

always present, but he sought to hold no private conversation with Mary; and she had too much self-respect, too much regard for the chaste decorum of her sex, for the obligations of religion and virtue, and too much reverence for the station which she filled, and which had been so adorned by the purity and goodness of the beautiful Anne, to listen to words of regret or tenderness from him, even had he been disposed to utter them. She felt, that they were no longer fit for her ear—but there was a sad pleasure in seeing around her the nobles of her own dear land, and of meeting amidst the fatiguing and splendid ceremonies of her new home, the subdued tenderness of that glance which had been dear to her from childhood, and of hearing the saddened but gentle tones of that beloved voice, whose accents awakened a thousand fond memories of the past, and carried her back to the green and silent woods of Havering Bower, where her heart had first whispered to her that she loved.

No wonder then, when the court festivities were for the present ended, and the band of English nobles prepared to take their leave of France, that Mary's heart should sink within her, and a deeper gloom again settle upon her spirits—deeper in contrast to the few bright rays that had shone for a transient space upon her unhappy destiny. She received the adieus of her countrymen with tears—but when she heard the low and agitated words, in which the kneeling Suffolk uttered his farewell, and felt the pressure of his trembling lips upon her hand, she sank upon her seat, and hid her beautiful face in the folds of her mantle. When she looked up, he was gone—they had all departed; but she met the fixed gaze of Francis of Valois, and she turned away with a burning blush, fearing he might have read the treasured secret of her heart.

Time now wore heavily away with the unhappy Mary. The increasing illness of the king forbade her partaking those amusements which might have diverted her melancholy, and it was only in the society of Francis and his accomplished sister, the Duchess of Alençon, that she found any relief from ennui and discontent. The count, now without a rival in her favour, had recovered his health and spirits, and seemed to exist only for her pleasure.—His favourite pursuits of hunting and hawking were abandoned, and under pretence of attending the sick king, he spent almost his whole time in the presence of Mary. Yet so delicate was the passion with which she had inspired him, that he shunned every gallantry which might subject her to the ill-natured remarks of the courtiers, and often neglected opportunities of conversation, or attendance upon her, lest he might provoke for her the censure of levity or imprudence. He even sought to create a friendship between her and the Princess Claude, the purity and correctness of whose principles and deportment, he well knew would shield her from all re-

proach, and it was with unmixed pleasure, he marked the daily increasing affection that united her and the Duchess of Alençon. Louisa of Angoulême, saw, with discontent, the influence which Mary, by her sweetness, her unaffected dignity, and the lovely qualities of her mind and heart, was acquiring at court—but with especial disapprobation, she remarked the devotion of Francis to her person, and augured the most disastrous consequences from the indulgence of a passion, which, with all his caution, was too ardent to escape detection. Her remonstrances, her entreaties, and when these failed, her angry menaces, were alike ineffectual—the count persisted in his attentions to Mary, declaring that he could never offend such heavenly purity as hers, by the avowal of his unhappy passion, and that so long as he confined it to his own breast, it could neither wound her peace, nor sully her unspotted reputation.

Mary indeed suspected not the nature of those feelings, that prompted the assiduities of Francis. Accustomed from her infancy, to the adulatory homage of the great, she viewed his attentions as the spontaneous offering of the refined gallantry for which this accomplished prince was remarkable; and they were so delicate and unobtrusive, so indicative of an elegant and generous mind, that she received them with unaffected pleasure, and prized them as she would have done, had they been rendered by a brother, or a long tried friend.

Things were in this situation, and the whole court were waiting with different hopes and views for the issue of the king's illness, who, since the tournament, had been rapidly declining, when suddenly he expired, and Mary, who had been but three short months a royal bride, was freed by the inevitable shaft of death, from those unwilling bonds, which, odious as they were, she had worn with a truly queen-like and submissive dignity. Yet, sweet as were the thronging hopes that now filled her heart, she could not forbear a few tears to the memory of him, who had been to her a kind and indulgent lord, and who, when he made her the partner of his throne, had doubtless looked forward to many years of life and happiness. The retirement, authorized by decorum, was a luxury to her, and though her youthful charms were shrouded in the weeds of widowhood, they were but the external emblems of woe, and covered a heart, where hope was springing gladly up from the very ashes of despair, and whose gentle thoughts and fond memories clustered around the living—not lavished themselves with vain and idle sorrow on the dead.

As yet, Francis had paid her but one short visit of ceremony, to offer the customary condolence on her bereavement, for though he deeply felt how hard it was to deny himself the luxury of her society, yet, as the acknowledged King of France, he could not assume the dignity of his exalted station, without giving all his time to the many responsible duties,