

WINDSOR CASTLE



W. HARRISON AINSWORTH

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

INTRODUCTION

THE great and all too auspicious induction to Harrison Ainsworth's romance of Windsor Castle is *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, some lines from which buoyant comedy appear on the original title-page of the story. They give the cue for the entrance of Herne the Hunter, who is used by the romancer to work up the fatality interwoven with the sad true account of Henry the Eighth, Anne Boleyn, and her supplanter. The lines that conjure up the horned figure of Herne are spoken by Mistress Page, in Act iv. Scene 4, when she and Mistress Ford are plotting against Falstaff.

There is an old tale goes, she says, that—

“ Herne the hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,
And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
You have heard of such a spirit; and well you know,
The superstitious idle-headed eld
Receiv'd, and did deliver to our age,
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.”

Their plot for the fairy-penance and the unhorning of Falstaff is too well known to need repeating, and it has nothing directly to do with Ainsworth's horned man. He loses no time in setting up the tree of destiny in his opening chapter,—“a large, lightning-scathed and solitary oak.” The original tree still stood, according to history, till the time of George the Third, who ordered it to be destroyed with others, far gone in decay, in 1796. It was a pollard tree, hollow, and had this huge advantage, that boys could get inside it comfortably. It was in fact some nine or ten paces round its trunk. Ainsworth gives Herne a wilder character than he had in the usually accepted Windsor tradition; in which he was one of the park-keepers who had hung himself in the oak, whereupon his ghost became,

according to a common attachment known in folk-lore, its attendant spirit. Something of the elemental wildness associated in Shropshire and Herefordshire lore with "Wild Eric," and with the aerial pack of hounds, the Seven Whistlers, probably helped Ainsworth to make out his magic huntsman's character. In fact he is a mixture of Wild Eric and a Windsor Mephistopheles; and the wonder is that in the story his black wizardry is not given yet fuller effect in the fate of other characters. For the Earl of Surrey, ill-fated hero and delightful love-poet, is taken to Herne's Tree, ominously and deliberately enough, at the opening of the story; yet his evil destiny is not followed up to its tragic close on the scaffold that makes a natural pendant to Anne Boleyn's. Wyatt, again, only survived Surrey by a few years: but in the story the Jane Seymour intrigue, and her triumph at the bloody end of her rival, close the account. The plot being what it was, we may still wonder a little why the formal melodrama does not pursue its subsidiary heroes and poets over the last barriers of sensation, with Herne to pilot them?

Harrison Ainsworth had a great liking for a historical background; and it is Windsor Castle which is, after all, the chief actor in this drama;—more than Henry VIII., more than Surrey or Wyatt, more than the two fatal queens. We might reasonably end, if we were to follow up the stage suggestion, by calling him distinctly a scene-painter among the novelists; one who looked upon his people as stage-properties, and rarely treated them as a true novelist, or a saga man, would. His picturesque patch of real record, irrupted in the romance, leaves the Castle well in the foreground at the end of his third book, and the latest Windsor historian, Sir Richard R. Holmes, pays him the tribute of saying that his novel mixes up with the Herne legend a fairly accurate account of the history during the early and Tudor times.

For some account of Ainsworth himself, the reader may turn to the preliminary pages of *Old Saint Paul's* and *The Tower of London* in this series.

