

thus preferred to them, employed spies to watch every part of his conduct, that they might find matter of accusation against him, and deprive him of the extravagant favor of his sovereign. They soon discovered that his affections were really fixed on a girl of obscure situation in life, named Laodice, to whom he had vowed an eternal attachment, and with whom he lamented all the honors and wealth showered upon him by the unsolicited favor of his royal mistress.

This discovery once made, means were easily found to communicate it, in a proper manner, to the queen, and prove to her the fact, beyond the possibility of doubt.—She questioned Ortanes on the subject, who, after some hesitation, throwing himself at the feet of his royal mistress, avowed his love for Laodice ; a love which nothing should ever eradicate from his heart, and which he would never exchange for crowns and diadems.

Artemisia, in all the rage of jealousy and disappointed passion, ordered him into the custody of a guard, who conducted him to a dungeon.

Laodice soon heard what had befallen her lover, and presented herself, unsummoned, before the throne of the vindictive queen. She prostrated herself before her sovereign, and entreated for mercy for her lover. The fury of Artemisia at the sight of the rival, who was the insuperable bar to all her wishes, blazed out with double violence. As she perceived she was exquisitely beautiful, her passion was still more irritated by despair, and she poured forth on her a torrent of bitter invectives, concluding with the dreadful menace, that Ortanes should never more behold those seducing charms which had occasioned him to slight and despise his queen.

Laodice, alarmed for the life of her lover, redoubled her entreaties with an earnestness bordering on frenzy. She offered to go into voluntary banishment, or resign her life for his sake ; but the queen, deaf to all her supplications, ordered her to be led to prison, and commanded that the eyes of Ortanes should be put out, which was executed on the spot.