

what God has joined. And you love not as I do, if through any fear like this, you can resolve that henceforth we shall part, and live as though we had never exchanged fond vows, or cherished hopes, that death alone should render vain."

"My Seymour," she said, and as she made the fond confession, a deeper glow heightened the delicate hue of her cheek, "loved I not so tenderly, I should have nought to do with fear. For myself, I dread not the king's wrath—once separated from you and I should have nought to hope—nought to tremble for. But to think, that by yielding to your wishes, I may bring down fearful vengeance on your head, is terrible indeed!"

"Cherish no fear for me, my Arabella; once mine, and I am persuaded the timidity of James will deter him from offering us serious molestation. In the mean time, I have that to tell, which may convince you that a decision in my favour, is the only means of saving you from the 'king-craft' of this treacherous monarch. Listen to what I shall relate, and then choose between the fate your royal kinsman is preparing for you, and the lesser evils that await you with your proscribed and banished lover. Last evening, after you left me, I still lingered in the grove, nursing, as you may suppose, many sad, and some joyous fancies, when the priest, father Everard, I think you call him, passed me, on his return from the gipsy encampment, whither he had been on a visit to the sick girl, Meta. Prepossessed by his benignant smile, and courteous salutation, I immediately formed the resolution to accost him, to unfold to him my situation, my wishes, and seek his aid in my almost hopeless intercession with you.

My purpose was executed without delay. To his infinite astonishment, I disclosed to him my name and rank, and when I had ended my brief detail of past events, and present hopes, he expressed with friendly warmth his sympathy and interest in our united welfare, and promised to do all in his power, to render the jealous policy of the king in regard to us, of no avail. He, moreover, informed me that he was even then hastening home to seek an interview with you, as he had only an hour before received letters from London, that contained intelligence of deep interest to you. The letters, he said, were from a nobleman, on terms of intimacy with the Earl of Rochester, from whom the information had been derived, and stated that the king was at that moment negotiating a marriage for you, with Lord Cameron, one of his Scottish nobles, who was to receive with your hand, a considerable dowry, on condition of his conveying you immediately to his Highland home, where for the remainder of your life you were to be immured. He further asserted, that an instrument had been drawn up, which was to be signed by you and your future husband, requiring you to renounce, both for yourselves and your heirs, all claims and pretensions, henceforth

and forever to the throne of England. Lord Cameron had been summoned a few weeks since on business of a pressing nature to Scotland, but he was to return at midsummer, when you were to be recalled to court, and the nuptials solemnised in due form. This, my Arabella, is the snare spread by your royal kinsman to entrap you, and now declare whether you any longer owe him either faith or loyalty."

"Neither, neither!" exclaimed the Lady Arabella, the proud, indignant spirit of her kingly race, crimsoning her cheek and brow. "He has absolved me from my oath by his treacherous design, and also from that obedience, which, while my freedom and my person, were unprofaned, I deemed it a duty to accord him. Seymour, it is time that we consulted our safety. I resist your wishes no longer, and I am ready to flee with you, when and where you will."

"Bless you, my own love," he exclaimed, as with impassioned tenderness he pressed to his lips and heart the hand she extended towards him, "this night, then,"—she started—"may be not dismayed—I do but repeat the counsel of Father Everard—he departs for London tomorrow, where he will remain a month, and he advises that our hands be joined before he goes, and that our longer sojourn here, or our speedy departure, be regulated by intelligence which he shall be able to transmit to us from the capital—as, through the friend from whom he has already been informed of the king's purposes, he trusts to gather still further knowledge of them, and also to learn, if any immediate steps are to be taken, concerning this projected marriage."

"And the Lady Gervase, that kind and true friend," faltered Arabella; "are we to make her a party in our disobedience, and involve her in the misery and ruin, which for aught we know, it may bring upon our heads?"

"By no means—her ignorance of our act shall shield her from censure, whatever may be its consequences to ourselves. Father Everard proposes to meet us in the private chapel of the Hall, at twelve tonight, with your faithful Jean, and my trusty follower Vincent, as the only witnesses of the ceremony. But tomorrow, let us reveal all to the Lady Gervase, and I doubt me much, if we need fear from her, an over sharp rebuke for an act, which Father Everard has sanctioned."

The Lady Arabella, pale from excessive emotion, attempted no reply—it was no longer a fear of the king's vengeance, nor the dread of a separation from her lover, that agitated her, but the thought of taking the step proposed by Seymour, with such precipitation—of that very night entering into the most solemn and holy covenant, with the warning only of a few brief hours, and under circumstances of a peculiarly singular, and trying nature,—this it was, that overwhelmed her with dismay and doubt; and prostrated the last remnant of that fortitude, which