E. R.

The following is a list of the works of William Harrison Ainsworth:—

Works of Cheviot Tichburn (pseudonym), 1822, 1824; *December Tales*, 1823; *Poems* (published under pseudonym), 1824; *A Summer Evening Tale*, 1825; *Considerations of the best Means of affording immediate Relief to the Operative Classes in the Manufacturing Districts*, 1826; *Sir John Chiverton* (? in collaboration with John Partington Aston), 1826; *Rookwood*, 1834; *Crichton*, 1837; *Jack Sheppard*, 1839; *Tower of London*, 1840; *Guy Fawkes*, 1841; *Old St. Paul's*, a *Tale of the Plague and Fire of London* (from the *Sunday Times*), 1841; *The Miser's Daughter*, 1842; *Windsor Castle*, 1843; *St. James's*, or *The Court of Queen Anne*, 1844; *Lancashire Witches* (from the *Sunday Times*), 1848; *Star Chamber*, 1854; *James the Second, or the Revolution of 1688, etc.*, 1854; *The Flitch of Bacon, or the Custom of Dunmow*, 1854; *Ballads, romantic, fantastical, and humorous*, 1855; *Spendthrift*, 1856; *Mervyn Clitheroe*, 1857; *The Combat of the Thirty. From a Breton Lay of fourteenth century, with introduction comprising a new chapter of Froissart, by W. H. A.*, 1859; *Ovingdean Grange, A Tale of the South Downs*, 1860; *Constable of the Tower*, 1861; *The Lord Mayor of London, or City Life in the Last Century*, 1862; *Cardinal Pole*, 1863; *John Law the Projector*, 1864; *The Spanish Match, or Charles Stuart in Madrid*, 1865; *Myddleton Pomfret*, 1865; *Auriol, or the Elixir of Life*, 1865; *The Constable de Bourbon*, 1866; *Old Court*, 1867; *The South Sea Bubble*, 1868; *Hilary St. Ives*, 1869; *Talbot Harland*, 1870; *Tower Hill*, 1871; *Boscobel*, 1872; *The Good Old Times, the story of the Manchester Rebels*, 1873; *Merry England*, 1874; *The Goldsmith's Wife*, 1874; *Preston Fight, or the Insurrection of 1715*, 1875; *Chetwynd Calverley*, 1876; *The Leaguer of Lathom, a tale of the Civil War in Lancashire*, 1876; *The Fall of Somerset*, 1877; *Beatrice Tyldesley*, 1878; *Beau Nash*, 1879 (?) or 1880; *Auriol and other Tales*, 1880; *Stanley Brereton*, 1881.

Editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, 1838-41, 1854, etc. (in which several of his novels first appeared); of *Ainsworth's Magazine*, 1842-54 (when it was incorporated with *Bentley's Miscellany*); of *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist*, vols. 73-147. He also started *The Bæotian* in 1824, but the magazine only ran through a few numbers. Contributor to *Fraser, London Magazine, Edinburgh Magazine*, etc.

LIFE.—*Memoir* by Laman Blanchard, the *Mirror*, 1842; prefixed to later editions of *Rookwood*; *John Evans, Early Life of William Harrison Ainsworth, Manchester Quarterly*, 1882; *W. E. Axon, William Harrison Ainsworth, A Memoir*, 1902.

“ About, about!
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out.”

SHAKESPEARE, *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

“ There is an old tale goes, that Herne the hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree. . . .

“ You have heard of such a spirit; and well you know,
The superstitious idle-headed eld
Receiv'd, and did deliver to our age,
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.”—*Ibid*.

All rights reserved
Made in Great Britain
at The Temple Press Letchworth
and decorated by Eric Ravilious
for

J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
Aldine House Bedford St. London
Toronto . Vancouver
Melbourne . Wellington

First Published in this Edition 1915
Reprinted 1923, 1927, 1933

CONTENTS

PAGE

BOOK I

ANNE BOLEYN I

BOOK II

HERNE THE HUNTER 77

BOOK III

THE HISTORY OF THE CASTLE 130

BOOK IV

CARDINAL WOLSEY 162

BOOK V

MABEL LYNDWOOD 235

BOOK VI

JANE SEYMOUR 274

WINDSOR CASTLE

BOOK I

ANNE BOLEYN

I

Of the Earl of Surrey's solitary Ramble in the Home Park—Of the Vision beheld by him in the Haunted Dell—And of his Meeting with Morgan Fenwolf, the Keeper, beneath Herne's Oak.

IN the twentieth year of the reign of the right high and puissant King Henry the Eighth, namely, in 1529, on the 21st of April, and on one of the loveliest evenings that ever fell on the loveliest district in England, a fair youth, having somewhat the appearance of a page, was leaning over the terrace wall on the north side of Windsor Castle, and gazing at the magnificent scene before him. On his right stretched the broad green expanse forming the Home Park, studded with noble trees, chiefly consisting of ancient oaks, of which England had already learnt to be proud, thorns as old or older than the oaks, wide-spreading beeches, tall elms, and hollies. The disposition of these trees was picturesque and beautiful in the extreme. Here, at the end of a sweeping vista, and in the midst of an open space covered with the greenest sward, stood a mighty broad-armed oak, beneath whose ample boughs, though as yet almost destitute of foliage, while the sod beneath them could scarcely boast a head of fern, couched a herd of deer. There lay a thicket of thorns skirting a sand-bank, burrowed by rabbits; on this hand grew a dense and Druid-like grove, into whose intricacies the slanting sunbeams pierced; on that extended a long glade, formed by a natural avenue of oaks, across which, at intervals, deer were passing. Nor were human figures wanting to give life and interest to the scene. Adown the glade came two keepers of the forest, having each a couple of buckhounds with them in leash, whose baying sounded cheerily amid the

woods. Nearer the castle, and bending their way towards it, marched a party of falconers with their well-trained birds, whose skill they had been approving upon their fists, their jesses ringing as they moved along, while nearer still, and almost at the foot of the terrace wall, was a minstrel playing on a rebec, to which a keeper, in a dress of Lincoln green, with a bow over his shoulder, a quiver of arrows at his back, and a comely damsel under his arm, was listening.

