, in a good-humoured voice, "you are a right

clever fellow, and as lucky as clever! I know not by what arts you have beaten a whole host of rivals, and contrived to win for yourself the fairest damsel that our good City of London can boast; but, however you have gained her, you deserve our hearty congratulations on your success, and you have them!"

"I humbly thank your majesty," replied Alban, bowing profoundly, while Jane made a deep reverence, "in my own name, and in that of my bride. I can assure your majesty that I esteem myself singularly fortunate in having obtained such a prize!"

"No wonder!" cried Edward. "But hark ye, Shore! you must not exclude your beauteous wife from public view. If so, all the young bachelors in the City will regret that she has bestowed her hand upon you. Let her be seen; let her appear at all shows

and entertainments ; let no restraint be put upon her. She must do as she pleases, go where she pleases, and be indulged in all her whims and fancies. This ought now to be agreed upon."

"It is agreed upon, my gracious liege," replied Shore. "My wife shall do exactly as she pleases."

"'Tis well!" cried Edward. "We are now satisfied you will make an indulgent and easy-going husband, and the fair Jane will be the most enviable wife in the City, as she is undoubtedly the prettiest."

Great merriment followed the king's speech.

"I know not how to thank your majesty for the interest you are pleased to take in me," said Jane, whose cheeks were suffused with blushes. "But indeed I am very grateful."

“Bring thy wife nearer to me, Shore,” said the king. “I have a trifling gift to bestow upon her.”

And as the injunction was obeyed, and the blushing bride, who really looked lovelier than ever, stood beside him, Edward detached a small diamond clasp from his attire, and presented it to her.

Then, bending down, he passed his arm round her waist, and slightly raising her, imprinted a kiss on her rosy lips.

That Shore approved of this proceeding on the part of the gallant monarch, we cannot avouch; but he forced a smile; and it is quite certain that Jane was not offended.

The lookers on were highly diverted.

In the midst of the general merriment, the king bade adieu to Jane, and, attended by his suite, rode on to Guildhall.

VII.

HOW JANE FOUND A DANGEROUS CONFIDANTE IN ALICIA
FORDHAM.

SOME three years had flown since Jane became the wife of Alban Shore; and if she was not perfectly happy, it was her own fault, for she had a most devoted husband, who strove to gratify her every wish.

As she had heretofore been styled the loveliest damsel in the City, she was now known as the fairest wife. None so beautiful as Mistress Shore.

The goldsmith was envied for his good

fortune by a great number of City gallants, among whom were the young bachelors previously mentioned, all of whom were still bachelors. But though many of these impertinent coxcombs would fain have intruded upon her notice, Jane gave none of them the slightest encouragement.

During the long interval we have chosen to pass over, Jane had sustained a very great and indeed irreparable loss in the death of her mother. This sad event occurred quite unexpectedly about a year after she had quitted the maternal roof, and was a source of great grief to her. Alban himself sincerely lamented his mother-in-law, and he had more reason for regret than he was aware of at the time. As long as Dame Milverton lived, she watched most carefully over her daughter, who was always governed by her counsels.

Deprived of her mother's judicious advice,

Jane chose a friend nearly of her own age, who flattered her in order to obtain an influence over her, and made it her business never to say anything disagreeable. Alicia Fordham, the friend in question, had been one of Jane's bridesmaids, and had since become the wife of a mercer, dwelling in the Poultry.

A lively brunette, with fine dark eyes and dark tresses, and a pretty figure, which she set off to the best advantage by dress— Mistress Fordham had a very agreeable, insinuating manner. She laid herself out to please Jane, and succeeded so well that she soon became her bosom friend and confidante. Mistress Shore could not exist without her.

This intimacy had a mischievous effect upon the goldsmith's young wife, and would never have been permitted had her mother been alive.

Shore did not altogether approve of it, though he had no idea of the danger ; but seeing how fond Jane was of her friend, he did not like to interfere. Moreover, Mistress Fordham was careful to do nothing to forfeit his good opinion.

Never since her wedding-day had Jane set eyes upon the king. Almost immediately after their meeting at the portal of the cathedral, a conspiracy broke out in the North, that led to a renewal of the civil wars that had previously desolated the kingdom, and the best blood in the country again flowed in torrents on the field of battle and on the scaffold.

Defeated by Warwick, Edward was compelled to fly the kingdom, and take refuge in Holland. But he returned, and soon raising another army, marched upon London, where the citizens opened the gates to him.

Then followed the sanguinary battle of Barnet, at which Warwick was slain; and three weeks afterwards, the fate of the Lancastrians was decided at Tewkesbury, when Queen Margaret of Anjou, and her son, were taken prisoners. The young prince was massacred by Clarence and Gloucester, in the presence of the victorious Edward, and the queen was sent a prisoner to the Tower.

The unfortunate Henry the Sixth having been secretly put to death in the Tower, and all the chief partisans of the Red Rose removed, Edward became tranquil possessor of the throne, and gave himself up for a time to ease and enjoyment.

But growing tired of this indolence, he roused himself, and entered into a league with his brother-in-law, the Duke of Burgundy, for the invasion of France. With this design he collected a large army, and

made other warlike preparations, and he was endeavouring to obtain the necessary supplies for the expedition at the time when our story is resumed.

Firmly attached to the House of York, Shore had watched the long struggle in which Edward had been engaged with the keenest interest. His chief desire, however, was that these internal dissensions should be settled, and the kingdom restored to tranquillity. A civil war was not favourable to his business, either as a banker or a goldsmith, and while it lasted, more jewels and plate were sold than bought. It is true that he could have lent money to half-ruined nobles and knights at any rate of interest he chose to demand; but, as we have said, he was not a usurer. Thus, though he regretted the fate of the unfortunate Henry the Sixth, he was rejoiced when Edward was firmly settled on the throne.

The projected invasion of France was popular with the citizens, and Shore shared the general enthusiasm.

One day, when Jane was alone in an upper room, looking into Lombard-street, Mistress Fordham presented herself in a state of great excitement, and exclaimed:

“What do you think, Jane? The king is coming here this morning. You have often said you wished to see his majesty again. Now you will have an opportunity. He has business to transact with Shore, and will be here at noon.”

“How know you this, Alice?” inquired Jane.

“A royal messenger is below,” replied Mistress Fordham. “I saw him as I came in, and learnt his errand. No doubt the king wants to borrow money for the French invasion. But he is sure to ask for you.”

“That is very unlikely,” replied Jane,

blushing. "I make no doubt he has quite forgotten me. He only saw me on one occasion—nearly three years ago."

"But recollect what occurred then," said Alice. "'Tis impossible he can have forgotten you."

"I hope he has," said Jane.

"I am quite sure he has not," rejoined Alice. "I myself witnessed the scene at the porch of the cathedral, and the king's looks showed plainly enough how much he was in love with you. No! no! be sure he has not forgotten you."

"But I have never heard from him since—never received the slightest message," cried Jane.

"That is easily accounted for," rejoined Mistress Fordham. "The rising in Yorkshire took place at the time, and his majesty was obliged to march off at once to put down the insurgents. Since then, as you

know, he has been constantly engaged in warfare, and has had no time, until lately, to think of lighter matters. As to his having forgotten you, that is quite out of the question."

"You alarm me, Alice. If I thought it likely the king had any design—such as you suggest—in coming here, I would avoid him; for, though I would never listen to his addresses, I should not like to trust myself with him—for it may be very difficult to say 'No' to a king, and my duty to my husband will not allow me to say 'Yes.' Do you really believe he troubles his head about me?"

"I scarcely know how to reply, since you put the question to me in that way," said Mistress Fordham. "I am quite certain the king was in love with you—greatly in love—three years ago. Possibly circumstances may have obliterated your image

from his memory, but as you are now lover than ever, I am quite certain when he beholds you again that his passion will be revived."

"What would you advise me to do?" cried Jane. "I ought not to see him again."

"Why not?" cried Mistress Fordham. "Surely you have sufficient reliance on yourself! But it will be time enough to consider what you ought to do when you see him."

"No; it will then be too late," said Jane. "To enable you to judge for me, I will confess that for some time after the interview with the king, to which you have just alluded, I did indulge a feeling for him that savoured of love; but I conquered it at last, and now he is nothing to me. Were I to see him again, the feeling might return. You know I have the best and

kindest of husbands, and I would not wrong him for the world."

"Shore is an excellent man," said Alice. "But if he were ten times better than he is, I should not think him comparable to the king."

"Alice, I will not allow you to disparage my husband."

"Nay, I deny him none of his merits. I only wish he was as handsome as the king."

"He is quite handsome enough for me," replied Jane. "I am sure he has always been faithful to me, and that is more than the queen can say of her royal consort."

"Poh! she does not trouble herself about his majesty's infidelities," said Mistress Fordham. "Fortunately for herself, she is not of a jealous disposition."

Just then a great noise was heard in the street, and, guessing the cause of the dis-

turbance, they flew to the window, and beheld the king.

With him were the Lord Hastings and the Lord Howard, and he was attended by a small body-guard of mounted archers, and a couple of grooms, one of whom held the bridle of his charger as he dismounted. A small body-guard of archers kept back the crowd.

Edward paused for a moment to say a word to Lord Hastings, and during this interval Shore came forth bare-headed, and after making a profound obeisance, ushered the king ceremoniously into his house.

The two nobles did not alight, and the crowd collected in the street was kept back by the archers.

VIII.

SHOWING ON WHAT ERRAND THE KING CAME TO LOMBARD STREET.

HAD Jane acted up to the prudent resolution she had formed, she would have instantly retired from the window when she found it was the king; but she appeared quite fascinated, and continued gazing at him as long as he remained in sight.

How majestic was his mien! Sumptuous attire set off his noble person to the greatest advantage, and so lofty was his stature that he quite dwarfed those who stood near him.

That the king noticed her, Jane could not

doubt. Just as he was about to enter the house, he cast his eyes upwards, and gave her a glance of recognition.

Momentary as was the look, it caused the most violent perturbation in her breast, and she shrank from the searching scrutiny of Alice, who was closely watching her.

“Well! was I not right?” cried the latter. “I said you would soon see the king, and lo! here he is. But you look quite overcome. You had better sit down.”

“Yes. I do feel rather faint,” replied Jane, sinking into a chair. “But I shall recover in a moment. I did not think I should have been so foolish. The king’s sudden appearance has thrown me into this state.”

“Prepare yourself for an interview,” remarked Mistress Fordham. “Depend upon it you will be sent for.”

“Nay, then, I must indeed prepare,” cried

Jane, starting up. "I must make some slight change in my attire. Call Drusilla for me, I beg you, Alice."

"No change is necessary," replied Mistress Fordham. "You cannot look better. Your dress suits you to admiration, and I am sure his majesty will be of my opinion. There is not a lady at Court who looks half so well in her velvet and jewels."

"Ah! Alice, you are a dreadful flatterer. But I am running headlong into the danger I ought to avoid. I must stop while there is yet time. Help me, Alice, help me, or I am lost!"

"Why, what a silly, timorous creature you are! There is nothing to cause this uneasiness. His majesty will pay you a few compliments, and then the interview will be over."

"But it may lead to another interview; there is the danger, Alice."

Whatever reply Mistress Fordham intended was cut short by the sudden entrance of a very pretty handmaiden, whose looks betokened great excitement.

“The king is coming up-stairs, madam,” exclaimed Drusilla.

“Oh, dear! what shall I do?” cried Jane.

“Receive him, of course,” rejoined the other. “What else can you do?”

“Nay, madam, there’s nothing to be afraid of,” observed Drusilla, in an encouraging tone. “His majesty looks very gracious. He even smiled at me when I was sent up to you by master. But here he is.”

“Saints protect me!” mentally ejaculated Jane.

But, before describing the meeting between Edward and the goldsmith’s wife, we must see what took place in Shore’s

back parlour, whither the king had been conducted when he entered the goldsmith's shop.

No sooner were they alone together in this room than Edward, who wanted to borrow money from the rich goldsmith, thus opened his business :

“ I have come to you for assistance, good Master Shore,” he said. “ You know that I am about to invade France, with a design of gaining the crown of that country ; or, at least, Normandy and Guienne. I have been very liberally dealt with by some of your fellow citizens ; but, though I have obtained large sums from them, I have not yet got enough. You must find me ten thousand crowns. I will repay you if I am victorious, as I shall be, for I have the aid of the Duke of Burgundy and Bretagne.”

“ Ten thousand crowns ! 'Tis a large sum,” observed Shore.

“Nay, if you require it, I will give you ample security—jewels of fully thrice the value.”

“The deposit is unnecessary,” said Shore. “Your majesty shall have the sum you require. I will take your royal word for the repayment of the money.”

“By Saint George! you are a noble fellow, Shore!” cried Edward. “Not without reason have you been praised for liberality. You shall not find me ungrateful. Ask any favour in return; ’tis granted ere asked. I swear it by my father’s head!”

“I have no boon to ask now, my gracious liege,” rejoined Shore. “Hereafter I may venture to remind your majesty of your promise.”

“When you please,” cried the king. “Be sure I shall not forget it. And now, since we have settled this grave affair so satisfactorily, let us turn to a pleasanter matter.

It was my good fortune to behold your lovely wife on your wedding day at Saint Paul's, and unless my eyes deceive me, I caught sight of her just now at the window above your shop. I would fain have a word with her."

"I will send for her at once," rejoined the goldsmith.

And, opening a side door, he called for Drusilla.

"Nay, by my faith," cried the king, "Mistress Shore shall not come to me; I will go to her. Lead the way, I pray you; lead the way."

Though somewhat discomposed by the order, Shore could not refuse compliance, but, with the best grace he could, conducted the king to the upper room.

IX.

HOW JANE AND HER HUSBAND WERE BIDDEN TO THE FESTIVITIES AT WINDSOR CASTLE.

JANE felt as if she should sink to the ground, when the door was thrown open by her husband, and the king entered the room; but his majesty's easy and affable manner quickly reassured her.

Raising her graciously as she bent to him, Edward pressed her hand to his lips, and he paid a like gallant attention to Mistress Fordham.

After reminding Jane of his former meeting with her, he said, playfully, "I hope

your husband has followed the advice I gave him on that occasion? I suppose he allows you your own way in everything? You do not look as if your inclinations were thwarted."

"Indeed, my liege, I have no complaint to make," replied Jane. "My husband is most indulgent to me. Mistress Fordham will tell your majesty that there is not a citizen's wife in London who has more liberty and indulgence than myself. Alban has never yet refused a request I have made to him."

"That is much to say, in good sooth," observed the king, "and speaks well both for you and him. We will now put his good nature to the test. Some festivities will be shortly held at Windsor Castle. The Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, with the aldermen and their wives, will be our guests. You must come with them.

Amongst other shows, there will be a tournament."

"Oh, how delightful!" exclaimed Jane. "I have longed so much to see a tournament."

"Then your desire shall now be gratified," said Edward. "You hear, Shore. You must bring your fair wife to our castle of Windsor next week, where both she and you shall be well cared for, and see all that is to be seen."

"I thank your majesty," replied Shore, bowing profoundly. "Both my wife and myself are highly honoured by the invitation. 'Tis more than we could expect to be included among your majesty's guests."

