

**THE VISION OF THE
TWELVE GODDESSES:
A ROYAL MASQUE**

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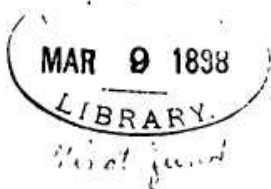
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Introduction.

THE Vision of the Twelve Goddesses, which is reprinted in the following pages, was a masque written by Samuel Daniel, and acted by the Queen, Anne of Denmark, and her ladies of honour at Hampton Court, on the 8th of January, 1604. Before describing the masque itself, it may be as well to give a short sketch of the state of the Court at the time of its representation, and of the persons who took part in it; and to glance at some of the other amusements and festivities, that enlivened the first Christmas which King James and his Queen spent in their new kingdom.

It was about the beginning of December, 1603, that they resolved to move to Hampton Court for the ensuing season. Probably the recollection of the splendid entertainments of which it had been the scene during the reigns of the Tudor sovereigns,

and especially of the late Queen, suggested it as the most appropriate royal residence in which to celebrate their advent to the throne. Of all the English palaces it was then, as it is now, the most spacious; and, with its magnificent suite of reception-rooms, of which only the Great Hall and Withdrawing Chamber now remain, the most adapted for brilliant Court gaieties. The desire of the King and Queen to rival the splendour of their predecessors doubtless had weight with them in selecting a masque as the principal feature of the festivities. For it was just about this time that these entertainments were beginning to be popular. Towards the close of Queen Elizabeth's reign they had gradually tended towards the form they eventually assumed under the skilful hands of Ben Jonson; they were, in fact, developing from the mere masquerades or mummings into dramatic representations of a high lyrical order, which found their noblest embodiment in Milton's sublime poem, "Comus." And it will be interesting to inquire into this masque of Daniel's in particular, because it was, in a certain sense, the first true masque ever presented, and because it holds a position midway between the earlier revels of Tudor times and the more finished compositions which have been alluded to.

The Queen, besides, was not altogether a stranger to these entertainments. On her way southwards from Scotland she had been received at Althorp in

a most elaborate and exquisitely beautiful pageant designed by Ben Jonson. As the royal *cortège* approached the house, on all sides from the woods and shrubberies, persons dressed in the guise of sylvan deities issued forth to greet her with songs and pretty speeches; while groups of minstrels were hidden at various points, and played strains of soft music as the procession moved forward. Afterwards, when the Queen and her attendants arrived at the house, the masqueraders performed picturesque dances "in country footing" on the lawns, to the accompaniment "of flutes and soft recorders," and addresses were spoken and songs were sung welcoming her to England. Again, at Winchester, in the month of October, a masque of some sort, of which no detailed account is extant, was acted before the Court and the Spanish ambassador.

These graceful and beautiful entertainments seem to have been particularly pleasing to the young Queen, accustomed as she was to the dull austerity of the Scottish Court; and it at once became her fancy to give something similar, in which the parts should be taken by herself and the ladies of her Court.

The first notice we have of the intention of the King and Queen to pass Christmas at Hampton Court, is in a letter dated the 8th of December, 1603, from the beautiful, charming, and accomplished, but ill-fated Lady Arabella Stuart, the story

of whose loves and misfortunes is so pathetically told by Isaac D'Israeli in his "Curiosities of Literature." She is writing from Fulston, near Sittingbourne, in Kent, where the Queen's Court then was, to the Earl of Shrewsbury; and after giving a lively account of the dulness of the life they were leading there, she says: "The Spanish Ambassador invited Madame Beaumont (the French ambassador's wife) to dinner, requesting her to bring some English Ladies with her. She brought my Lady Bedford, Lady Rich, Lady Susan (Vere), Lady Dorothy (Hastings) with her, and great cheer they had. . . . Yesterday the Spanish ambassador, the Florentine, and Madame de Beaumont, took their leave of the Queen till she come to Hampton Court."

In the meanwhile, preparations for their reception were busily going on, as appears by some old accounts preserved in the Record Office, from which the following are extracts:—

"Item paid to Sir Richard Coningsbie, gentleman usher the waytor for th'allowance of himself, one yeoman usher, three yeomen, two groomes of the chamber, two groomes of the wardrobe, and one groome-porter for making readie at Hampton Court the Hall there for the Kinge & the Queene to dyne with the Ambassadors by the space of two days mens. O.F. 1603. as appeareth by a bill signed by the Lo. Chamberlain.

"Item (to the same) for making readie Hampton Courte for the Kinge, the Queene, & the Prince by the space of twentie days."

And very soon after the Court arrived here, as we learn from another letter of Lady Arabella Stuart's, which gives us the first intelligence of the gaieties in prospect. It is dated, "Hampton Courte December the 18th," and is addressed to Lord Shrewsbury. Having noticed that the Queen arrived on Friday, the 16th, she goes on:—

"The King will be heere to-morrow. The Polonian Imbassador shall have audience on Thursday next. The Queen intendeth to make a mask this Christmas, to which end my Lady Suffolk and my Lady Walsingham hath warrant to take of the late Queen's best apparrell out of the Tower of their discretion. Certain noblemen (whom I may not yet name to you because some of them have made me of their counsell) intend another. Certain gentlemen of good fort another. It is said there shall be 30 playes. The King will feast all the Imbassadors this Christmas."

Sir Dudley Carleton also writes on the 22nd from London, where he had apparently gone for the day, to his "affured frend Mr. John Chamberlain:—Sir we have left Salisbury plaines to the frost and snow, and the pleafant walkes at Wilton to as good durt as ever you saw in Smithfield

when it is at the best, and comming to Hampton Courte were there welcomed with fogs and mists, which make us march blindfold; and we feare we shall now stumble into the sicknes, which till now we have miraculously scaped. . . . Hether I came to heare what newes of our frendes, but find defolation in every corner, and at your Doctors more than anywhere else, onely I mett with good newes that all is well where you are, which I was most glad of, and wish myself with you though it were but for an hower to know what you have done, and requite you with my adventures since I saw you. . . . We shall have a merry Christmas at Hampton Court, for both male and female maskes are all ready bespoken, whereof the Duke is *reitor chori* of th'one side, and the La. Bedford of the other. After Christmas if the sicknes cease we shall come to Whitehall. . . . So I rest your most assured Dudley Carleton. From Waterfon's shop."

And the next day Sir Thomas Edmonds writes thus to Lord Shrewsbury from Hampton Court:—
 “. . . . There hath latelie fallen out an occasion which staieth M^r. Sanford's journey for a few daies, and that your Lordship maie be enformed of the trueth' this is the cause: Both the King's and Queene's majesties have an humour to have some Maskes this Christmas time and therefore, for that purpose, both the younge Lordes and chief Gentle-