

as trustworthy as any oath. I will not betray you: in your schemes I will neither meddle nor mar. Gi'ye good night."

And, sheathing his sword, he walked away with as light and careless an air as if he had not been the moment before engaged in desperate combat. Anthony Babington went back to his fellow-conspirators, mortified and humbled.

IV.

THE bright morning sunlight was streaming down through the branching trees in the woods of Fotheringay, and glistening on the dew besprinkled plume of a gallant-looking cavalier, who, wrapped in his embroidered cloak, walked thoughtfully up and down. Presently, from between the trees behind him there stepped forth a graceful maidenly form in mantle and wimple. This fair vision, with bright blue eyes, rich glossy brown tresses, roseate cheeks and lips that might tempt an anchorite, tripped up silently and smilingly to the cavalier and laid a small white hand upon his arm.

"Hugh!" she said in a soft, low voice that was music itself.

He turned round, caught her in his arms and imprinted burning kisses on her dewy lips. She struggled from his embrace, her face suffused with crimson blushes.

"Pardon me, darling Kate," said her lover; "but oh! 'tis a world of time since I saw thee last."

"Why, how foolish thou art, Hugh," the maiden replied with an arch smile. "It was only three weeks ago."

"Ah! yes!" sighed Hugh Huntley. "But those three weeks were an age to me, unlighted by those bright twin stars."

"Flatterer!"

"Thou know'st I flatter not, my Kate," he said, lifting her soft, dainty hand to his lips. "But tell me, sweetest, how is thy royal mistress?"

"Sick almost to death," the maiden replied, the tears suddenly springing to her eyes. "If they would but let her alone, meseemeth she will not trouble them long."

"Poor lady!" said Hugh Huntley, "Heaven pity her! Do they continue to persecute her still?"

"Ay, do they, the fiends!" cried Kate, with flashing eye, clenching her little hand. "Yea, worse than ever. Two vile women, minions of the royal English harridan, have been appointed her nurses during her illness; but their sole function is to worry and persecute her night and day; for they never leave her. Her enemies hope to kill her by this species of torture and avoid the odium of a public execution."

"Fiends!" exclaimed Huntley, his hand involuntarily seeking his sword.

"But, dearest Hugh," said the maiden clasping his arm with both her hands, and looking up to him with a tender, anxious gaze, "I would give you a word of earnest counsel. There is a wild, enthusiastic young man named Babington, a gentleman of Derbyshire, who has been corresponding with my royal mistress. I fear that he and others as rash and foolish as himself, are engaged in some wild and desperate plot, which can only end in ruin to themselves, and, I fear, to the poor queen. It has reached me, Hugh, that this Master Babington is a friend of thine: Oh! beloved, assure me that thou'st not mixed thyself up with this mad conspiracy."

"Fear not, sweet Kate," replied her lover. "They sought to tempt me, but in vain. I would die to secure the queen's freedom and restoration to her throne and the banishment or death of the detestible bastard, Murray. But I have no intention of throwing my life into a common hazard with these hair-brained dupes, who are walking blindfold along the straight road to the scaffold."

"Thank God!" murmured the maiden.

What further conversation passed between these two it is needless to relate. Their talk, uttered in low, soft, tender accents, was such as has been familiar to lovers in all ages—talk accompanied by gentle pressure of the hand—and it maybe of the lips, too. Never you mind.

Hugh Huntley was walking down Ludgate Hill next day, when he encountered a brother Scot. The latter stopped him, exclaiming:

"Hey! Airnseraig," (so Hugh was always called on his ancestral estate), "where hae ye been this age? All your friends are missing ye."

"In the country. Any news?"

"Terrible news, man. Poor, mad