"None will be more welcome," said Edward. "And I am sure no lovelier dame will grace the gallery of the tilt-yard. I shall not be sorry that the haughty Court dames should find themselves outshone by

a citizen's wife. I have always maintained that the fairest women are to be found here in London."

"The citizens' wives are greatly beholden to your majesty," observed Mistress Fordham.

"Nay, I assert the simple truth," said the king. "But you must come with Mistress Shore to the tourney, and witness her triumph."

Alice bent low as she signified her delighted assent.

"Will it please your majesty to take the money with you?" inquired Shore. "If so, I will give orders respecting it."

"Prithee, do so," rejoined the king, evidently well pleased by the suggestion.

Thereupon the goldsmith made an obeisance, and quitted the room.

No sooner was he gone than Mistress Fordham retired towards the window, so

that the king and Jane were left alone together.

“The moment I have so eagerly longed for has arrived,” said Edward, taking the hand of the goldsmith’s fair wife, and gazing tenderly into her face. “I can now have a word with you. During the long interval that has elapsed, I have never ceased to think of you. In the tent, or on the field, your image has been constantly before me. I have looked upon you as my guardian angel.”

“I did not suppose your majesty ever thought of me,” said Jane. “You, who have seen so many beauties——”

“But none of them ever produced the same effect upon me as you. Tell me, sweet Jane,” he said, in the soft tones that had generally proved resistless, “have you ever thought of me?”

“Too often for my peace of mind, my

liege," she replied. "I have sometimes wished I had never beheld you."

"Oh, say not so!" he cried. "You will have no cause to regret meeting me, for henceforward I will devote myself to you. Fate has separated us for a while, but we are now restored to each other, and we will part no more."

"I must not listen to such language, even from your majesty," said Jane, trembling. "You forget that I have a husband, whom I ought to love above all other men, and whose happiness depends upon me."

"Your husband will surrender you to me," said the king. "Nay, he must—if I so will it."

"Your majesty may take me from him by force—but he will never yield me up. Of that I am certain," replied Jane.

"But you will come to me of your own free will—will you not, sweetheart? From

love, or pity, you must needs be mine—I cannot live without you.”

“Press me not for an answer, my liege! I dare not give it,” murmured Jane.

“Confess you love me, and I shall be satisfied!” cried Edward.

“Hist! hist!” exclaimed Alice. “There are footsteps on the stairs.”

Next moment, Shore entered the room, and if he had looked towards his wife, he must inevitably have noticed her confusion.

His attention, however, was directed to the king, who had drawn back when the warning was given by Mistress Fordham.

“All is prepared, my liege,” he said. “The bags of money will be delivered to your grooms.”

“I thank you heartily, good Master Shore,” replied Edward. “I repeat you have conferred a great boon upon me. Adieu, fair mistress!” he added, turning to

Jane, "We shall soon see you again at Windsor Castle."

"Why do you not answer?" cried Shore.
"Yes, my gracious liege. I will not fail to bring her and Mistress Fordham."

With a look at Jane, who only just dared to raise her eyes, and who almost shrank from his gaze, the king quitted the room, ceremoniously attended by Shore.

Shortly afterwards, shouts in the street proclaimed that he was mounting his charger, and Alice, who had rushed to the window, called out :

"Come hither quickly, Jane. His majesty is looking for you."

But Jane did not stir.

A trampling was then heard, announcing the departure of the royal cavalcade. But Jane still continued motionless.

Presently Alice left the window, and Jane said to her :

“Is he gone?”

“Yes,” replied the other. “Why did you not gladden him with a parting smile? He looked back as long as he was in sight.”

“I have done wrong in listening to him, Alice,” said Jane, gravely. “I must not see him again—I will not go to Windsor.”

“Not go to Windsor!—not attend the tournament! What excuse will you make to your husband?”

“I will tell him the truth.”

“Very proper, no doubt—but extremely foolish,” cried Alice, half contemptuously. “You will only make Shore uncomfortable. If you are wise, you will hold your tongue.”

“Perhaps that may be the best course,” observed Jane. “At all events, I won’t go to Windsor.”

“We shall see,” muttered Alice.

Determined to use all her influence to frustrate Jane’s good intentions, Mistress

Fordham thought it best not to say anything at the moment, feeling convinced that another and more favourable opportunity for discussing the matter would speedily arise.

She therefore took leave of her friend, promising to come next day, when she hoped to find that Jane had changed her mind.

“I don’t think I shall,” replied the goldsmith’s wife.

“Don’t decide till to-morrow,” said Alice; “and, meanwhile, say nothing to Alban.”

Rather reluctantly Jane assented to the suggestion, and Alice took her departure.

X.

HOW JANE DETERMINED NOT TO GO TO WINDSOR, AND BY WHOM HER PRUDENT RESOLVE WAS OVERRULED.

ALBAN could not help remarking that his wife seemed thoughtful during the remainder of the day, and he was the more surprised by her pensive looks, as he expected she would have been overjoyed by the royal invitation to the tournament.

However, he did not question her on the subject, but on the following day, finding she still looked more serious than was her wont, he said, "Why so melancholy,

dearest Jane? Has aught occurred to trouble? Confide your grief to me."

"Nay, I have no grief," said Jane, trying to force a smile.

"Something is certainly upon your mind," observed Alban. "Does aught connected with the king's visit disturb you? It may be that you have some dread of appearing among the Court dames, and fancy they may look down upon you. Dismiss any such notion. A goldsmith's wife may not take rank, but she cannot be slighted; and depend upon it no disrespect will be shown you. If I thought so, you should not go."

"Oh, no; you are mistaken!" she cried; "I have no fear of being treated with disrespect. But I think it will be best not to go to Windsor. Do not ask my reasons, for I cannot very well explain them. It will be a great disappointment to me not

to see the tournament; but I am sure I should experience some annoyance that would do away with all my pleasure.”

“Make yourself quite easy, sweetheart. The king will take care you experience no annoyance.”

“That may be; but you know how censorious people are, and were his majesty to pay me any attentions, improper constructions would infallibly be put upon them.”

“But if I am satisfied, you need not mind what other people say,” remarked Alban. “I have too much faith in you to be jealous, even of the king.”

“You are too good,” cried Jane, almost overcome. “I do not deserve your confidence.”

“What terrible matter have you kept back from me?” said Alban, smiling good-humouredly, and taking her hand. “Tell me, sweetheart—tell me.”

“Since you will have me speak,” rejoined Jane, summoning up her courage for the dreaded disclosure, “the king professes to be in love with me.”

The announcement did not produce the effect she anticipated. Shore’s equanimity was not in the slightest degree disturbed. On the contrary, he smiled, and said:

“That is only what I expected. His majesty professes to be in love with every pretty woman he meets. Many of them are foolish enough to believe him; but I am sure that is not the case with you.”

Jane made no answer, and her husband went on.

“You must not for a moment treat the matter seriously. Your safety is in indifference, real or assumed.”

“But what am I to do if the king should continue to persecute me with his addresses?”

“Act as I advise, and he will soon desist,” replied Shore.

Just then Mistress Fordham made her appearance.

She saw at a glance how matters stood, and though she blamed Jane's imprudence, she was glad to find that Alban seemed so unconcerned.

“Jane has just let me into a secret,” he said; “but I dare say it is no secret to you. She tells me the king is in love with her. Knowing his character, I should be surprised if he were not. His passion gives me no sort of uneasiness, because I feel sure it will never be reciprocated. Jane's affection for me could no more be shaken than could mine for her.”

“I admire your calmness, sir,” rejoined Mistress Fordham. “You view the matter most sensibly. I have always said you are the best of husbands, and you now prove

the truth of my assertion. You are quite right in the good opinion you entertain of your wife. Rest assured she will never deceive you."

"I am certain of it," replied Shore. "I should be sorry she stayed away from any mistaken apprehension of the king's designs, which, if contemplated, can easily be baffled."

"I will do whatever you desire," said Jane.

"Spoken like a dutiful wife," he cried. "Since the matter is settled, I will now tell you that I have just seen the Lord Mayor. Hearing that we are invited to the royal festivities, he offers to take us in his barge to Windsor."

"Oh! that will be delightful!" exclaimed Jane.

"Then you will not blame me for accepting the offer?" remarked Shore.

“Blame you? Oh, no! I should have been grieved if you had declined it. Nothing could please me better than such a trip. But Alice must go with us.”

“That is arranged. There will be a large party on board the barge, consisting of the aldermen and their wives, and some other important citizens. I think you will find it amusing.”

“I am sure I shall,” cried Jane, who was now radiant with delight. “His majesty seems very desirous to please the citizens.”

“He wishes to show his gratitude for the substantial aid they have given him towards the projected invasion of France,” replied Shore. “But I must now leave you, sweetheart. I have some matters of business to attend to.”

Well pleased at having brought back the

smiles to his wife's fair cheek, he then quitted the room.

“Was there ever such an obliging husband,” exclaimed Alice.

“Never, I am certain,” replied Jane. “I should be culpable, indeed, were I to betray his trust in me!”

XI.

THE GOODLY COMPANY ASSEMBLED IN THE LORD MAYOR'S
BARGE.

VERY lovely was the morn on which Jane and her husband, with Mistress Fordham, stepped on board the Lord Mayor's barge.

At the prow of the burnished vessel floated a large silken banner, emblazoned with the City arms. The oarsmen were clad in rich liveries; several pages were in attendance; and trumpeters in embroidered tunics and velvet caps, made the towers on the bridge ring with the bruit of their silver clarions.

Already the principal part of the company was assembled, and the grand saloon of the barge, hung with silken curtains, and provided with velvet-cushioned seats, presented a splendid sight, being filled with the wives of the sheriffs and aldermen, and some other City dames, all of whom wore rich attire and costly ornaments; collars of gold round the neck, and girdles set with precious stones.

Tall steeple caps, with large butterfly wings attached to them, predominated among the fair assemblage; but a few crescent head-dresses could be seen.

At the upper end of the saloon, and conspicuous by the amplitude of her person, as well as by the splendour of her apparel and ornaments, sat the Lady Mayoress.

A prodigiously fine woman. No wonder her full-blown charms had attracted the king's admiration. Her dress consisted of

a crimson velvet gown, richly embroidered, and a large turban-shaped head-dress, adorned with pearls.

The other ladies were, likewise, splendidly dressed, and several of them possessed considerable personal attractions; but there was not one who did not flatter herself that she had been the special object of the gallant king's regards. To gain the goodwill of the citizens, Edward made love to their wives, and, judging by the result, the plan succeeded.

The Lord Mayor was arrayed in crimson velvet, and had a furred velvet cap on his head, and a gold baldrick round his neck. The sheriffs and aldermen wore scarlet gowns, with purple hoods, and the splendour of their habiliments added to the brilliant appearance of the assemblage. Moreover, as we have intimated, there were several

wealthy citizens among the company, and they were all richly attired.

Jane drew all eyes upon her as she entered, and was conducted to the upper end of the saloon by the Lord Mayor. She was very charmingly dressed in a gown of blue velvet, trimmed with fur; and in lieu of a steeple cap, she wore a roll of white silk, through the centre of which her fair tresses were allowed to pass, and flow down her back. A murmur of admiration arose as she passed on, for there was a witchery about her that was quite irresistible, and the ladies were forced to admit the supremacy of her beauty.

She was very graciously received by the Lady Mayoress, who assigned her a place near her own seat. This attention was the more marked, as the stately dame's manner towards Mistress Fordham was exceedingly stiff and distant.

A few more arrivals took place, and then, the whole party being assembled, the gorgeous vessel commenced the ascent of the river, amid the clangour of trumpets, and the shouts of the throng congregated on the wharf.

At first, the progress of the barge was slow—intentionally so, perhaps—and it was a very pretty sight to watch it as it moved on, accompanied by a crowd of smaller barques, nearly all of which were occupied by persons in holiday apparel.

It being understood by the occupants of the barques that the fair Mistress Shore was on board the barge, great curiosity was manifested to obtain a glimpse of her. But this was not so easily accomplished, since Jane was hidden by those around her; and it was not till she was subsequently brought on deck by the Lord Mayor, that she was recognised and welcomed by a loud shout.

As the day was remarkably fine, a delightful excursion could be calculated upon ; and having this pleasant prospect before them, the company were all in high spirits, and nothing was heard in the saloon, or on deck, but lively sallies and laughter.

A water-party, at the time of which we treat, must have been remarkably agreeable ; the river being then perfectly clear, and its banks free from all unsightly structures. Indeed, from London Bridge to the old Palace of Westminster, built by Edward the Confessor, and greatly enlarged by the then reigning monarch, a constant succession of picturesque buildings delighted the eye.

Higher up, charming prospects opened on the view ; quaint habitations, constituting a small village, and each village boasting a church ; ancient mansions, half hidden by trees ; gardens with terraces ; and

smooth lawns, sloping down to the water's edge; grey convents and other monastic-looking houses; parks with long sweeping glades, amidst which herds of deer could be descried; such were the principal features of the scenery, through which ran the bright, pellucid river.

Jane was enchanted. Often had she made a little voyage on the Thames, but never under circumstances more agreeable—never on a finer day.

Moreover, the greatest court was paid her—the Lord Mayor and all the principal personages vying with each other in attention.

Having breasted the silver current for several miles, the barge had now brought its company to a most lovely region, that still retains its pristine beauty, though lacking, of course, the quiet and secluded character which then distinguished it.

The river was now flowing past a lovely hill, partially clothed with wood. From the summit of the eminence an unequalled prospect could be obtained over a vast plain, then so thickly covered with timber that it resembled a forest. At intervals the river could be traced as it winded its way through the plain, and the distant view was bounded by the towers of Windsor Castle.

Nearer could be seen the antique village of Kingston, with its reverend church.

The exceeding beauty of the river banks at this point—the verdant slopes and noble trees on the left, the lovely meads on the right—all combined to form a most exquisite picture.

XII.

HOW THEY WERE ENTERTAINED AT SHENE PALACE, AND HOW MALBOUCHE, THE KING'S JESTER, CAME ON BOARD THE BARGE, AND WHAT PASSED BETWEEN HIM AND JANE.

SHORTLY afterwards, the royal mansion of Shene, hitherto screened from observation by the intervening woods, came into view, and formed a most striking object with its grand *façade*, its immense bay windows, battlements, and turrets.

Nothing could be finer than the situation of Shene Palace, the windows of which commanded the magnificent prospect just described, while its garden and terrace extended along the margin of the river.

As the barge approached the stately pile, a boat put off from the landing-place, having on board a chamberlain and three or four serving-men in the royal livery.

At a sign from the chamberlain, the barge was stopped, and the official, respectfully saluting the Lord Mayor, invited him and the rest of the party, in the king's name, to enter the palace, and partake of some refreshment.

The invitation was readily accepted, and the company having landed, were conducted by the chamberlain to the great banqueting-hall, where a splendid collation was laid out for them. At the same time he explained that these preparations had been made by his majesty's commands. Half an hour being spent over the repast, the Lord Mayor and those with him returned to the barge, very well satisfied with their entertainment.

An addition was here made to the party in the person of Malbouche, the king's favourite jester. As Malbouche was proceeding to Windsor Castle to join his royal master, he begged to be taken on board the barge, and of course his request was readily granted. Moreover, he was not placed with the other servants, but was allowed to remain on deck with the company, and he amused them very much by his caustic remarks.