On the left, a view altogether different in character, though scarcely less beautiful, was offered to the gaze. It was formed by the town of Windsor, then not a third of its present size, but incomparably more picturesque in appearance, consisting almost entirely of a long straggling row of houses, chequered black and white, with tall gables, and projecting storeys skirting the west and south sides of the castle, by the silver windings of the river, traceable for miles, and reflecting the glowing hues of the sky, by the venerable College of Eton, embowered in a grove of trees, and by a vast tract of well-wooded and well-cultivated country beyond it, interspersed with villages, churches, old halls, monasteries, and abbeys.

Taking out his tablets, the youth, after some reflection, traced a few lines upon them, and then, quitting the parapet, proceeded slowly, and with a musing air, towards the north-west angle of the terrace. He could not be more than fifteen, perhaps not so much, but he was tall and well-grown, with slight though remarkably well-proportioned limbs; and it might have been safely predicted that, when arrived at years of maturity, he would possess great personal vigour. His countenance was full of thought and intelligence, and he had a broad lofty brow, shaded by a profusion of light brown ringlets, a long, straight, and finely-formed nose, a full, sensitive, and well-chiselled mouth, and a pointed chin. His eyes were large, dark, and somewhat melancholy in expression, and his complexion possessed that rich clear brown tint constantly met with in Italy or Spain, though but seldom seen in a native of our own colder clime. His dress was rich, but sombre, consisting of a doublet of black satin, worked with threads of Venetian gold; hose of the same material, and similarly embroidered; a shirt curiously wrought with black silk, and fastened at the collar with black enamelled clasps; a cloak of black velvet, passmented with gold, and lined with crimson satin; a flat black velvet cap, set with pearls and

goldsmith's work, and adorned with a short white plume; and black velvet buskins. His arms were rapier and dagger, both having gilt and graven handles, and sheaths of black velvet.

As he moved along, the sound of voices chanting vespers arose from Saint George's Chapel; and while he paused to listen to the solemn strains, a door, in that part of the castle used as the king's privy lodgings, opened, and a person advanced towards him. The new-comer had broad, brown, martial-looking features, darkened still more by a thick coal-black beard, clipped short in the fashion of the time, and a pair of enormous moustachios. He was accoutred in a habergeon, which gleamed from beneath the folds of a russet-coloured mantle, and wore a steel cap in lieu of a bonnet on his head, while a long sword dangled from beneath his cloak. When within a few paces of the youth, whose back was towards him, and who did not hear his approach, he announced himself by a loud cough, that proved the excellence of his lungs, and made the old walls ring again, startling the jackdaws roosting in the battlements.

"What! composing a vesper hymn, my lord of Surrey?" he cried with a laugh, as the other hastily thrust the tablets, which he had hitherto held in his hand, into his bosom. "You will rival Master Skelton, the poet laureate, and your friend Sir Thomas Wyat, too, ere long. But will it please your lordship to quit for a moment the society of the celestial Nine, and descend to earth, while I inform you that, acting as your representative, I have given all needful directions for his majesty's reception to-morrow?"

"You have not failed, I trust, to give orders to the groom of the chambers for the lodging of my fair cousin, Mistress Anne Boleyn, Captain Bouchier?" inquired the Earl of Surrey, with a significant smile.

"Assuredly not, my lord!" replied the other, smiling in his turn. "She will be lodged as royally as if she were Queen of England. Indeed, the queen's own apartments are assigned her."

"It is well," rejoined Surrey. "And you have also provided for the reception of the Pope's legate, Cardinal Campeggio?"

Bouchier bowed.

"And for Cardinal Wolsey?" pursued the other.

The captain bowed again.

"To save your lordship the necessity of asking any further questions," he said, "I may state briefly that I have done all as if you had done it yourself."

"Be a little more particular, captain, I pray you," said Surrey.

