

the last drop of his blood in assaulting the tyrant who would have robbed the house of Tudor of its lineage rights!"

The burst of feeling with which Mary uttered these words, touched Suffolk to the soul, and unable on the instant to reply, he bent his knee before her and raised her hand in silence to his lips. Mary feared to partake his emotion, and rallying her fortitude, said with as firm a tone as she could assume:

"Rise, my lord, I pardon all that may have pained me in your conduct, and pray you may be happy in the attainment of that brilliant destiny to which your fortune leads."

"In nothing have I wilfully offended," said the duke; "and of one sin only, have I knowingly been guilty! and even if death, or imprisonment, were for this to be my portion, I never can repent. I have not sought to strengthen myself by an alliance with the powerful or the wealthy—my heart was untouched by the charms of the beautiful daughter of the Viscount Lisle, to whom my sovereign would have affianced me. And in Flanders, when my Lord of York proposed to negotiate a marriage for me with the high born Margaret of Savoy, I unhesitatingly declined the honour—and why was I thus indifferent to all that could ennoble and exalt my fortunes? Because there was one to whom I dared not aspire, whose smiles were my life. Because—I beseech your highness, pardon my presumption,—because my love for Mary of England was interwoven with my very being, and I felt that the throne of the Cesars, had it been proffered me, could not have tempted me to forego the precious privilege of dwelling, even at humble distance, in her presence."

"Oh God! what is it I hear," cried the surprised and wretched Mary, gasping for breath, and sinking powerless on her seat—but in an instant she rallied, and resumed: "Are you not then secretly affianced to the Duchess of Savoy? If not, why have you permitted appearances to justify the rumour? Why have you even suffered the king to remain in ignorance of the truth?"

"The king is well aware that there is no betrothment—he has hoped, indeed, to bring the matter to that point, and in this hope he has been upheld by my Lord of York, who, suspicious of the passion which I have dared to cherish for a far more amiable and beautiful princess, designed to punish my presumption, by a pretended zeal to serve me in another cause. Yet of this I am assured, that had he foreseen the smallest chance of my success with Margaret of Savoy, he would instantly have framed some plea for relaxing his efforts, nor willingly have lent his aid to aggrandize the object of his hatred."

Suffolk paused, but Mary, incapable of utterance, remained silent. It was not till this moment that she had realized the full extent of her wretchedness. But now the consciousness of the happiness which

she had blindly cast away, and the horrors of the fate which awaited her, rushed upon her like an overwhelming tide, against which she had not power to struggle. The duke, mistaking the cause of her emotion, proceeded:

"Had your highness deigned to listen sooner to this explanation, you would not so long have viewed me as a heartless votary of ambition, whom it was your duty to despise, and banish from your presence. Even the circumstance of the motto which I displayed at the last tournament, and which has given an air of truth to the reports in circulation, arose from an incident the most trivial and unimportant. When I took my leave of the Lady Margaret, in Flanders, she presented me with a scarf, wrought with her own hand, which, with no more than fitting gallantry, I promised to wear at the next tournament, together with some appropriate motto. That which I chose, certainly signified nothing more than any knight should have expressed towards a lady who had thus far honored him, but bitterly did I regret even this trifling act of courtesy, when I was informed of the rumors to which it had given rise—when I learned that it had heightened the displeasure of your highness against me, and robbed me, as I feared, for ever, of your favour."

Again Suffolk paused, but still Mary remained motionless and silent, and he resumed:

"All that I have endured since my return to England, can be known only to God and my own heart, but to suffer any longer in silence is impossible, and I have waited but for this opportunity, to confess, at your feet, the secret of a heart, which even from childhood, has acknowledged but one mistress, one bright and chosen object of tender, deep, impassioned love—nor can it ever know another,—and if by this avowal, I offend you past forgiveness, I will henceforth quit England for ever, and dwell a voluntary exile, where I may no more pain you by my presence. But, if you deign to smile upon my hopes,—and oh, what balm and joy dwell in that blessed thought!—I will seek the king tomorrow, and throw myself upon his mercy—I never yet have sued to him in vain, though cold the words in which I may have craved the boon,—but now, all precious as it is, he will be fain to grant it to the burning eloquence of love!"

"Brandon!" exclaimed the wretched Mary, in a voice almost suffocated with emotion; "It is too late! too late to save me from the gulf into which my own folly has precipitated me. This should have been the happiest moment of my life, but it has proved the consummation of my utter, hopeless misery. This very day I have yielded my consent to wed the king of France; my word is pledged beyond recall; and soon I shall quit my native shores, and happiness, forever."

She paused, and burying her face in her mantle