Malbouche's grotesque attire proclaimed his office. On his head he wore a cock's-comb, and carried a bauble in his hand. Over his shoulder was suspended a broad baldrick hung with silver bells. The royal badge was embroidered in front, and at the back of his scarlet cloth tunic, which had loose hanging sleeves lined with white. His hose were parti-coloured, red and white.

Short and round-shouldered, Malbouche

had an ill-favoured countenance, marked by a decidedly malicious expression, and lighted up by a pair of piercing black eyes.

Like all jesters, Malbouche was privileged to say what he pleased, even to his royal master, and he took full advantage of the license.

“What hast thou been doing at Shene, my merry knave?” said the Lord Mayor to him.

“I came here on important business, my lord,” replied Malbouche. “I was sent by my royal master to see that your lordship and those with you were fittingly entertained.”

“Why did his majesty select thee for the office? Thou art scarce suited to it,” observed the Lord Mayor.

“The king is a better judge than your lordship,” rejoined Malbouche. “Besides,

I knew that fair Mistress Shore was to be of the party, and I wished to behold her."

"Were that really thine object, thou hast come on a very foolish errand," observed Jane.

"Not so," replied Malbouche. "I rarely pay compliments. But I have seen a marvel. The king had said much of you, but all he said fell short of the truth."

"Pooh! thou art turned flatterer," remarked Jane.

"You will not think so, fair mistress, when you know me better," rejoined the jester. "The Court dames and damsels give me a very different character. Take advice, fair mistress, and stay not long at Windsor, or you are never like to return. Were I Master Shore, I would not have brought you at all."

"Thou art a disloyal knave to say so," observed the goldsmith.

“And you are over confident,” replied Malbouche. “I warrant me you would not expose your brightest jewel to a band of robbers.”

“Dost compare thy royal master and his nobles to a band of robbers?” observed Shore.

“An’ your jewel be lost, you will cry out that it is stolen,” remarked the jester.

“Why dost thou not give like caution to others besides me?” observed Shore.

“Because none of them have such a precious gem,” was the rejoinder.

The goldsmith said no more, fearing the jester might make some farther sarcastic remark calculated to give offence to the City dignitaries.

Presently, Malbouche observed to the Lord Mayor:

“Shall I tell your lordship why you are all bidden to Windsor? ’Tis that the King

expects an answer from his royal cousin, Louis of France, to whom he has sent a defiance by Garter King-at-Arms."

"That is no secret," replied the Lord Mayor. "The citizens of London are ready and willing to aid his majesty in a war with France. Normandy and Guienne belong to us of right, and we would gladly recover them."

"Then the king is wiser than I deemed in embarking in the war," observed the jester. "But what of James of Scotland? Will he not take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded him to invade England?"

"We have a truce with the King of Scotland," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "There is nothing to fear from him."

"If he break not the truce, I will send him my fool's cap," said Malbouche.

XIII.

HOW THE KING AND QUEEN, WITH THE LORDS AND LADIES
OF THE COURT, RETURNED FROM HAWKING IN THE
FOREST.

MEANWHILE, they had gradually neared Windsor Castle, and were now passing by the Home Park, the beautiful woods of which grew down to the margin of the river.

Jane had long been gazing at the proud regal structure, which she now beheld for the first time. Much as she had heard of it, its grandeur far surpassed all her pre-conceived notions.

From the eminence on which the lordly pile was reared, it seemed to look down majestically on the surrounding plain. The royal standard floated from the keep, and a party of armed men could be seen on the northern terrace.

On the right of the river, surrounded by trees, was the College of Eton, founded some five and thirty years previously by the unfortunate Henry the Sixth. But Jane's gaze remained fixed upon the castle, and she could look at nothing else till they reached the wharf near the bridge.

Here half a dozen magnificent chariots, with richly caparisoned horses attached to them, were waiting to convey the Lord Mayor and the rest of the party to the castle. Mounted grooms and henchmen appparelled in the royal liveries, were likewise in attendance. The foremost chariot was assigned to the Lord Mayor, but at the

special request of the Lady Mayoress, Jane and her husband, with Mistress Fordham, rode with them.

As soon as the equipages were filled, the cavalcade made its way through the old town, and, mounting the steep street that led past the walls of the castle, came to a gateway, flanked by strong towers, leading to the basement court. They did not, however, enter the court, but, by the directions of the officer in attendance, proceeded to the Great Park, where the king had pitched his pavilion.

Driving past the south terrace of the castle, they presently turned off into a long avenue bordered by magnificent trees, and having tracked it for about a quarter of a mile, came to an opening on the right, that admitted them to a large clear space, in the midst of which was the royal pavilion. Fashioned of red velvet, lined with silk,

and embroidered all over in gold, with the king's cognizance—the “*rose en soleil*”—it presented a superb appearance.

Accustomed to camp life, Edward liked it during fine weather; and hence, though he had the noblest castle in the realm close at hand, he chose to pitch his tent in the forest.

But the place was deserted at the time of the arrival of the Lord Mayor and his party, for his majesty and the queen were hawking in the forest with the lords and ladies of the court. However, the new comers had only just alighted, and were still collected in front of the royal pavilion, when word was given that the king was returning, and immediately afterwards a numerous and splendid party could be seen approaching through the trees.

At the head of the cavalcade, which comprised, as just intimated, all the principal

lords and ladies of the Court, as well as the two royal dukes, rode the king and queen.

Edward was magnificently dressed, as usual. His tunic was of green velvet, embroidered with gold, and trimmed with sable. His cap was likewise of green velvet, adorned with a heron's plume, and a silver bugle hung from his shoulder. Attached to his girdle was a wood-knife. His courser was splendidly equipped, but not so much so as to impede the action of the high-mettled animal.

The queen, who rode a snow-white palfrey, trapped in cloth of gold, embroidered with white roses, was exceedingly handsome; but her features had a very haughty expression, and her fine eyes had sometimes a sinister look. Her tresses were still light and luxuriant, and her figure faultless. Personally, she was quite as attractive as

when the king first beheld her, and became so passionately enamoured of her, that he married her despite all opposition.

To Edward's credit, it must be stated that although he had long ceased to love his consort, he paid her the utmost deference. On her part, the queen manifested no jealousy, though quite aware of his numerous infidelities, being perfectly content with the homage he paid her in public. Owing to this judicious course, they had no quarrels, and Elizabeth never lost her influence over her royal husband. Her great desire was to aggrandise her own family; and she succeeded so well in the aim, enriching her father, ennobling her brother, and exalting her sisters by marrying them into the proudest families, that she incurred the animosity of all the old nobility. Confident, however, of Edward's support, she set them completely at defiance.

The queen was arrayed in a tight-fitting long-waisted *côte-hardie* of *baudekyn*. Over the gown, which was so long that it quite concealed her pointed shoes, she wore a furred mantle, which displayed her charming figure to perfection. It is needless to describe the costly ornaments with which she was bedecked, the jewels running down the centre of her gown, or the splendour of her girdle and collar; but we must mention that her hair was confined by a golden comb, with large and preposterous side ornaments, like wings, attached to it.

The queen was attended by a score of ladies, almost all of whom were young and beautiful, and made a splendid show on their mettlesome palfreys.

The costume of these fair dames and damsels was somewhat varied, but they had one feature in common peculiar to the period—namely, the tall steeple cap.

With the queen were the two young princesses, Elizabeth and Cicely, both very pretty girls. They rode what were then called hobby-horses, and managed them extremely well.

Mingled with the ladies of the Court were an equal number of nobles and distinguished personages, chief amongst whom were the king's two brothers, George, Duke of Clarence, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Neither of them possessed Edward's lofty stature, handsome physiognomy, nor majestic deportment. Indeed, the Duke of Gloucester was deformed and crook-backed, by which epithet he was constantly distinguished.

The Duke of Clarence, who was not yet thirty, was slight, but well-formed, and had a noble countenance; the expression, however, of his eyes was shifting, and betrayed his treacherous character. His habiliments

were splendid, and he was mounted on a fiery steed.

Some seven or eight years previously, the Duke of Clarence had espoused Isabella, eldest daughter of the great Earl of Warwick, surnamed the "King Maker," and who, in fact, had enabled Edward to obtain the crown. Soon after his alliance, the ambitious young duke, who secretly aspired to the throne, revolted against his brother. True to no one, however, he deserted Warwick at the most critical juncture, and joining his brother with several thousand men, enabled him to win the battle of Barnet, at which Warwick was slain.

The Duchess of Clarence was amongst the ladies, but there was no cordiality between her and the queen. At the time of her marriage, the duchess was considered very handsome; but she now looked pale and thin, and appeared far from happy.

Could she be happy, indeed, when she knew that the duke, her husband, had betrayed her father, and caused his death !

But if Clarence was perfidious, he was not half so dangerous as his brother, the dark, deceitful Gloucester. Clarence had not the talent to conceal his designs, but Gloucester, who was equally treacherous, was a deep dissembler, and worked in secret. Though the throne seemed completely shut out from him, he determined to mount it, and nothing turned him from his purpose.

To look at that bold, crafty visage, in every line of which cunning was written ; to feel the effect of that dark, searching eye, caused those who came near him to comprehend that they were in the presence of a master spirit. Gloucester could not inspire regard ; but he inspired dread. Men hated him, but served him well, because

they feared him. Even Edward experienced the force of his determined will.

Gloucester would have been of the average height had not his crooked back diminished his stature by several inches. In other respects he was well-proportioned, and strongly built. His features were decidedly handsome, though the expression was sinister. His complexion and hair were dark, and his eyes exceedingly fine, and their glances full of fire. Not only did Gloucester possess the wisdom of the serpent, but the venom. Courageous, and a good leader, he never hesitated to attack a superior force.

There was no love between him and the Duke of Clarence, whom he had deeply offended by his marriage with Anne, the younger daughter of the Earl of Warwick, and widow of Prince Edward, son of Margaret of Anjou, and the unfortunate

Henry VI. Having helped to despatch the young prince, after the battle of Tewkesbury, which sealed the fate of the Lancastrian party, Gloucester resolved to marry the princess, and succeeded in his design, notwithstanding all the efforts of Clarence to prevent him.

By this match, Gloucester secured a large portion of Warwick's immense possessions, and laughed at his brother's displeasure. A long and bitter dispute ensued, which at length was settled by the king, but from that time the brothers nourished a deadly animosity towards each other.

Gloucester was as fond of dress as the king, and wore the richest stuffs and the most splendid ornaments. His embroidered mantle was so disposed as to hide his hunch-back as much as possible. His black velvet cap was adorned with gems.

It would seem scarcely possible that the

Princess Anne could endure the man who had slain her husband, and forced her into a marriage that at first had appeared hateful to her; but Gloucester had so won upon her regard, that she now seemed to like him. She was among the queen's ladies, and rode by the side of the Duchess of Clarence.

The Princess Anne was far handsomer than her sister, and to judge from her countenance, was disturbed by no secret grief. Her attire was very sumptuous. She wore a *côte-hardie* of blue velvet, and her girdle was studded with gems. Passionately fond of hawking and of the chase, she had greatly enjoyed the day's pastime.

Of the nobles who composed the king's suite, we may enumerate the Duke of Buckingham, the Marquis of Dorset, the Lord Hastings, the Lord Rivers, the queen's brother, the Lords Howard and

Stanley, Sir Thomas Montgomery, and Sir Thomas Saint Leger—the latter being a great favourite with the king. All these nobles and gentlemen were attired in hunting dresses of green velvet, embroidered with gold, and were mounted on fleet, well-bred coursers.

At the rear of the cavalcade came the falconers, carrying the hawks in their hoods and jesses; and the huntsmen, with the hounds in leash. These, with a great number of grooms, piquers, and pages, completed the splendid train.

XIV.

OF THE GRAND COLLATION GIVEN IN THE PAVILION; AND
OF THE STRANGE PRESENT BROUGHT BY GARTER FROM
LOUIS OF FRANCE.

As the king entered the open space, and perceived the Lord Mayor and his party stationed near the royal pavilion, he rode forward, and offered them a most gracious welcome. While distributing his smiles among the bevy of fair dames, he bestowed a special greeting on Jane.

Shortly afterwards the queen came up, and the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress were presented by the king to her majesty, who expressed herself delighted to see them.

Some other presentations then took place, and during these formalities, the nobles and ladies composing the cavalcade dismounted, and their coursers and palfreys were led away by the grooms.

Having welcomed his guests, Edward sprang from his charger, and bidding them follow him without ceremony, took the hand of the Lady Mayoress, and conducted her to the pavilion, in which a splendid collation was laid out. They were followed by the queen and the Lord Mayor; and pursuing the example thus set them, the royal dukes and the nobles each selected a citizen's wife, while the sheriffs and aldermen were honoured by Court dames. Jane fell to the share of the Lord Chamberlain, who took care to place her near his royal master.

Though a rigorous observer of regal etiquette, Edward would sometimes dispense

with it altogether, as on this occasion, when, his great object being to conciliate the citizens, he treated them with unwonted familiarity. At the same time, though excessively affable, he was dignified in deportment as usual.

The interior of the pavilion was splendid, as it was roofed with cloth of gold. The tables were covered with plate, and there was a superb buffet. The daintiest fare and the most exquisite wines were set before the guests.

At the close of the repast, the king caused a large goblet to be filled by his cup-bearer, and drank to the Lord Mayor and the citizens. After which they all rose, and pledged his majesty in return.

“You are aware, my good and faithful lieges,” said the king to the citizens, “that we have sent a herald to our cousin, Louis of France, to signify to him that he must

forthwith restore to us the duchies of Guienne and Normandy, and if he refuses to do so, we will make war upon him, and invade his dominions with all our power. We shall soon know what answer Louis hath sent, for Garter, the herald, as we learn, hath returned to London from his embassy, and is on the way hither."

At this juncture, Malbouche, who was stationed at the back of the king's seat, whispered something in his majesty's ear.

"Say'st thou that Garter has arrived?" cried Edward.

"Yea, my liege," replied the jester, speaking in a loud voice, so that all around might hear. "And he hath brought your majesty some presents. King Louis hath sent you the best horse in his stables, and a noble steed it is. But that is not all—he hath sent your majesty something more."

“Indeed!” exclaimed Edward. “Doth he think to pacify me by gifts?”

“There is much significance in the present,” replied Malbouche. “But here comes the herald, who will give your majesty all needful explanation.”

As he spoke, Garter appeared at the entrance of the pavilion, and way was made him to approach the king.

“Thou art welcome from France!” cried Edward, as the herald bent profoundly. “Hast thou made our demand of King Louis? Speak out! We desire that all should hear his answer.”

“King Louis’s answer was very brief, my liege,” rejoined Garter. “He received me very well, and manifested neither anger nor impatience while I made my demand. When I had done, he regarded me fixedly and somewhat sternly, and remarked, ‘Tell

the king our cousin that we counsel him to do nothing.' That was all he said. In token of his friendly feeling towards your majesty, he hath sent you the best horse in his stables."

"Aught more?" inquired Edward.

"Yes, my liege," replied Garter, with some hesitation. "Just before my departure he sent his quarter-master, Messire Jean de Lailler, with a wolf, a wild boar, and an ass, as a further present to your majesty."