"Willingly, my lord," replied Bouchier. "In your lordship's name, then, as vice-chamberlain, in which character I presented myself, I summoned together the dean and canons of the College of St. George, the usher of the black rod, the governor of the alms-knights, and the whole of the officers of the household, and acquainted them, in a set speech—which, I flatter myself, was quite equal to any that your lordship, with all your poetical talents, could have delivered—that the king's highness, being at Hampton Court with the two cardinals, Wolsey and Campeggio, debating the matter of divorce from his queen, Catherine of Arragon, proposes to hold the grand feast of the most noble order of the Garter at this his castle of Windsor, on Saint George's Day—that is to say, the day after to-morrow—and that it is therefore his majesty's sovereign pleasure that the Chapel of St. George, in the said castle, be set forth and adorned with its richest furniture; that the high altar be hung with arras representing the patron saint of the order on horseback, and garnished with the costliest images and ornaments in gold and silver; that the pulpit be covered with crimson damask, inwrought with flowers-de-luces of gold, portcullises, and roses; that the royal stall be canopied with a rich cloth of state, with a *haut-pas* beneath it of a foot high; that the stalls of the knights companions be decked with cloth of tissue, with their scutcheons set at the back; and that all be ready at the hour of tierce—*horâ tertiâ vespertinâ*, as appointed by his majesty's own statute—at which time the eve of the feast shall be held to commence."

"Take breath, captain," laughed the earl.

"I have no need," replied Bouchier. "Furthermore, I delivered your lordship's warrant from the lord chamberlain to the usher of the black rod, to make ready and furnish Saint George's Hall, both for the supper to-morrow and the grand feast on the following day; and I enjoined the dean and canons of the college, the alms-knights, and all the other officers of the order, to be in readiness for the occasion. And

now, having fulfilled my devoir, or rather your lordship's, I am content to resign my post as vice-chamberlain, to resume my ordinary one, that of your simple gentleman, and to attend you back to Hampton Court whenever it shall please you to set forth."

"And that will not be for an hour, at the least," replied the earl; "for I intend to take a solitary ramble in the Home Park."

"What! to seek inspiration for a song—or to meditate upon the charms of the fair Geraldine, eh, my lord?" rejoined Bouchier. "But I will not question you too shrewdly. Only let me caution you against going near Herne's Oak. It is said that the demon hunter walks at nightfall, and scares, if he does not injure, all those who cross his path. At curfew toll I must quit the castle, and will then, with your attendants proceed to the Garter, in Thames Street, where I will await your arrival. If we reach Hampton Court by midnight, it will be time enough, and as the moon will rise in an hour, we shall have a pleasant ride."

"Commend me to Bryan Bowntance, the worthy host of the Garter," said the earl; "and bid him provide you with a bottle of his best sack in which to drink my health."

"Fear me not," replied the other. "And I pray your lordship not to neglect my caution respecting Herne the Hunter. In sober sooth, I have heard strange stories of his appearance of late, and should not care to go near the tree after dark."

The earl laughed somewhat sceptically, and the captain reiterating his caution, they separated—Bouchier returning the way he came, and Surrey proceeding towards a small drawbridge crossing the ditch on the eastern side of the castle, and forming a means of communication with the Little Park. He was challenged by a sentinel at the drawbridge, but on giving the password he was allowed to cross it, and to pass through a gate on the farther side opening upon the park.

Brushing the soft and dewy turf with a footstep almost as light and bounding as that of a fawn, he speeded on for more than a quarter of a mile, when he reached a noble beech-tree standing at the end of a clump of timber. A number of rabbits were feeding beneath it, but at his approach they instantly plunged into their burrows.

Here he halted to look at the castle. The sun had sunk

behind it, dilating its massive keep to almost its present height and tinging the summits of the whole line of ramparts and towers, since rebuilt and known as the Brunswick Tower, the Chester Tower, the Clarence Tower, and the Victoria Tower, with rosy lustre.

Flinging himself at the foot of the beech-tree, the youthful earl indulged his poetical reveries for a short time, and then, rising, retraced his steps, and in a few minutes the whole of the south side of the castle lay before him. The view comprehended the two fortifications recently removed to make way for the York and Lancaster Towers, between which stood a gate approached by a drawbridge; the Earl Marshal's Tower, now styled from the monarch in whose reign it was erected, Edward the Third's Tower; the black rod's lodgings; the Lieutenant's—now Henry the Third's Tower; the line of embattled walls, constituting the lodgings of the alms-knights; the tower tenanted by the governor of that body, and still allotted to the same officer; Henry the Eighth's Gateway, and the Chancellor of the Garter's Tower—the latter terminating the line of building. A few rosy beams tipped the pinnacles of Saint George's Chapel, seen behind the towers above-mentioned, with fire; but, with this exception, the whole of the mighty fabric looked cold and grey.

