

LIVES

OF

THE QUEENS OF ENGLAND.

MARY BEATRICE OF MODENA,
QUEEN-CONSORT OF JAMES THE SECOND, KING OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

Lely's portraits of Mary Beatrice—Her ancestry, parentage, birth—Death of her father—Anecdotes of her infancy—Her mother's stern rule—Her desire to take the veil—Her future husband, James duke of York—The earl of Peterborough commissioned to select a new consort for him—Four ladies named—Description of the ladies—Intrigues at home—Mysterious letters from the court of Modena—Perplexity of the earl—His premature communication to the princess of Wirtemberg—Marriage with Mary of Modena determined—The earl proceeds to Modena—Reluctance of the princess—First interview with Mary Beatrice—Her petulant behaviour—The pope refuses his dispensation to the marriage—The duchess of Modena's determination—Reluctant consent of the princess—Clerical obstacles—The espousals celebrated—The earl of Peterborough proxy for the duke of York—Honours paid to him in that capacity—The bridal dinner and ball—Public rejoicings at Modena on the marriage—The news announced at the court of Charles II.

THE pencil of Lely has rendered every one familiar with the languishing dark eyes, classic features, and graceful form of the Italian consort of James II. That painter was never weary of multiplying portraits of a princess who completely realized his *beau idéal* of female loveliness, and who so well became the rich and picturesque costume which his exquisite taste had rendered the prevailing mode of the court of the second Charles. She appears to no less advantage, however, when de-