

axiom, he glanced at the Lady Arabella, whose ear had caught the whispered words, and whose pale cheek, betrayed the fears they already awakened in her heart. The King marked her perturbation, and with a kind of uncouth courtesy, which was any thing but regal, pledged her in a cup of wine, and then, as if to atone for the pain he had occasioned, he addressed frequent remarks to her, of a nature calculated to win her from unpleasant thoughts. But Arabella strove in vain to rally her spirits. She felt that the airy fabric of her hopes was about to be rudely cast to the earth, and she shrunk from a repetition of the sufferings she saw she was fated to endure. Seymour could scarcely command himself, as he marked the rapidly varying colour of her fair cheek, and caught the low and subdued tones of her voice, as she struggled to bear a part in the conversation of those around her. He longed for the dear right to shelter her in his bosom, from that unjust suspicion and restraint, of which she had ever been the innocent object, and he resolved, let what would come, to contend manfully for the coveted hand, which he already saw it was the purpose of the king to deny him.

When the banquet was ended, the usual, "pastimes and fooleries," as they were justly termed, were enacted for the special amusement of the king, "who took marvellous delight therein." But such exhibitions suited not the refined taste of Seymour, and to the Lady Arabella, particularly at this time, they were so disgusting, that before they were over, she sought, and obtained the queen's permission to retire. Once more within the shelter of her own apartments, the tide of long repressed emotion burst forth like a flood, and dismissing her attendants, she cast herself upon her couch, bathed in tears of grief and despair.

In this hour of hopeless desolation, prayers, silent but heartfelt, arose to Heaven for aid and support, and they were not breathed in vain—calmness descended upon her spirit, and as she viewed in its proper light, the unjust tyranny which had ever been exercised over the freedom of her person and her mind, she resolved, in this instance, to remonstrate against it. She had made no unworthy choice, and it was her determination to abide by it—to remain true to Seymour, under whatever circumstances she might be placed, and unshrinkingly to avow her purpose to the king. It was not till the broad light of day shone in upon her, that she fell into a troubled sleep, and when she awoke, her first greeting, was a summons to attend the king. Arabella felt that the crisis of her fate was at hand, and, though she trembled excessively, she resolved to meet it with courage and firmness. Her hasty toilette was soon completed, her slight repast, which she only tasted to gratify her anxious attendant, shortly ended, when she quitted her apartment, and followed the page, who waited to conduct her to the royal closet.

She found the king alone, though she had indulged a hope that the amiable prince Henry, or the kind-hearted and lively queen, would have been present, to lend her their support and aid. James sat ensconced in a royal chair of capacious dimensions, lined with crimson velvet, and its tall back surmounted by a crown, yet in his morning gown and slippers, with a growth on his chin which promised an abundant harvest, he looked as unkingly as a monarch well might. Before him stood a table loaded with ponderous tomes, and manifold parchments and papers, mingled in strange confusion with hoods and jesses, and various other articles indicative of the sport in which he most delighted. A volume upon "Faulconrie" lay open before him, and beside it a Latin folio, moth-eaten and time-worn, and on its unfolded leaves the King's tablets, still wet from the recent touch of his pen, indicated the nature of his employment at the moment of the Lady Arabella's entrance. And while thus, in this his morning hour of retirement, ministering to the spiritual wants of the mind, James had not forgotten the grosser necessities of the outward man as was evidenced by the contents of a golden porringer, which, half filled with the unpalatable condiment peculiar to Scotland, stood on a salver of the same precious metal beside him, and which in the course of the following conversation, he often paused to taste.

"A fair morning to you, my bonny maid," he exclaimed, as Arabella advanced, and slightly touching one knee to the ground, kissed the royal hand held forth to greet her; "a fair morning, and a bright day, and a calm evening, my pretty coz, both for the time that now is, and for that long day of life, which Heaven grant may be your's before the setting of your last sun."

"I humbly thank your majesty for these kind wishes," said the Lady Arabella, not however reassured by this warm greeting of the dissembling monarch; "and since," she timidly added, "it is in your highness' power to render my day of life free from cloud or storm, excepting those with which it shall please Heaven to overshadow it, I trust it is destined to remain bright as my fondest hopes could wish it."

"Aye, tread but the easy path which I shall mark out, and all will be well,—but choose a bye-path of your own, and it will lead to labyrinths, where you will pursue the phantom happiness in vain."

"And, may I ask your majesty, if I am considered too imbecile to decide between good and evil, that all choice with regard to my future destiny is forbidden me? or wherefore is it, that my free agency is to be thus fettered and prescribed?"

"It is that you are a ward of the crown, a branch of the royal tree, and as such, amenable to the parent trunk, and bound not of your own free will, to engraft, even upon one of its off-shoots, a foreign