At this juncture the upper gate was opened, and Captain Bouchier and his attendants issued from it, and passed over the drawbridge. The curfew bell then tolled, the drawbridge was raised, the horsemen disappeared, and no sound reached the listener's ear except the measured tread of the sentinels on the ramparts, audible in the profound stillness.

The youthful earl made no attempt to join his followers, but having gazed on the ancient pile before him till its battlements and towers grew dim in the twilight, he struck into a footpath leading across the park towards Datchet, and pursued it until it brought him near a dell filled with thorns, hollies, and underwood, and overhung by mighty oaks, into which he unhesitatingly plunged, and soon gained the deepest part of it. Here, owing to the thickness of the hollies and the projecting arms of other large overhanging timber, added to the uncertain light above, the gloom was almost impervious, and he could scarcely see a yard before him. Still, he pressed on unhesitatingly, and with a sort of pleasurable sensation at the difficulties he was encountering. Suddenly, however,

he was startled by a blue phosphoric light streaming through the bushes on the left, and, looking up, he beheld at the foot of an enormous oak, whose giant roots protruded like twisted snakes from the bank, a wild spectral-looking object, possessing some slight resemblance to humanity, and habited, so far as it could be determined, in the skins of deer, strangely disposed about its gaunt and tawny-coloured limbs. On its head was seen a sort of helmet, formed of the skull of a stag, from which branched a large pair of antlers; from its left arm hung a heavy and rusty-looking chain, in the links of which burnt the phosphoric fire before mentioned; while on its right wrist was perched a large horned owl, with feathers erected, and red staring eyes.

Impressed with the superstitious feelings common to the age, the young earl, fully believing he was in the presence of a supernatural being, could scarcely, despite his courageous nature, which no ordinary matter would have shaken, repress a cry. Crossing himself, he repeated, with great fervency, a prayer, against evil spirits, and as he uttered it the light was extinguished, and the spectral figure vanished. The clanking of the chain was heard, succeeded by the hooting of the owl; then came a horrible burst of laughter, then a fearful wail, and all was silent.

Up to this moment the young earl had stood still, as if spell-bound; but being now convinced that the spirit had fled, he pressed forward, and, ere many seconds, emerged from the brake. The full moon was rising as he issued forth, and illuminating the glades and vistas, and the calmness and beauty of all around seemed at total variance with the fearful vision he had just witnessed. Throwing a shuddering glance at the haunted dell, he was about to hurry towards the castle, when a large, lightning-scathed, and solitary oak, standing a little distance from him, attracted his attention.

This was the very tree connected with the wild legend of Herne the Hunter, which Captain Bouchier had warned him not to approach, and he now forcibly recalled the caution. Beneath it he perceived a figure, which he at first took for that of the spectral hunter; but his fears were relieved by a shout from the person, who at the same moment appeared to catch sight of him.

Satisfied that, in the present instance, he had to do with a being of this world, Surrey ran towards the tree, and on

approaching it perceived that the object of his alarm was a young man of very athletic proportions, and evidently, from his garb, a keeper of the forest.

He was habited in a jerkin of Lincoln green cloth, with the royal badge woven in silver on the breast, and his head was protected by a flat green cloth cap, ornamented with a pheasant's tail. Under his right arm he carried a crossbow; a long silver-tipped horn was slung in his baldric; and he was armed with a short hanger, or wood-knife. His features were harsh and prominent; and he had black beetling brows, a large coarse mouth, and dark eyes, lighted up with a very sinister and malignant expression.

He was attended by a large savage-looking staghound, whom he addressed as Bawsey, and whose fierceness had to be restrained as Surrey approached.

"Have you seen anything?" he demanded of the earl.

"I have seen Herne the Hunter himself, or the fiend in his likeness," replied Surrey.

And he briefly related the vision he had beheld.

"Ay, ay, you have seen the demon hunter, no doubt," replied the keeper at the close of the recital. "I neither saw the light, nor heard the laughter, nor the wailing cry you speak of; but Bawsey crouched at my feet and whined, and I knew some evil thing was at hand. Heaven shield us!" he exclaimed, as the hound crouched at his feet, and directed her gaze towards the oak, uttering a low ominous whine, "she is at the same trick again."