"Ha!" exclaimed Edward, angrily. "Now, by Saint George! that seems like a studied insult."

"'Twas doubtless intended as an apology," remarked Malbouche. "Methinks I can explain it. The wolf is your majesty—a vile comparison, doubtless—the wild boar is Charles the Bold of Bur-

gundy, and the ass is the Duke of Bretagne.”

Incensed as he was, Edward could not help laughing at the jester's explanation, and some half-suppressed merriment was heard among the company.

“Our cousin of France shall find that his jest is ill-timed,” said the king. “Our preparations for the invasion are complete, and, by Saint George, we will soon set foot in his dominions.”

At this announcement loud acclamations arose from the assemblage, and it was evident that the nobles and citizens were of one mind in regard to the war.

Soon after this, the king arose and quitted the pavilion, taking the Lady Mayoress with him. His majesty was followed by the queen, the Lord Mayor, and the rest of the splendid company.

Shortly afterwards, the queen entered her chariot with the two princesses, and was driven to the castle, whither other chariots followed, filled by the Duchesses of Clarence and Gloucester, and other noble dames.

XV.

HOW JANE PROMISED THE KING AN ANSWER AT THE BALL.

THE festivities of the day were not yet ended. A grand ball was to be given in the evening at the castle, to which all were looking forward with delight.

A great portion of the company proceeded to the castle on foot, and they could now be seen shaping their course thither beneath the trees.

As the evening was delightful, nothing could be more agreeable than the walk, and Jane, who was accompanied by her

husband and Mistress Fordham, enjoyed it greatly.

They had just entered the great avenue, and were proceeding slowly along the gentle ascent leading to the castle, which rose before them in all its grandeur, when the trampling of horses was heard behind, and the king was seen approaching, accompanied by Lord Hastings and some half-dozen grooms.

As soon as he came up to Jane, the king dismounted, and consigned his horse to a groom, while Hastings engaged Shore and Mistress Fordham in conversation. The grooms kept at a respectful distance.

As may be supposed, the enamoured monarch did not lose the opportunity, but protested his passion in the most ardent terms.

“You have heard what has just passed,” he said. “I am about to invade France

with a large army. You shall go with me, and you will then be really queen.

Jane was dazzled by the brilliant prospect opened before her.

“Could I believe that your majesty would really devote yourself to me, I might be induced to consent. But no, no!” she interrupted; “I must not—cannot.”

“Do not decide too hastily,” he said. “Give me your answer at the ball to-night.”

“My answer will still be the same, my liege,” she replied, trembling.

“I hope not,” he rejoined. “Think what you will throw away! But I must not continue this converse, lest I should excite your husband’s suspicions. Adieu for the present.”

At a sign, his horse was instantly brought him by the groom, and he rode off with Hastings towards the castle.

Meanwhile, Shore had returned to his wife. Fixing a melancholy look upon her, he said :

“ I cannot mistake the nature of his majesty’s attentions to you, Jane. He loves you, and has told you of his love.”

Jane made no reply ; but her silence convinced him he was right in the surmise.

“ You must not be exposed to this danger,” he said. “ You shall not enter the castle.”

“ You are needlessly alarmed,” said Jane. “ I should be sorry to miss this grand ball. To-morrow I shall be quite willing to return, but not now.”

“ To-morrow may be too late,” muttered Shore. “ I have made up my mind that you shall go at once.”

“ But I am quite sure the king will not permit our departure,” she said.

“He will know nothing about it till we are far hence,” rejoined Shore, peremptorily.

“Alice,” cried Jane, to Mistress Fordham, “what do you think? Alban says we must go back immediately.”

“Not stay for the ball!” exclaimed Mistress Fordham. “It would not only be a great disappointment to us, but a positive disrespect to his majesty. Were I you, I would positively refuse to go.”

“You counsel badly, mistress,” remarked Shore, angrily. “Jane will obey me.”

Alice gave her a look, encouraging her not to yield.

“I never knew you so unreasonable before, Alban,” said Jane. “You have ever treated me with the greatest kindness, and indulged all my fancies. But now you would deprive me of a gratification on which I have set my heart.”

“You know my motive Jane,” he cried, in a reproachful tone.

“Yes. But I do not admit it. Dismiss these silly fears. No harm will ensue.”

“Since you give me that positive assurance, I will trust in you,” he said.

“Then you consent to stay for the ball?” she cried, eagerly.

“Very reluctantly,” he replied. “I have a presentiment of ill.”

“Nonsense!” cried Mistress Fordham. “If the king really meant to rob you of your beautiful wife, do you think she would be safe in Lombard-street?”

“Make yourself easy, Alban,” said Jane. “The king is very powerful, but he shall not take me from you.”

“I am content with that promise,” he rejoined. “We will stay for the ball.”

And they proceeded to the castle.

XVI.

HOW JOUSTS WERE HELD IN THE LOWER COURT OF WINDSOR CASTLE; HOW THE PRIZE WAS BESTOWED ON JANE BY THE MARQUIS OF DORSET; WHAT OCCURRED AT THE BALL; AND HOW SHORE LEFT HIS WIFE.

ON entering the upper ward of the castle, Shore, with his wife and Mistress Fordham, were met by the chamberlain, who conducted them to apartments on the north side of the quadrangle. Here they found their trunks, which had been brought from the barge, and by the time they had made the necessary change in their attire, they were summoned to a magnificent repast, which was served in Saint George's Hall. The

king and queen, with the royal dukes and duchesses, were seated at a raised table, and in the centre of the room sat the principal nobles and ladies.

Supper over, the company adjourned to a large apartment, which was brilliantly lighted up. Jane was quite bewildered by the splendour of the scene. The king had now laid aside his mantle, and appeared in a blue velvet tunic richly embroidered with gold. Amongst his other accomplishments, Edward excelled in dancing, and on this occasion he selected his partners from the wives of the citizens.

Jane's turn came at last, and, when the bransle was over, he led her to a room opening out of the hall, which seemed to be empty at the time.

Thinking they were entirely alone, Edward addressed a few passionate words to

her, and said, "Now, then, sweetheart, I must have your answer. Will you remain with me?"

Ere she could reply, they were disturbed by the unexpected appearance of Shore, who had followed her into the room.

Edward signed to him angrily to be gone, but he did not move.

"I am ready to obey you, my liege," he said; "but I must take my wife with me. Come, madam," he added to Jane, who, however, hesitated and consulted the king by a look.

"I shall not interpose my authority," said Edward. "Mistress Shore is free to depart if she thinks proper. Do as you please, madam," he added to Jane.

"Then I will stay," she rejoined.

"Since this is your decision, Jane, farewell for ever!" said Alban, in a reproachful

tone. "You know how fondly I have loved you. But I now put you from me. You are no longer mine."

He looked at her for a moment fixedly, hoping she might relent; but as she did not stir, he made an obeisance to the king, and quitted the apartment.

"Do not let him go, my liege," said Jane. "I shall be miserable if he departs in this mood."

"Methinks you are far better without him, sweetheart," said the king; "but since you desire it, I will give orders that he be not allowed to quit the castle."

With this, he led her back to the ball-room, and, summoning the Lord Chamberlain, gave him some directions in a low tone.

Next morning a sumptuous breakfast was given at the royal hunting lodge in the Home Park, to which all the guests were

invited, and after the repast, they were taken to see the vineyard.

Our climate must certainly have been better in the fifteenth century than now-a-days, since grapes from which tolerable wine was made were then grown at Windsor.

The vineyard was situated on a slope facing the south, so that the grapes had the full benefit of the sun, and now hung in ripening clusters from the trellised vines. With the gay crowd wandering about the alleys, the enclosure presented a very charming picture.

After another banquet in Saint George's Hall, the whole company repaired to the jousts. Barriers were here erected in the lower ward, and overlooking them was a superb gallery, hung with blue velvet, and embroidered with white roses. This gallery was reserved for the queen, the two duchesses,

the Court dames, the Lady Mayoress, and the wives of the citizens.

A large crowd was collected round the barriers, and the vast court was filled with knights, pages, esquires, and halberdiers, all in the royal livery.

Loud fanfares of trumpets were sounded as the king came forth, equipped in a full suit of shining mail, with a snowy plume in his helm, and mounted on a charger trapped in cloth of gold, adorned with his cognisance.

His majesty was attended by the Duke of Buckingham, the Lords Howard, Dorset, and Stanley, Sir Thomas Montgomery, and Sir John Cheyne, all clad in armour, and all well mounted.

As soon as the king had taken his position on one side of the lists, the trumpets were again sounded, and the Duke of Clarence, the Earl of Rivers, the Lord Hastings,

all clad in armour, and attended by half a dozen knights and gentlemen, rode into the lists.

The two parties having ridden past the central part of the gallery, in which were the queen with the two royal duchesses and the two princesses, and bowed to her majesty, took their places on either side of the lists. Jane sat with the ladies of the Lady Mayoress's party.

Shortly afterwards the trumpets were sounded, and the signal being given by the king, two knights clapped spurs into their steeds and rode against each other.

These were the Lord Howard and the Lord Rivers. They met in mid career, and both lances were splintered, but neither cavalier was unhorsed.

They were followed by the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Hastings, with pretty nearly the same result; except, per-

haps, that the advantage was slightly in favour of Hastings.

Next the Duke of Clarence and the youthful Marquis of Dorset, the queen's son by her first husband, Sir John Gray, ran against each other, and a general murmur of satisfaction arose when the youthful marquis, who was exceedingly handsome, struck off the duke's helmet.

Clarence did not bear his defeat with a good grace, but looked highly displeased.

Many more lances were splintered, but good fortune attended the young Marquis of Dorset, who unhorsed one of the knights on the side of the Duke of Clarence, and at length was adjudged the victor by the king.

Amid the plaudits of the assemblage, the shouts of the heralds, and the clangour of trumpets, the youthful earl rode towards

the royal gallery, and as he bent before the queen, she hung a wreath of white roses on the point of his lance.

The handsome young noble glanced round the bevy of beauties, as if considering on whom he should bestow the prize, and many a bosom throbbed high at that moment; but as there could be no question that the fairest amid the throng was Jane, he rode up to the part of the gallery where she was stationed, and, lowering the point of his lance, presented the wreath to her.

Loud applause followed, as Jane took the prize thus gracefully offered her, and the king seemed particularly well pleased.

Some other diversions followed, after which the queen and all the ladies withdrew, and returned to their apartments in the castle.

In the evening there was a grand supper

in Saint George's Hall, and when the company had feasted royally, a pleasant surprise was given to the ladies.

The great doors of the hall being thrown open, a troop of sirens came in, singing melodiously. They were followed, after a short interval, by an immense sea-monster, which, from its size, caused the greatest astonishment and even terror among the female beholders. How the huge fish was moved could not be understood, the mechanism being hidden; but it seemed to roll, or rather swim, into the hall, without even being guided, only moving its tail and fins.

On reaching the centre of the hall, the monster opened its enormous jaws, and forth came a troop of mermaids and mermen, who performed a grotesque dance, while the sirens sang, amid the merriment of the company.

This exhibition ended, the dancers returned to their retreat, and the huge sea-monster quickly disappeared from the hall.

Other amusements followed, after which the company adjourned to the ball-room, where dancing instantly commenced.

No opportunity occurred to the king that night for any private converse with Jane; but next morning, at an early hour, he repaired to her apartments.

Mistress Fordham was with her, but she seemed to be in a state of great distress, and when Edward appeared, she rushed towards him, and threw herself at his feet.

“My husband has really left me, my liege,” she cried, “and has forbidden me to return to him.”

“Give yourself no concern about him,” he replied, raising her gently. “You shall remain with me. Listen to me, sweetheart,” he continued. “You like the Hunting

Lodge in the Home Park? Is it not so?"

"I have seen nothing so charming, my liege," she replied.

"'Tis yours. Take possession of it at once. You shall have your own servants, and everything you can desire. Thus much for Windsor. At Shene, at Whitehall, at Eltham, at the Tower, wherever I may be, you shall have your own apartments."

Her thanks were murmured in a low voice.

"My sole desire is to make you happy, Jane," he said.

Something like a sigh was her response.

"Why that sigh?" he inquired, gazing at her tenderly.

"I am thinking of poor Alban," she replied.

"Think of him no more," said Edward.
"You are now mine, and shall be ever with

me. When I embark for France you shall accompany me."

"And your majesty will not abandon me?" cried she, gazing at him imploringly.

"Never!" cried Edward, fervently. "Never! I swear it!"

"Bear witness to the vow, Alice," cried Jane.

"Ay, bear witness!" said Edward; "and call me false and perjured if I break it. But that I will never do."

"I will trust you," replied Jane, and her head sank upon his shoulder.

Ere many hours she was installed at the Hunting Lodge.

End of Book the first.

Book the Second.

THE EXPEDITION TO FRANCE.

I.

HOW JANE RESIDED AT THE HUNTING LODGE IN THE HOME PARK, AND HOW KING EDWARD PREPARED TO INVADÉ FRANCE.

“THE king seems infatuated with Mistress Shore,” observed the Duke of Buckingham to Lord Hastings as they walked together one morning in the upper quadrangle of Windsor Castle. “Think you she will retain her influence over him?”

“For many reasons, I think she will,” replied Hastings. “In the first place, she is incomparably beautiful, and beauty weighs much with the king, as you know. But she has something more than beauty to recom-

mend her. Her disposition is most amiable, and her manner extremely engaging. She is always ready to do a service to any one who needs it. Her influence over the king is unbounded, but she does not abuse it. What is most surprising is that she has embraced the queen's part, and does all in her power to further her majesty's plans."

"Is it from interest or good feeling that she acts thus?" inquired Buckingham. "You know I have been away, so that I have not yet had any opportunity for observation."

"'Tis from goodness of heart," replied Hastings. "Mistress Shore, as I have just said, is the most amiable person living. She has more suitors than the queen herself. Every one who has a favour to ask, or a petition to present, comes to her. The king can refuse her nothing; yet she asks little for

herself. She might soon grow rich if she chose; but she gives away almost all she receives. His majesty bestows the richest dresses upon her, costly ornaments, diamonds and plate, and has given her an almost regal establishment at the lodge; but, by my faith! I believe she does not desire it, but would rather live less ostentatiously."

"You amaze me," said Buckingham. "I did not think such a woman existed."

"Certes, there are few like her," rejoined Hastings, laughing. "She has many enemies, no doubt, foremost among whom are Clarence and Gloucester; but they are unable to do her any injury. The queen, as I have hinted, is favourable to her, and wisely declares that as the king must have a favourite, she would rather it should be Mistress Shore than any other."

"But what of Shore? Is he reconciled to the loss of his beautiful wife?"

“Since she has left him, he has disappeared altogether,” replied Hastings.

“Disappeared!” exclaimed Buckingham.

“Ay; he has sold his house in Lombard-street, all his plate and jewels, has discharged all his servants, and gone—no one knows whither. ’Tis said he has become a monk, but this is doubtful. He was devoted to his wife, and her abandonment of him seems to have disturbed his reason.”

“Only a fool would grieve for a woman who leaves him,” said Buckingham. “A sensible husband would have reconciled himself to the loss, and have reaped all the benefit he could from it. With Jane’s help he might have risen at Court.”