The earl glanced in the same direction, and half expected to see the knotted trunk of the tree burst open and disclose the figure of the spectral hunter. But nothing was visible—at least, to him, though it would seem from the shaking limbs, fixed eyes, and ghastly visage of the keeper, that some appalling object was presented to his gaze.

"Do you not see him?" cried the latter at length, in thrilling accents; "he is circling the tree, and blasting it. There! he passes us now—do you not see him?"

"No," replied Surrey; "but do not let us tarry here longer."

So saying he laid his hand upon the keeper's arm. The touch seemed to rouse him to exertion. He uttered a fearful cry, and set off at a quick pace along the park, followed by Bawsey, with her tail between her legs. The earl kept up

with him, and neither halted till they had left the wizard oak at a considerable distance behind them.

"And so you did not see him?" said the keeper, in a tone of exhaustion, as he wiped the thick drops from his brow.

"I did not," replied Surrey.

"That is passing strange," rejoined the other. "I myself have seen him before, but never as he appeared to-night."

"You are a keeper of the forest, I presume, friend?" said Surrey. "How are you named?"

"I am called Morgan Fenwolf," replied the keeper; "and you?"

"I am the Earl of Surrey," returned the young noble.

"What!" exclaimed Fenwolf, making a reverence, "the son to his grace of Norfolk?"

The earl replied in the affirmative.

"Why, then, you must be the young nobleman whom I used to see so often with the king's son, the Duke of Richmond, three or four years ago, at the castle?" rejoined Fenwolf.

"You are altogether grown out of my recollection."

"Not unlikely," returned the earl. "I have been at Oxford, and have only just completed my studies. This is the first time I have been at Windsor since the period you mention."

"I have heard that the Duke of Richmond was at Oxford likewise," observed Fenwolf.

"We were at Cardinal College together," replied Surrey.

"But the duke's term was completed before mine. He is my senior by three years."

"I suppose your lordship is returning to the castle?" said Fenwolf.

"No," replied Surrey. "My attendants are waiting for me at the Garter, and if you will accompany me thither, I will bestow a cup of good ale upon you to recruit you after the fright you have undergone."

Fenwolf signified his graceful acquiescence, and they walked on in silence, for the earl could not help dwelling upon the vision he had witnessed, and his companion appeared equally abstracted. In this sort they descended the hill near Henry the Eighth's Gate, and entered Thames Street.

II

Of Bryan Bowntance, the Host of the Garter—Of the Duke of Shore-ditch—Of the Bold Words uttered by Mark Fytton, the Butcher, and how he was cast into the Vault of the Curfew Tower.

TURNING off on the right, the earl and his companion continued to descend the hill until they came in sight of the Garter—a snug little hostel, situated immediately beneath the Curfew Tower.

Before the porch were grouped the earl's attendants, most of whom had dismounted, and were holding their steeds by the bridles. At this juncture the door of the hostel opened, and a fat jolly-looking personage, with a bald head and bushy grey beard, and clad in a brown serge doublet, and hose to match, issued forth, bearing a foaming jug of ale and a horn cup. His appearance was welcomed by a joyful shout from the attendants.

"Come, my masters!" he cried, filling the horn, "here is a cup of stout Windsor ale in which to drink the health of our jolly monarch, bluff King Hal; and there's no harm, I trust, in calling him so."

"Marry, is there not, mine host," cried the foremost attendant. "I spoke of him as such in his own hearing not long ago, and he laughed at me in right merry sort. I love the royal bully, and will drink his health gladly, and Mistress Anne Boleyn's to boot."

And he emptied the horn.

"They tell me Mistress Anne Boleyn is coming to Windsor with the king and the knights-companions to-morrow—is it so?" asked the host, again filling the horn, and handing it to another attendant.

The person addressed nodded, but he was too much engrossed by the horn to speak.

"Then there will be rare doings in the castle," chuckled the host; "and many a lusty pot will be drained at the Garter. Alack-a-day! how times are changed since I, Bryan Bowntance, first stepped into my father's shoes, and became host of the Garter. It was in 1501—twenty-eight years ago—when King Henry the Seventh, of blessed memory, ruled the land, and when his elder son, Prince Arthur, was alive likewise. In that year the young prince espoused Catherine