“Evidently he disdained such a course. But let us go to the lodge. You will find the king there. His majesty desires that as much respect shall be paid Mistress Shore as if she were actually queen.”

“I understand,” replied Buckingham.

Passing through the postern near Edward the Third's tower, and crossing the drawbridge over the moat, they proceeded to the lodge, which was situated in the Home Park.

A pleasant walk through the vineyard brought them to the garden, which was beautifully laid out.

On the terrace in front of the Hunting Lodge, several pages in the royal liveries were grouped, conversing with the king's falconers, who had their hawks in readiness. On the right were grooms, with a splendid charger and a beautiful palfrey. Halberdiers were stationed at the entrance; and within were a gentleman usher, and a number of serving-men.

Preceded by the usher, the two nobles gained the private apartments, and entered an ante-chamber, crowded with courtiers

and suitors, who bowed respectfully as the distinguished personages passed through their midst. The Lord Chamberlain and his companion were then admitted to an inner room, where they found the king and Jane.

Seated in a velvet-covered fauteuil, in an easy attitude, with his foot on a tabouret, Edward was glancing at a letter which he held in his hand, and Jane was leaning over his shoulder. The attitude was well calculated to display the grace and beauty of her figure. She was attired in a tight-fitting *côte-hardie* of green velvet, with a girde above the hips, and her sunny tresses were covered by a net of gold. Edward simply wore a tunic of embroidered satin, and had a black velvet cap on his head.

At a little distance from the king was Malbouche, the jester, who was playing with a small monkey, fastened to a stand.

On entering, the two nobles made a profound obeisance to the king, and did not neglect to salute the royal favourite.

“You are welcome, my Lord of Buckingham,” said Edward. “I am right glad to see you back.”

“Your majesty will be pleased to learn that I bring with me five hundred archers,” replied the duke. “They are now encamped with the rest of the army on Blackheath, and await your majesty’s orders.”

“’Tis well,” replied Edward. “We shall now be able to muster fifteen thousand mounted archers, besides ten thousand foot soldiers. In a few days I shall march the whole army to Dover, where the embarkation will take place. I have just received a letter from my brother of Burgundy, wherein he promises to send me five hundred flat Dutch boats for transportation of

the horses to Calais. Our own ships will convey the men-at-arms and ordnance."

"I hope your majesty will be able to land all the men in safety," said Hastings. "Louis has several men-of-war at Boulogne, and he may capture some of our transports."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Jane.

"I suppose you would dissuade his majesty from this expedition, madam," remarked Buckingham.

"Your grace is mistaken," she replied, "I would have him go on with it, unless his terms are agreed to. Having defied the King of France, he cannot honourably withdraw."

"If I conquer France, I will make you a countess, sweetheart," said Edward, "and give you a castle in Touraine, with a proud domain attached to

“I would rather have this hunting-lodge than any castle in France,” she replied.

“Peradventure your majesty may not get beyond Calais,” remarked Malbouche. “I have no great faith in your two potent allies, the Duke of Burgundy and the Duke of Bretagne.”

“Neither have I,” said Jane. “I fear they may play you false.”

“You misjudge them, sweetheart. ’Tis their interest to be true to me. They are both opposed to Louis.”

“Since your majesty has determined to commence the embarkation forthwith,” said Buckingham, “’tis time that a portion of the army should march to Dover. I will take my five hundred archers thither without delay, if your majesty desires it.”

“You shall take thrice that number, my lord,” said Edward, “and Hastings shall

follow with as many more. Ere a week is out, the whole army shall assemble at Dover."

"Whom think you, my lords, his majesty is about to take with him to France, and at my suggestion?" observed Jane.

"A score of young knights, who will all wear your colours," rejoined Buckingham.

"A score of the wealthiest citizens in London," replied Jane.

"With what object?" demanded the duke, surprised.

"To show them honour, and make them witnesses of the enterprise," said Edward.

"These fat and well-fed citizens will never be able to endure the fatigues of war," observed Hastings.

"Then their voices will be for peace," said the jester; "and should his majesty require another loan—as most assuredly he will—they will help him to raise it."

Some further discussion ensued respecting the march of the army to Dover, after which the two nobles departed, and the king and Jane rode out into the Great Park, attended only by the falconers and a couple of mounted grooms.

II.

HOW KING EDWARD EMBARKED WITH HIS FORCES AT DOVER,
AND HOW HE WAS RECEIVED AT CALAIS.

ERE a week had flown, Edward reached Dover with his whole army.

On the morning after his arrival, he mounted to the ramparts of the ancient castle, to watch the embarkation of the troops. He was attended only by a young esquire and a page, both remarkable for good looks and symmetry of person.

From the lofty post he had chosen, the French coast was perfectly distinguishable, and even the tower of Notre Dame de

Calais, with some of the buildings of the town, could be seen.

But the king's attention was chiefly attracted by what was going on in the harbour.

To a modern spectator, the crowd of vessels there collected would have presented a most singular and striking appearance. The larger ships were exceedingly lofty, and stood so high out of the water, that they might be compared to floating castles. They were richly gilded, and the royal cognisance was not only displayed at the sides, but painted on the sails.

These ships of forecastle, as they were designated, had four masts—two in front and two near the stern. The masts were painted and gilt. Head and stern were alike. The forecastle and cabin formed two towers, on the summit of which archers and arbalestriers could be stationed.

The king's own ship, the *Rose Blanche*, as she was called, could be easily distinguished among her companions from her superior height and splendour. Her stately sides were emblazoned with the royal arms; the royal standard was hoisted at the prow; and the masts were hung with small flags of beaten gold.

Though these ancient vessels cannot be compared in point of utility with ironclads and modern "leviathans of the deep," it must be allowed that their appearance was infinitely more magnificent and imposing.

Beside the large ships, there were vast numbers of smaller vessels — picturesque looking galleys, with a high crook, surmounted by a carved figure, with the rudder at the side, and a short strong mast, having a sort of cage at the top, in which armed men could be placed; barges, balingers, pinnaees, and carvels.

Then there were certain long vessels, called *huissières*, having two rows of oars, with doors and bridges, for the transport of horses; and, in addition to these, there were the five hundred flat-bottomed Dutch boats sent by the Duke of Burgundy.

No grander spectacle can be imagined than was now offered to the king, and the sea being almost as calm as a lake, the fleet could be seen to the greatest advantage. Even in the days of Edward the Third and the Black Prince, no such armament had ever been provided for the invasion of France as was now collected.

But in other respects the picture was exceedingly lively and interesting. Not only were the inner and outer courts of the castle filled with men-at-arms and archers, but the cliffs were covered with troops, as were the quay and the beach.

Knights and esquires were constantly

riding to and fro, bringing companies of foot soldiers to the quay, to be conveyed thence in small boats to the pinnaces and carvels, and hundreds of horses were put on board the huissières and Dutch boats.

Having contemplated this exciting scene with the greatest interest for more than an hour, Edward quitted the ramparts, and attended by the young esquire and the page just alluded to, and whom he addressed as Isidore and Claude, mounted his horse, and rode down to the harbour, to superintend the proceedings in person.

But though the king's presence stimulated the men to greater exertions, the embarkation did not go on rapidly, and the whole fleet could not be got ready to sail before the following morning.

The flat-bottomed boats containing the horses and artillery, and which were propelled by oars, had been previously sent off,

but they moved very slowly, and had not made more than a couple of leagues.

After remaining on the beach for several hours, the king returned to the castle. The two pages, from the richness of their attire and grace of person, had excited considerable attraction. Isidore, the chief of them, had evinced great interest in the embarkation.

Next morning, at an early hour, amid the roar of cannon from the castle, the clangour of trumpets, and the beating of drums, the king went on board the *Rose Blanche*, which looked like a gorgeous pavilion, the forecastle and cabin being hung with cloth of gold and arras, and the deck carpeted with velvet.

Amongst the distinguished persons already assembled on board the royal vessel, were the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, Thomas of Rotherham, Bishop of Lincoln

and Lord High Chancellor; the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Northumberland, the Lords Dorset, Hastings, Stanley, and Howard, Sir Thomas Montgomery, Sir Thomas Saint Leger, and other knights and esquires.

Somewhat removed from these important personages were Doctor Morton, the king's chaplain and confessor, and the king's physician and almoner.

Edward was very sumptuously attired, and was attended by the young esquires, Isidore and Claude. Malbouche the jester was likewise in attendance upon his royal master.

Shortly afterwards, the signal was given, and amid another roar of ordnance from the castle, that made the cliff's echo, the whole of the mighty armament was put in motion.

The sight was truly splendid. Already

the galleys, balingers, pinnaces, and carvels, which were crowded with knights, esquires, archers, and men-at-arms, were in movement, and they were now followed by the larger vessels.

Close beside the *Rose Blanche* was another large and richly-ornamented ship called the *Azincourt*, on board which were the wealthy citizens invited by the king to accompany the expedition. All these personages were now on deck, and gazing with admiration at the spectacle.

Never from the heights of Dover had so grand a spectacle been witnessed as was then beheld.

The weather was most propitious, the day being brilliantly fine, with just sufficient wind blowing from the right quarter to waft the fleet across the Channel.

After a time, as the sun became hot, a rich awning was drawn over the deck, and

a splendid repast was served, to which the king and all the principal personages sat down.

Edward was waited upon by the two pages, and being somewhat self-indulgent, did not quit the table till the towers and walls of Calais came in sight.

Almost immediately after the *Rose Blanche* had cast anchor, Lord Wenlock, the Lieutenant-Governor of Calais, attended by several officers, came on board.

Finding the king surrounded by nobles, he bent the knee before him, and said :

“ You are welcome, my liege. All is ready for your majesty, and those with you, in your loyal town of Calais.”

“ I thank you, my lord,” replied Edward, graciously. “ But what of my good brother of Burgundy? Has he arrived at Calais, and what number of men-at-arms hath he brought with him?”

“I have not such good tidings to give of the Duke of Burgundy as I could desire, my liege,” replied Lord Wenlock, rising. “His Grace has raised the siege of Neuss, and has taken his army into Lorraine. But as yet he hath sent no men to Calais, nor hath he come hither himself.”

“Ah! by Saint George! this is strange!” exclaimed Edward, looking greatly surprised and displeased. “His highness promised to meet me at my landing with three thousand mounted men-at-arms, and a large body of foot, and you say none have arrived.”

“My liege, it is as I tell you,” replied Lord Wenlock. “The Duke of Burgundy hath taken the whole of his army into Lorraine.”

A murmur of displeasure arose from the nobles grouped around.

“Then he has broken his treaty with

me," cried Edward, angrily. "He stipulated to find me ten thousand men. But what of the Constable Saint Pol, and the Duke of Bretagne?"

"Would that I could give you good tidings of them, my liege!" replied Lord Wenlock. "As yet, they have done nothing."

"And they will do nothing," said the Duke of Gloucester. "Your majesty has been deceived by false promises."

"So it would seem," cried Edward. "But I can stand alone."

"Better alone than with such perfidious allies," said Gloucester.

"'Tis a grievous disappointment," remarked Clarence, "and will give confidence to Louis!"

"If your majesty will deign to listen to my advice, you will turn back without landing," said Malbouche.

“Peace, thou foolish varlet!” cried the young esquire, who was standing behind the king. “His majesty would scorn thy counsel. Though King Louis were before Calais with all his army, our royal master would land and give him battle.”

“Thou art right, Isidore,” said Edward. “Our plans are in no way changed by these untoward circumstances. We shall prosecute the war with as much vigour as if the Duke of Burgundy had been here to join us. Return at once, my lord,” he added to the governor, “and prepare for our entrance into the town.”

Thereupon Lord Wenlock departed, and as soon as his boat touched the strand, a great stir was observable among the crowd assembled on the quay.

Loud shouts arose, and repeated discharges of cannon took place. The royal standard of England was hoisted above the

Lantern Gate fronting the port, and another broad banner floated above the tower of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Calais.

Meanwhile a considerable number of archers, men-at-arms, and horses had been very expeditiously landed from some of the transports, and these were now collected on the quay.

All being at last in readiness a splendid bark came out for the king and his nobles; and as Edward stepped upon the landing-place, which was covered with velvet, he was met by the mayor of Calais, and the heads of the municipal council, in their robes, who bent the knee before him, and offered him the keys of the town on a velvet cushion.

This ceremony gone through, a procession was quickly formed, at the head of

which marched the mayor and the municipal council.

These authorities were followed by the lieutenant-governor on horseback, wearing a richly-furred mantle.

Fortunately, the citizens of London had landed in time to join the procession, and they followed Lord Wenlock.

A body-guard of mounted archers preceded the king, who rode a milk-white charger, and wore a crimson velvet surcoat, lined with ermine. On his right side walked Isidore, and on the left Claude.

Behind his majesty came the two royal dukes, with the whole of the nobles who had been in attendance upon him during the voyage, while another troop of archers brought up the rear of the procession.

In such state, amid the roar of cannon, the ringing of bells, the beating of drums,

and loud flourishes of trumpets, intermingled with the shouts of the inhabitants, Edward entered Calais by the Lantern Gate, and proceeded to the cathedral, where he offered up thanks for his safe voyage, and invoked Heaven's aid for his arms.

On that night, the king and his suite were lodged at the Hotel de Ville, which had been prepared for his majesty's reception.

III.

HOW THE ENGLISH ARMY WAS ENCAMPED WITHOUT THE WALLS OF CALAIS; AND HOW ISIDORE, THE YOUNG ESQUIRE, WAS SENT ON A SECRET MISSION TO KING LOUIS.

NEXT day the disembarkation commenced, and was conducted with the greatest possible despatch. As may be imagined, the greatest confusion prevailed in the port; but at length, the whole of the men and horses were safely landed, and took up their quarters in the camp, which was formed outside the walls of the town.

Never before had so large an English army been seen in France as was now col-

lected at Calais. There were fifteen hundred men-at-arms—most of them gentlemen—mounted on strong barded horses. Besides these, there were fifteen thousand archers, all well equipped and well mounted, and above four thousand foot soldiers—making a total of upwards of twenty thousand men. No wonder those who beheld this mighty host, commanded by a warlike monarch, who had gained almost every battle he had fought, predicted the conquest of France. But Edward himself was not altogether so sanguine, and felt greatly mortified that he had been deserted by the Duke of Burgundy, on whose aid he counted.

Seen from the old walls of Calais, the English camp presented a most striking sight. Laid out in long lines, the tents extended for more than a mile among the sandy dunes. The ground was not all that

could be desired, but none better offered. The camp was divided into six quarters, four of which were allotted to the horsemen, as being the most numerous, and two to the footmen. Through the midst of the tents ran a broad street, and in the centre of the camp a large square was reserved for the assembling of the troops. Another place, surrounded by palisades, was appointed for the horses; and near the market-place was an entrenched spot, designed for the munition of the ordnance.

Besides the ordinary tents, there were others much larger and handsomer, in which the knights and officers were lodged. Bell-shaped and fashioned of rich stuff, these tents were surmounted by banners, emblazoned with the arms of their occupants.

But the most splendid feature of the camp, and which threw all else into the

shade, was the royal pavilion, which was placed in a commanding situation near the town. This superb tent attracted universal attention. Its size was equal to its splendour. It consisted of five of the largest tents or pavilions, composed of cloth of gold, and connected by covered passages, so as to form a palace of immense extent, and comprehending every convenience. This will be understood when we state that each of the five grand pavilions had a smaller tent attached to it on either side, and only separated by curtains from the other part of the structure.

The interior of this gorgeous silken palace was truly regal and magnificent, and constituted a series of splendid apartments, in which the two royal dukes, with the Lord High Chancellor and all the nobles and knights in immediate attendance upon the king, could be lodged. Here also were

lodged the wealthy citizens of London, whom Edward had invited to accompany him on his warlike expedition to France. Here the luxurious monarch could be served with as much state and splendour as if he had been at Windsor Castle. Here he banqueted daily; a long table, decked with vessels of silver, being laid in the central pavilion, which was hung with cloth of gold.

Externally, this grand pavilion presented a splendid appearance, each angle of the roof being ornamented by gilt heraldic devices, representing the king's badges—the falcon within a fetterlock, the rose and sun, a white hart, a white wolf, a sable dragon, and a bull—each holding a small flag.

Thus splendidly housed, Edward could well afford to wait for a few days for the Duke of Burgundy, but as the duke came

not, he waxed impatient, and determined to commence the campaign without him.

Before doing so, however, he judged it proper to send another herald to Louis, who was then at Compiègne with his army, and he was about to give orders to this effect, when the young esquire, Isidore, who chanced to be alone with his royal master at the time, said :

“Your majesty may smile, but the proposition I am about to make is perfectly serious. You will do well to send me to King Louis. I am firmly persuaded that I can obtain an advantageous treaty of peace for your majesty.”

“Thou negotiate a treaty !” exclaimed Edward, laughing incredulously.

“Yes, I,” replied Isidore. “I should proceed very differently from any herald or ambassador your majesty might send, and I think I should succeed. Although you

have brought this vast army to France, I am well aware that your majesty does not desire the war, but would rather come to a pacific arrangement, if it can be effected on satisfactory terms.”

“Very true,” remarked Edward.

“I am equally certain that Louis is of the same opinion,” pursued Isidore. “He, too, desires peace; and I am very much mistaken if he will not make large sacrifices to obtain it.”

“Nay, forsooth, he will not part with any portion of his kingdom, or even a small town — such as Boulogne — unless it be wrested from him,” said Edward; “but he will do much to avoid a war, which he must perceive is inevitable unless he comes to terms.”

“He cannot doubt that you are in earnest, sire, after all the preparations you have made,” said Isidore. “He will there-

fore be ready to pay a large sum to get rid of you. What will your majesty accept?"

"A hundred thousand crowns down before I will conclude a peace with him," said Edward.

"Is that all?" asked Isidore.

"No; I shall require an annuity of fifty thousand crowns; and a marriage must be contracted between the Dauphin and my eldest daughter, the Princess Elizabeth. On such terms I may consent to take back my army to England."

"I am of opinion that I can obtain these terms for your majesty," replied Isidore.

"You are very confident," observed the king. "But, for many reasons, I cannot trust you with the mission. The matter is too important."

"If I fail, no harm will be done," said Isidore. "But I shall not fail."

"You are aware of the risk you will

incur in the journey to Compiègne? I can only send a very small guard with you."

"A small guard will suffice. I feel sure I shall arrive in safety."

"Since you are bent upon the expedition, I will not oppose you," said Edward. "You shall have my signet ring," he added, taking a large ring from his finger. "Show this to my brother Louis, and it will convince him that you come from me, and are empowered to treat with him."

"I understand," replied Isidore, as he took the ring. "Claude must accompany me."

"Be sure I shall not send you without your friend and companion," replied Edward, smiling. "But you ought to take Malbouche as well, for you are going on a fool's errand. However, all shall be ready for you and Claude to-morrow morning—horses and attendants. Moreover, a guide

shall be found well acquainted with the country, and on whom you may place perfect reliance, and a safe-conduct shall be prepared for you and your attendants."

"I am greatly beholden to your majesty for allowing me to undertake this expedition," said Isidore, joyfully. "I scarcely expected you would consent."

"You are wilful, and must have your way; but I shall never forgive myself if harm should befall you," said the king.

At an early hour next morning, a little party on horseback set forth from the camp, and took the road towards Ardres and Saint Omer.

The party consisted of three well-mounted men-at-arms, at the head of whom rode the young esquire, attended by Claude. Both wore green velvet riding-dresses embroidered with gold, green velvet caps, and morocco boots; and each was armed with

sword and dagger. They were provided with mettlesome jennets, which they managed like perfect cavaliers; and to judge from their manner, they evidently did not think any danger attended the adventure they had undertaken.

Cyriac Franklin, the principal man-at-arms, had been specially enjoined by the king to take charge of Isidore and his companion. He was strongly-built, and had a resolute look.

The party rode on through the flat and uninteresting country near Calais, then as now intersected by dykes, and had proceeded for about three leagues, when they descried a small party of horsemen advancing towards them at a rapid pace.

The leader of this little troop, whose appearance proclaimed his exalted rank, was a very powerful-looking personage, and rode a superb war-horse.

He was clad in a complete suit of polished mail, encrusted with gold, and the crest on his helm was formed by a golden lion. Over his shoulders was a crimson velvet mantle lined with ermine, and from his neck depended the order of the Toison d'or. His features, which could be easily distinguished, since his visor was raised, were strongly marked, and had an exceedingly proud, almost fierce, expression. His complexion was swarthy, and his eyes black and piercing.

As he came up, he glanced inquiringly at the young esquire, and seemed inclined to stop and question him, but suddenly changing his mind, he rode on.

Isidore, who had borne the knight's scrutiny as well as he could, now turned to Cyriac, and said, "Methinks that is the Duke of Burgundy."

"You are right," replied the other. "'Tis Charles the Bold, in person."

The young esquire and the page exchanged glances.

“I am glad we had started before the duke reached the camp,” remarked Isidore. “Had he seen the king he might have prevented our journey.”

“’Tis fortunate he did not guess our errand, or he might have compelled us to turn back,” said Claude.

Leaving them for the present, we will follow the Duke of Burgundy to the English camp.

Aware of the great dissatisfaction felt at his conduct by the English soldiers, the duke had need of all his hardihood to confront them; but though menacing looks were constantly thrown at him, he rode slowly through the camp, and stopped not till he came to the royal pavilion.

He then dismounted, and leaving his charger with one of his men, entered the

pavilion, and commanded the usher, who advanced to meet him, to conduct him at once to the king.

The usher bowed low, and led him ceremoniously through a sort of gallery filled with nobles and knights, who bowed reverently as the duke passed with haughty step, and then drawing aside a curtain of arras, which masked the entrance to a side tent, ushered the princely visitor into the presence of the king.

IV.

HOW CHARLES THE BOLD ARRIVED AT THE ENGLISH CAMP;
AND OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH KING EDWARD IN THE
ROYAL PAVILION.

CHARLES, Duke of Burgundy, one of the most renowned princes of his epoch, and well deserving of the surname he had acquired of *Le Téméraire*, was in the full vigour of manhood, being only just turned forty.

Temperate and abstemious, almost to a fault, the duke could not control the terrible fits of anger to which a fierce and violent temper rendered him liable, and he

frequently indulged in acts of savage barbarity, apparently inconsistent with a generous and noble nature, such as he once possessed. But his disposition had become hardened and unrelenting by the constant warfare in which he was engaged, and he seemed resolved to render himself feared rather than beloved.

Ever since he succeeded his father, Philip the Good, Charles the Bold had been continually at war with Louis the Eleventh, whom he detested because he felt himself inferior to that monarch in dignity and power, and he repeatedly declared that he would not rest till he had dethroned the French king. Despite this threat, he entered into several treaties with the crafty Louis, and even received a large bribe from him to discontinue the war, but the treaties were broken almost as soon as made.

Charles the Bold's restless ambition and warlike tendencies would not allow him to remain tranquil, and he was ever planning some new campaign. Firmly believing in his own great military capacity, he would never allow that he had been fairly defeated, and in the latter part of his career, after the disastrous battle of Gransen, a deep dejection seized him. But at the time of his introduction to the reader, though he had sustained several reverses, his confidence in himself was entirely unshaken. He had given numberless proofs of the greatest intrepidity, and at the battle of Montlhéry, when he was surrounded by the enemy, he performed prodigies of valour.

Eleven years prior to our story, the Duke of Burgundy espoused Margaret of York, sister to the King of England, at that time remarkable for her beauty. Subse-

quently to the marriage, Edward sent him the Order of the Garter.

Charles the Bold was warmly attached to his royal brother-in-law, and when Edward was driven from his dominions by Warwick, and compelled to take refuge in Holland, the duke furnished him with money and ships, and enabled him to regain his kingdom.

For this aid Edward naturally felt grateful, and promised to aid Charles in his ambitious designs against Louis. On his part, the duke was most urgent that his royal brother-in-law should invade France, doubtless anticipating that he himself would reap the real harvest of the war.

Incited by the duke's representations of an easy conquest, Edward got together a large army, as we have related; but in the mean time, Charles, from some unaccountable caprice, had laid siege to Neuss—

a strongly-fortified town on the Rhine, not far from Cleves—and failing in his attempt to take it, turned his arms against the Duke of Lorraine, who had been induced by the wily Louis to declare war against him.

This was the ostensible reason why the Duke of Burgundy had not joined his royal brother-in-law at Calais, according to his promise.

Two finer looking men than Charles the Bold and Edward of England could not be seen. Yet there was not the slightest personal resemblance between them. Both were of lofty stature, but Edward was the taller of the two, and had the most graceful figure. Moreover, his features were far handsomer than the duke's.

Charles had a noble cast of countenance, and his deportment, though haughty, was exceedingly dignified; but his stern look

inspired uneasiness—even terror. His person was well-made, but robust, and indicated great strength.

Sheathed from head to foot in shining mail, he wore his harness as easily as a velvet jerkin. For a few moments he stood there, with his left hand on the hilt of his lengthy sword, looking fixedly at Edward, as if uncertain how he should be received.

Edward did not embrace the duke, or even offer him his hand, but saluting him coldly, said, "Soh! you are come at last, brother!"

"It is not my fault that I have not been here sooner," replied the duke. "I have lost sixteen thousand men before Neuss, and was compelled to send the remains of my shattered army into Lorraine."

Edward regarded him incredulously.

"From the steps you have taken, brother," he said, "it would seem that you

are more anxious to make the conquest of Lorraine than to aid me in the conquest of France."

"Mistake me not, brother," rejoined Charles the Bold. "I have been compelled to change my plans. 'Twill be better now that we should not join our forces, but make war separately. Indeed, we have no choice, since the country has been so devastated by Louis, that both armies could not find sufficient food."

"But why did you allow Louis to lay waste the country?" demanded Edward.

"I could not prevent him," said Charles, angrily.

"No; because you were occupied on the Rhine, instead of being here according to your promise," cried Edward.

"Calm yourself, brother, and listen to me," said the duke. "This is what I propose. While you pass the Somme, and

proceed by way of Laon and Soissons, I will drive the Duke of Lorraine from Luxembourg, and after possessing myself of Bar and Lorraine, will meet you at my good city of Rheims, where you can be crowned King of France.”

“The plan pleases me not,” rejoined Edward. “Since you seem to forget the terms of our treaty, I must remind you of them. It was agreed that I should pass over into France at the head of an army of ten thousand men, well armed and well equipped, while you were to assist me in person with all your forces to accomplish the invasion. As soon as war was declared we were to march together and attack the common enemy in all convenient places; and in the event of the conquest of France, it was agreed that I should bestow upon you the Duchy of Bar, the counties of Champagne, Nevers, Eu, Guise, the barony of Dousy,

with all the towns on both banks of the Somme."

"I have not forgotten our agreement," remarked Charles.

"I have not done," pursued Edward. "On your part you expressly undertook to furnish for the war an army of twenty thousand men. Where are they?"

Charles made a movement of impatience.

"I must tell you plainly, brother, that your extraordinary conduct is viewed with the deepest dissatisfaction by my nobles, my knights, and my men. They do not understand why you should engage in another war at this particular juncture. If they were surprised that you should besiege Neuss, they are still more astonished that you should attack Lorraine."

"I owe your nobles and knights no explanation," remarked the duke, sternly.

“But you owe me one, brother,” rejoined Edward. “I am not satisfied.”

“You are angry with me without reason,” said Charles. “All will yet go well. I have just received a letter from the Constable Saint Pol, in which he promises to deliver up Saint Quentin to you. Furthermore, he engages to serve me and all my allies—especially your majesty—against all enemies. I will place his letter in your hands. Are you now content with me?”

Without making any direct reply, Edward took the despatch, and said, “I will assemble my council at once, and you shall meet them.”

“Hold me excused, brother,” replied the duke. “I have come hither at the greatest inconvenience to myself, in order to explain matters to you personally, and I now desire to return to my camp in Lorraine without delay.”

“By Saint George! you shall not go, brother, even if I forcibly detain you!” cried Edward, in a determined tone. “Your sudden arrival, and hasty departure, would have an injurious effect on the army. I will march forthwith to Peronne; and you shall accompany me thither!”

“Since you will have it so, I yield to your request,” replied the duke, though with evident reluctance. “But there must be no needless delay. Commence the march as soon as you can.”

“The camp shall be struck to-morrow morn,” said Edward. “I will give immediate orders to that effect.”

He was about to summon an attendant, when Charles stopped him.

“There is a slight matter that I would fain mention to you, brother,” said the duke, regarding him fixedly. “As I came hither, about three leagues hence, on the

road to Guines, I encountered a handsome young esquire, with a page and two or three men-at-arms, who evidently came from your camp."

"How know you that?" said Edward, sharply.

"The men were clearly English, and so was their leader," replied Charles. "Whither were they bound?"

"You should have questioned them yourself, brother," replied Edward, carelessly.

"It struck me afterwards that the youth might be a messenger to Louis," remarked Charles, still keeping his eyes fixed on the king.

"If I sent a messenger to Louis, he would not be a youth, such as you describe," replied Edward. "I can give you no information respecting him."

Though by no means satisfied, Charles made no further remark.

A council of war was then summoned, at which the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, with all the principal nobles, were present.

Charles the Bold repeated all he had said to the king, and his explanation appeared satisfactory to every one save Gloucester.

The letter from the Constable Saint Pol, who, it may be proper to mention, was uncle to the Queen of England, was laid before the council, and the promises contained in it, apparently made in good faith, dispelled much of the distrust hitherto felt.

At the close of the meeting, the citizens of London were presented to the Duke of Burgundy by the king, and were received by Charles with the utmost courtesy.

After surveying the camp, so soon to be broken up, the king and the duke, who

seemed now to have come to a perfectly good understanding, entered Calais, and proceeded to the church of Notre Dame, where they both alighted and made their prayers at the high altar.

A grand banquet in the royal pavilion concluded the day; and at this splendid entertainment were present not only all the important personages who had accompanied the king in the expedition, but the mayor and most worshipful citizens of Calais, as well as the much-honoured citizens of London.

V.

HOW KING EDWARD MARCHED HIS ARMY TO PERONNE ; AND
HOW THE CONSTABLE SAINT POL REFUSED HIM ADMIT-
TANCE TO SAINT QUENTIN.

By noon next day, all preparations being completed, the camp was struck, and the march of the army commenced into Artois. The first division was led by the king, who was accompanied by Charles the Bold, the Earl of Northumberland, and Lord Hastings, and attended by the spearmen of Calais, in black velvet gowns, and having massy chains round their necks.

Owing to the immense number of bag-

gage waggons and other equipages, together with the long train of artillery, the progress of the army across the marshy land in the neighbourhood of Calais was exceedingly slow, and the main body did not get beyond Ardres.

The first division, however, reached Saint Omer; but Edward, at the suggestion of the Duke of Burgundy, who represented to him that the inhabitants would be greatly inconvenienced, did not enter the town.

Towards evening, next day, the whole army arrived at Arras; and Edward, despite the duke's remonstrances, took possession of the Hotel de Ville, and quartered the brigade under his own immediate command upon the townspeople.

Bapaume formed the limit of the next day's march; and on the fourth day, Peronne was reached.

In the immediate vicinity of this strongly

fortified town, situated on the north bank of the Somme, and possessing a castle garrisoned by Charles the Bold, Edward proposed to wait till Saint Quentin, which was only a few leagues distant, should be delivered up to him by the Constable Saint Pol.

Throughout the march, the conduct of the Duke of Burgundy had been such as to inspire distrust. Evidently, he was most unwilling that the English army should enter any town belonging to him, or disturb the inhabitants. At Arras, where his wishes were disregarded, he could not conceal his vexation; and now at Peronne, though he could not refuse Edward admittance to the town, he would not lodge him at the castle.

The drawbridge was kept constantly raised, and no one was permitted to enter the fortress. Determined not to brook

further delay, and fancying he perceived some symptoms of uneasiness about his brother-in-law, Edward called upon him to compel the constable to fulfil his promise to deliver up Saint Quentin.

Accordingly, Charles sent a letter to the constable; but as the messenger did not return forthwith, the king waxed impatient, and set out for Saint Quentin, with a guard of two hundred archers, accompanied by the Duke of Burgundy, who had likewise a small guard with him.

On arriving within a couple of leagues of Saint Quentin, Edward commanded the captain of the guard to ride on with twenty men, and announce his approach to the constable.

On reaching the town with his company, the officer found the gates shut, and a number of armed men on the walls. Two large pieces of ordnance were placed on the sum-

mit of the gate, and the engineers threatened to fire upon him if he did not at once withdraw with his men.

Highly offended, the officer demanded admittance in the name of the King of England, whereupon a body of cavalry, commanded, it was thought, by the Constable Saint Pol in person, sallied forth, killed the officer and three of the men, and drove off the rest, who galloped back as hard as they could, to warn the king of his danger.

Edward was riding slowly along, at the head of his men, with Charles the Bold by his side, and the Lords Hastings and Howard close behind him, when the discomfited soldiers came up, and told him what had happened.

Highly incensed, he cried out to the Duke of Burgundy, "By my soul, brother! you shall rue this treachery!"

“Am I answerable for the constable’s misdoings?” observed Charles, coldly. “Visit your anger upon him.”

“Think not to impose upon me by this equivocation!” cried Edward, furiously. “You are the real author of the mischief! Can I doubt that the constable is acting by your orders? But, as I live, both you and he shall repent it!”

“Calm yourself, I pray you, my liege,” interposed Hastings, fearing that the quarrel might proceed to some dire extremity. “Doubtless, his grace will be able to offer an explanation.”

“By Saint George of Burgundy! I know nothing of the matter,” said Charles, “as I will prove to you. Let us ride on, and demand an explanation from the constable.”

But Edward refused to proceed.

“You have deceived me,” he said, sternly,

“and I will not trust you further. You shall return with me to Peronne.”

“As your prisoner? Never!” rejoined Charles, laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword. “Whoso dares hinder my departure had best look to himself! Come with me, Burgundians!”

Thus enjoined, his scanty band of followers pressed towards him.

Edward seemed disposed to stay him, but Hastings again interposed.

“He will never surrender himself, my liege,” said the earl; “and if he be slain, you will be held accountable for his death.”

Edward was sufficiently master of himself to listen to this judicious advice.

As the duke departed, he called out to him, “Take refuge in Saint Quentin, brother. The constable will gladly let you in, though he refuses me admittance.”

Disdaining to make any reply, Charles rode slowly away with his followers.

Firmly resolved to break off the alliance with his faithless brother-in-law, Edward returned to Peronne.

In the first impulse of his wrath, he determined to assault Saint Quentin, and wrest the town from the constable; but when he grew calmer, he deemed it advisable to await the result of the message to Louis.

Beginning to feel some uneasiness respecting Isidore, he resolved to send another messenger to Compiègne, and could find none more suitable than a cordelier, named Father Severin, who had accompanied the army from Dover.

Edward's instructions to the cordelier, who could speak French fluently, were that he should proceed as quickly as he could to Compiègne, and ascertain if any mischance

had befallen Isidore and Claude. Father Severin was charged to render them all the assistance in his power. Moreover, he was furnished with a letter, which he was to deliver to Louis, in case circumstances rendered the step necessary—not otherwise.

Provided with a stout, ambling nag, and with ample means for the journey, the cordelier set out alone, as it was not deemed prudent to send an escort with him.

Having taken this precautionary step, Edward employed himself in preparing for a vigorous prosecution of the war, should Louis decline to accept his conditions.

The bulk of the army were anxious that the campaign should commence in earnest, as they felt sure that the same success that had formerly attended the English arms awaited them now. Moreover, their patience was well-nigh exhausted and provisions were

becoming scarce. They, therefore, ardently hoped that the king would soon order an attack upon Amiens.

The principal knights and nobles were, however, quite satisfied with what had already been done, and the citizens were of the same opinion.

Unaccustomed to hardships of any kind, the latter were annoyed by the trifling discomforts to which they had been subjected during the march from Calais to Peronne, and wished themselves safe back again in London.

VI.

HOW ISIDORE PROCEEDED TOWARDS COMPIEGNE, AND HOW HE WAS STOPPED BY A PARTY OF BURGUNDIAN SOLDIERS ON THE WAY TO MONTDIDIER.

AFTER the encounter with Charles the Bold, which had caused considerable alarm to Isidore and Claude, they proceeded across a plain, rendered famous at a subsequent period for the meeting between Henry the Eighth and Francis the First; and, without halting at Ardres, rode along the banks of a little river to Saint Omer, where they halted for the night.

Resuming their journey at an early hour

next morning, and passing through Bethune, they reached Arras without hindrance or misadventure.

There they would have sojourned for the night, but as it seemed likely they might be detained by the authorities of the town, they decided upon proceeding as far as Doulens.

Next day they rode to Peronne, but did not enter the town, and after refreshing themselves and their horses, shaped their course towards Montdidier; but they had not proceeded much more than a league, when they perceived they were followed by a small party of Burgundian soldiers, with an officer at their head.

The leader of the troop called out to them to stop, and, as it was impossible to fly, they obeyed.

Facing about with his attendants, and assuming a courageous look, Isidore waited

till the officer came up, and then haughtily inquired his business.

“Pardon me, fair sir,” said the officer, courteously. “The orders I have received from the Governor of Peronne are to take you and your attendants back to the town. Be pleased, therefore, to come with me.”

“I protest against any interruption in the name of the King of England!” said Isidore. “I am an envoy from his majesty to King Louis.”

“I must remind you, fair sir, that you are still in the territories of his highness the Duke of Burgundy,” said the officer, who had not in the slightest degree abated his courtesy.

“I am quite aware of it,” replied Isidore. “But the duke, your master, is the ally as well as the brother-in-law of King Edward.”

“Nevertheless, his highness does not

choose that a message even from the King of England shall be sent without his grace's knowledge and approval to the King of France."

"How has the duke learnt that I am charged with any such message?" demanded Isidore.

"I am not bound to give any explanation," replied the officer; "but it would seem that his highness encountered you and your party near Ardres, and suspecting your errand, has sent an order to have you stayed."

"No doubt you have calculated the consequences of such a step. It will naturally give great umbrage to the king my master."

"I have simply to obey orders. You will be first taken to Peronne, and will then be sent back to the English camp. Compel me not, I pray you, to use force."

"Since needs must, I will go with you,"

said Isidore. "But I again warn you that the king, my master, will deeply resent this interference!"

"I cannot help it," rejoined the officer, shrugging his shoulders.

With great reluctance, Cyriac and his comrades accompanied the Burgundian soldiers; but as their young leader did not seem inclined to offer any resistance, they obeyed, and the whole party turned back, and proceeded towards Peronne.

They had not, however, got far when a troop of horsemen, whose accoutrements and the standard which they carried showed they were French soldiers, issued from a wood, and made quickly towards them.

At the sight of this troop, which more than trebled his own in number, the Burgundian officer, though a brave man, looked quite dismayed. In the leader of the hostile troop, he had recognised the Sire de Co-

mines, one of the chief councillors of the French king, and he felt almost certain that this was only a reconnoitring party, and that a much larger force must be close at hand.

Bidding his men save themselves, he seized hold of Isidore's bridle, and tried to drag him along; but Cyriac came to the young esquire's assistance, and soon liberated him.

The Burgundian officer then struck spurs into his horse's flanks, and galloped off with his men towards Peronne.

Pursuit, however, was not attempted by the Sire de Comines, who presently came up with his troop.

VII.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN ISIDORE AND THE SIRE DE
COMINES.

THE chief councillor and chamberlain of the French king was a noble-looking personage, and his strongly marked but handsome countenance was stamped by intelligence, and had a grave and rather stern expression.

Originally in the service of Charles the Bold, with whom he was a great favourite, Philip de Comines was induced to abandon the duke by the magnificent offers made him by the wily Louis the Eleventh, who

desired to secure to himself a person of such ability.

On the defection of Comines, all his estates were immediately confiscated by the Duke of Burgundy, but he was amply rewarded for the loss.

Louis appointed him his chief councillor and chamberlain, with a pension of six thousand livres, and besides bestowing other lucrative honours upon him, created him Prince de Talmont.

Endowed with great shrewdness and power of observation, Philip de Comines kept a record of the most important events that occurred during the reign of Louis the Eleventh, and to him we are indebted for the best chronicle of the period under consideration.

But, though the pursuits of the Sire de Comines were studious, he was well skilled in military matters, and as fond of the sword

as the pen. An excellent horseman, he constantly accompanied his royal master in the chase. He was above the middle height, and strongly built.

On the present occasion, he was clad in a suit of mail, damaskeened with gold, and graven with his arms, and over his armour he wore a rich mantle.

As he came up, he looked hard and inquiringly at Isidore, and said, "By your looks and habiliments you should be an English esquire. What do you here?"

"I am the bearer of a message from the King of England to King Louis of France," replied Isidore.

"By Saint Philip!" exclaimed De Comines, "your royal master does not show much respect to his majesty in sending to him such a coxcomb as thou art. Deliver thy message to me; I will convey it to the king."

“May I inquire who makes me the offer?” said Isidore.

“I am the Sire de Comines, Prince de Talmont, the king’s chief councillor and chamberlain,” said the other.

“And his majesty’s best adviser,” replied Isidore, taking off his cap, and bowing lowly. “I have often heard my royal master speak of you in terms of the highest commendation.”

“Ah! indeed,” exclaimed De Comines, looking hard at the speaker. “It appears you have much influence with King Edward.”

“Not much,” replied the esquire. “But he can trust me.”

“And you have really an important message for King Louis? Do not trifle with me.”

“My message is most important, as you

will admit when I tell you that on the result of my interview depends war or peace!"

"Do you come as an ambassador from the King of England?" cried De Comines.

"No," replied Isidore; "but I am authorised by the king to negotiate a truce."

Though scarcely crediting the assertion, De Comines made no remark; but, after reflecting for a few moments, said, "I will take you to the king. I had other matter in hand, but this shall supersede it."

During the foregoing brief colloquy, the countenances of both speakers had been carefully watched by Claude and Cyriac, who soon saw an understanding had been arrived at.

They were not surprised, therefore, when the Sire de Comines ordered his men to

return at once to Compiègne, while Isidore explained to his followers that he was about to accompany the French noble.

The whole party then set off at a brisk pace for Roye, where they halted, and then proceeded to Gournay.

After resting themselves and their horses at the latter place, they rode on to Compiègne.

During the whole of the journey, De Comines paid great attention to the young esquire, and seemed very anxious to obtain information respecting Charles the Bold.

All Isidore could tell him was that the duke had joined the king at Calais, but with only a very slender attendance.

VIII.

HOW ISIDORE MET THE COUNT DE BEAUJEU IN THE FOREST OF COMPIEGNE; AND HOW THE YOUNG ESQUIRE AND HIS COMPANION WERE LODGED IN THE ROYAL PALACE.

EVENING was coming on as the Sire de Comines and Isidore, with the others, entered the extensive forest adjoining Compiègne, and they were pursuing the road that led through it, when from a side alley, about a bow-shot in advance, there issued a small hunting party, consisting of some half-dozen huntsmen, at the head of whom rode a man of middle age, habited in a green velvet hunting-dress. This person

had a couteau de chasse in his belt, and a riding-whip in his hand. Despite his plain attire, there was an air of distinction about him, and his manner, albeit peculiar and abrupt, was not devoid of dignity. He rode a very fine horse, and though his own attire was extremely plain, the liveries of the huntsmen were magnificent.

“’Tis the Count de Beaujeu. I did not expect to meet him here,” exclaimed De Comines.

With this, he signed to his men to slacken their pace, and rode on alone to join the count, who waited till he came up, the huntsmen slowly continuing their course, accompanied by the hounds.

The name and title of the stranger conveyed nothing to Isidore. He had never before heard of the Count de Beaujeu; but he was struck by his appearance. In age

the count might be about fifty, perhaps rather more; but he looked full of vigour. His features were strongly marked, and characterised by great shrewdness, and had a very crafty and sarcastic expression.

While conversing with De Comines, the count ever and anon cast a scrutinising glance at Isidore, proving that the young esquire was the subject of their discourse.

At length Isidore was summoned, and presented to the count, who thus addressed him, eyeing him keenly as he spoke.

“Soh! you are an envoy from the King of England, I am told, young sir. You have some qualifications for the office, I admit. You are good-looking, and the Sire de Comines says you speak our language well; but I cannot understand why your royal master should send you on the errand, unless a jest is intended.”

“I fear the laugh would be against me if I attempted to jest with King Louis,” rejoined Isidore.

“You are right,” remarked De Comines.

“Yet King Louis jested with his royal brother when he sent him that singular present of the wolf, the wild boar, and the ass,” observed the esquire.

“What said King Edward to the gift?” demanded the count, laughing.

“I dare not tell you, my lord; but his majesty was highly offended.”

“Perchance it is in reprisal that he now sends you as his envoy.”

“I am sent because his majesty felt certain I should succeed in the mission,” Isidore observed.

“He must place great reliance on your powers of persuasion?” remarked the count, dryly.

“Persuasion will be unnecessary, my

lord," rejoined the esquire. "King Louis will gladly accede to the proposition I am empowered to make to him."

"You think so," cried the count.

"I am sure of it," rejoined the esquire, "because it is his interest to do so."

Both the Count de Beaujeu and De Comines laughed heartily at this observation.

"You treat the matter lightly, my lords," said the esquire; "but your royal master will view it very differently."

"We shall see!" rejoined the count. "Have you a written authority from the king!"

"I have his signet-ring," replied Isidore, taking off his glove, and displaying it.

"Enough!" exclaimed the count, after he had carefully examined the ring. "I am satisfied. You shall have an audience of the king to-morrow."

"I thank you, my lord," said the esquire;

“but, perchance, you promise more than you can perform.”

“I promise nothing, save that you shall see the king,” rejoined the count. “I have influence enough with him to procure you an audience; that is all. Take the youth to the palace,” he added, to De Comines.

So saying, he rejoined the huntsmen, and again putting himself at their head, rode off at a brisk pace, and quickly disappeared.

“I have heard that the king has some strange favourites,” observed Isidore. “The Count de Beaujeu must be one of the strangest of them.”

“He has more influence than any one else with the king,” rejoined De Comines. “His majesty can do nothing without him.”

Isidore would fain have questioned him further as to this singular personage; but

finding him disinclined for converse, he forbore.

Nothing more passed between them till they emerged from the forest, and came in sight of the old town of Compiègne. Pleasantly situated on the banks of the Oise, it formed a very charming picture from this point of view.

Close to the town, but not within the walls, was the palace—a large fortified pile, surrounded by a deep moat, supplied with water by the Oise. The aspect of the structure, with its towers and ramparts, was exceedingly striking.

Dismissing the greatest part of his men, with orders to proceed to the town, and retaining only a small guard, De Comines conducted the young esquire and his attendants to the palace.

The drawbridge was raised, but was instantly lowered on the appearance of the

party ; and crossing it, and passing through a gateway, which was strongly guarded, they reached the court-yard.

Here several grooms and pages, in the royal livery, were collected ; and by the time Isidore had dismounted, a gentleman usher made his appearance.

Addressing the usher, De Comines told him that lodgings were to be provided for the young esquire and his attendant, pointing as he spoke to Claude, who was now standing beside his master ; upon which the usher bowed profoundly, said that orders to that effect had been given him, and all was ready for the young esquire's reception in the best part of the palace.

The significance with which the latter part of the speech was uttered did not escape Isidore, and he remarked with a smile to De Comines, "The Count de Beaujeu, I perceive, has been beforehand with us."

“In sooth, you are indebted to him for this attention,” replied De Comines.

“I am none the less indebted to you, my lord,” said Isidore. “Without your aid I should not be here now.”

“Perhaps not; but all difficulties and dangers are surmounted, and you are safe in the royal palace. To-morrow you will see the king. No doubt I shall be present at the audience.”

“And the Count de Beaujeu also?”

“Most likely. Till then, adieu! The usher will conduct you to your apartments.”

Praying the young esquire to follow him, the usher then led him and Claude, who kept constantly near his master, to a wing of the palace facing the Oise, and commanding a charming view.

It would seem that the rooms assigned the young esquire and his attendant must

have belonged to one of the Court ladies, for an elderly *gouvernante*, who was addressed as Madame Benoite, and her daughter Colombe, appeared to have entire charge of them, and waited upon the guests. No pages or valets were allowed to enter the rooms.

Strange as it seemed, this arrangement proved extremely agreeable to Isidore and his companion, nor could they complain, for the utmost attention was shown them by Madame Benoite and Colombe. Supper was served early, and, after partaking of it, Isidore retired to rest, being somewhat fatigued by the journey.

Next morning, there was a great stir within the palace, and Isidore inquired whether anything unusual had happened, and was informed by the *gouvernante* that the king was inspecting the garrison.

Feeling certain he should receive a sum-

mons when it was proper to present himself to his majesty, the young esquire did not leave his room, but passed the time in contemplating the beautiful view of the town and the river from the windows.

He was thus occupied when De Comines entered the room, and, after courteously saluting him, proposed to conduct him to the king.

“His majesty has graciously consented to grant you an audience,” he said. “Have no misgiving; he is in a perfectly good humour, and I think all will turn out as well as you could desire.”

“I am glad to hear it,” replied Isidore. “But where is the Count de Beaujeu? I hoped to see him.”

“You will see him anon,” replied De Comines. “Let me show you the way to the king’s cabinet.”

They then went forth together, leaving

Claude behind, though the page would fain have accompanied his master.

After traversing a corridor thronged by various officers connected with the royal establishment, who made way respectfully for them, and threading several narrow passages, they came to a second corridor, quite as crowded as the first.

Here they entered an ante-chamber, in which some half-dozen distinguished-looking personages were collected. These persons bowed to De Comines, and looked hard at Isidore, but made no remark.

Stationed at the further end of the room was an usher, bearing a white wand. On seeing them approach, he opened the door of the royal cabinet.

Greatly was Isidore surprised to find that there was no one in the little chamber except the person whom he had hitherto known as the Count de Beaujeu. The sup-

posed count, however, no longer wore the hunting-dress in which he had been first seen, but a costume that proclaimed his exalted rank. It was needless for De Comines to inform the esquire that this was King Louis.

Stepping forward, Isidore bent the knee to the monarch, who smiled graciously as he raised him.

IX.

HOW ISIDORE HAD AN AUDIENCE OF KING LOUIS THE ELEVENTH IN HIS MAJESTY'S PRIVATE CABINET IN THE PALACE.

BORN in 1423, Louis the Eleventh was now upwards of fifty, but still strong and remarkably active. He was of middle height, and stooped slightly, but his person was well formed. His features were sharp and intelligent, and his face being scrupulously shaven, its expression could easily be read. His eyes were grey, and their glances singularly keen and searching.

On his closely-cropped head he wore an

embroidered velvet skull-cap, above which was a bonnet bordered with pearls, and having a little leaden figure of the Blessed Virgin placed in front. About his person were a number of saintly relics and images.

On the present occasion, his attire consisted of a tawney-satin tunic, embroidered with gold, over which he wore a purple velvet robe, furred with ermine. Dark red silk hose, and velvet buskins of the same hue, completed his costume. Around his neck hung the chain of the order of Saint Michael, which he himself had founded in 1469.

The cruel, treacherous, and vindictive character of this able and most sagacious monarch is well known. Dissimulation was his practice; his favourite motto being, *Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare*. It is said of him by Mézerai, "that he never neglected to revenge himself, unless he

feared the consequences would be dangerous." And he always acted up to this principle, for he sought to make himself feared.

"Louis the Eleventh," says M. Pitre-Chevalier, "is one of those political giants that arise at the moment of social revolutions; some carry the sword, others the pen—he carried the axe, and the executioner was his gossip. This inflexible organiser, who bequeathed to France in the midst of the remains of the old world the elements of a new world, a homogeneous kingdom, a public administration, manufactures, roads, ports, and that equality before the king, which one day became equality before the law—this man, who alone in his time comprehended and carried his thoughts in his head—this politician so fine, that he attempted to deceive Heaven, and braved Satan, of whom he was so much afraid—

this Louis the Eleventh, in short, for his name alone ought to define him, said to himself, while thinking of his great vassals, whom he meant to destroy, 'My two cousins, Burgundy and Bretagne, shall fall the first.'"

Numerous assassinations were laid to the charge of this terrible king. It is said that he poisoned Agnes Sorel, the beautiful and amiable favourite of his father, Charles the Seventh; and so fearful was the father of being poisoned by his son, that he refused all nourishment, and died from excess of precaution.

Those who became the confidants and favourites of Louis were men of the lowest condition. The three persons who had the greatest ascendancy over him were his provost-marshal, Tristan l'Hermite, whom he familiarly styled his gossip; his barber, Olivier le Dain; and his physician, Jacques

Coictier. His best and sincerest adviser was Philip de Comines, whom he had contrived to detach from the service of Charles the Bold.

Louis never forgave a minister who abused his confidence ; and having discovered the treacheries of Cardinal Balue, he subjected him to a long and terrible imprisonment in an iron cage.

Ever since he ascended the throne, Louis had been engaged in a constant struggle with his great vassals, his rebellious subjects, and his powerful and ambitious neighbours.

Dangerous leagues were continually formed against him by his brother, the Duke de Guienne ; and when the duke died, it was said that Louis had removed him by poison. Other dark crimes were laid to his charge, and not unjustly.

The last and most dangerous league

formed against Louis was that with which we have now to deal, and which comprehended the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke of Bretagne, and King Edward of England. But he hoped to break up this formidable alliance by his superior craft, and his first object was to get rid, at any cost, of the warlike monarch who had invaded his kingdom.

Fortunately for his purpose, the Duke of Burgundy had acted towards his royal ally with inconceivable folly, and Louis was not slow to take advantage of the duke's egregious blunder. If he could separate Edward and Charles, the Duke of Bretagne would be easily dealt with.

Regarding the young esquire with a smiling and encouraging look, the wily monarch said to him, "I promised you should see the king, and you perceive I have kept my word."

Isidore bowed, and Louis went on, in a cajoling tone, "I am very glad my good cousin, the King of England, has sent you to me. He could not have chosen a better messenger."

"I was not chosen, sire," rejoined Isidore. "I volunteered to come."

"*Pâques-Dieu!* you have plenty of courage!" exclaimed Louis. "Yet I am surprised the king could trust you."

"He knew I was in no danger, sire; and he knew, also, that he could rely upon me."

"Are you in full possession of his majesty's wishes, and able to treat for him?" asked Louis.

"I am, sire."

"In that case, I am persuaded we shall arrive at a satisfactory understanding. Believe me, when I assert that I have always desired to live on terms of amity with my good cousin, and, however appearances may

be against me, my sincere wish has ever been that the two kingdoms should be at peace. Never since my accession to the throne have I undertaken a war against England; and if I received the Earl of Warwick, it was against the Duke of Burgundy, and not against King Edward."

"I will take care to mention this to my royal master," remarked Isidore.

"I know very well," pursued Louis, "that my good cousin has been induced to invade my kingdom by the artful representations of Charles of Burgundy. But the duke is unable to aid him. He has just returned from the siege of Neuss, wholly discomfited. His army is in such a deplorable condition, that he dares not show it to the king, your master."

"It would certainly appear so, sire," observed Isidore.

"I am also aware," said Louis, "that

King Edward has an understanding with the Constable Saint Pol, whose niece he has married. But let him beware. The constable is a traitor, as I know to my cost."

"His majesty has little faith in him," observed Isidore.

"Mark me!" said Louis, significantly. "My good cousin will do far better to conclude a loyal peace with an old enemy, than to count upon the promises of his faithless allies."

"Such a peace may be concluded," said Isidore.

"You think so?" cried Louis, eagerly.

"I am able to state to your majesty the terms on which alone King Edward will consent to make peace."

"Let me hear them," cried Louis.

"Before King Edward will leave the kingdom, he requires seventy-five thousand crowns down."

“He shall have them,” said Louis.

“Further, an annuity for life of fifty thousand crowns.”

“Granted!” cried Louis. “Is there aught more?”

“Yes, sire; the most material part has to come,” said Isidore. “The next condition is that a marriage shall be contracted between the Dauphin and King Edward’s eldest daughter, the Lady Elizabeth of York—it being understood that the princess shall receive an annual pension of sixty thousand crowns, secured on the revenues of Guienne, and to be paid at the Tower of London until such time as she shall come to France, to reside with her royal husband.”

“This demand requires consideration,” said Louis. “But I may possibly accede to it. How say you, De Comines?”

His councillor replied, in a low tone, calculated only for the king's ear.

“Bear in mind, sire, the advice of Sforza, Duke of Milan: ‘Give what you have not got, and promise what you cannot give.’”

Seeing the drift of the remark, Louis added, to the esquire, “I agree to the proposed marriage. Is there aught more?”

“There are some other demands,” replied Isidore; “but they are of minor importance, and relate chiefly to the citizens of London. I doubt not the points will be readily conceded by your majesty.”

“Ay, such matters do not need discussion,” said Louis. “If I agree to the terms proposed to me, my motives must not be misunderstood. I desire peace, but am fully prepared for war. All the passages of the Somme are well guarded, and King Edward will not be able to pass the river

without severe fighting—even if he should succeed in passing it. Is he prepared for a long campaign? I doubt it. The Duke of Burgundy has led him to suppose he can march on without difficulty. He will find it otherwise. The country has been wasted, and as he will not be able to procure provisions for his army, he may have to retreat ingloriously.”

“King Edward will not retreat, if the war once commences,” said Isidore. “Of that your majesty may rest assured. All difficulties will be surmounted, and he will return in triumph like Edward the Third from Cressy and Poitiers, and Henry the Fifth from Agincourt.”

“We are talking of peace, not war,” cried Louis, sharply.

“True, sire,” rejoined Isidore; “and peace can be made, provided my royal master’s terms are agreed to by your ma-

jesty. A formal treaty has been drawn up, which only lacks your majesty's signature."

"Have you the treaty?" demanded Louis, hastily.

"'Tis here, sire," rejoined Isidore, taking the paper from his breast.

Louis almost snatched the document from him, and ran his eye eagerly over its contents.

"Your majesty will find nothing more set down than what I have stated," said Isidore.

"You have not misled me, I see," cried Louis. "When this treaty is executed—and I know you have sufficient interest with King Edward to bring that about—you shall have, in token of my regard, nine thousand crowns in gold, besides the thousand I will presently bestow upon you."

"Ten thousand crowns of gold!" exclaimed the esquire. "'Tis a royal gift."

“But you will richly deserve it, if you are the means of securing a peace between the two kingdoms,” observed De Comines.

“The conditions are fully agreed upon,” said Louis; “but to keep up appearances, they must be formally discussed by ambassadors, on King Edward’s part, and commissioners on mine; after which, an interview can take place between my good cousin and myself, when the treaty can be executed, and a truce concluded.”

Isidore bowed assent, and Louis went on.

“You must be content to be my guest for a few days,” he said, “while certain preliminaries are arranged; but you shall have as much privacy as you can desire.”

“I am in no haste to depart,” replied the esquire; “but I trust I may be permitted to communicate with the king, my

master, who may feel some uneasiness concerning me."

"'Tis my wish that you should write to King Edward," said Louis. "One of the guard who attended you can take the letter to him. Very few words will suffice, as the missive might fall into wrong hands. Have you a man with you whom you can trust?"

"There is an archer named Cyriac, my liege, on whom I can perfectly rely."

"I have had some converse with the man," remarked De Comines, "and will answer for his fidelity."

"Enough," said Louis. "He shall have a safe-conduct, which will protect him, unless he should fall into the hands of the Duke of Burgundy. Do not for a moment imagine," he continued, with a singular smile, "that I mean to detain you as a hostage. But I may have a correspondence

with King Edward, which you alone can conduct.”

“ I quite understand, sire,” said Isidore.

“ During your stay at Compiègne, which I will endeavour to make pleasant to you,” said Louis, “ you will do exactly as you please. Servants and horses shall be placed at your disposal. You can visit the town, ride in the forest, go where you will; all I require is that you do not leave without my consent.”

Seeing that the interview was at an end, Isidore bowed profoundly to the king, and was re-conducted to his apartments by *De Comines*.

END OF VOL. I.

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