

himself the annulling of the marriage; and, forbidding Essex to prosecute his suit any farther, he ordered splendid preparations to be made for the union of his favourite and the young countess; he would himself give away the bride, and that she might not lose rank by her union with Rochester, he created him Earl of Somerset.

Before the marriage was solemnized, the court were astounded by the sudden death of Overbury; rumours of poison were circulated, and many eyes were turned in distrust on Somerset; but as poor Sir Thomas had no relations to prosecute the search for truth, the rumours soon died away.

The day fixed upon for the nuptials came at last; and did Somerset remember that it was the day he had appointed for his trysting at the burn-side, with his devoted Alice? It was just twelve months since he parted with her; but so wholly absorbed was he in his meretricious attachment, that he forgot, as he wished to, his early love, and not one thought of her clouded the bridal day.

But remorse—deep, bitter, remorse—was yet to come; after the first intoxication of his love was over, he found his countess destitute of every thing calculated to fix the affections, to give a charm to the domestic circle, or wile him from the remembrance of the guilt by which he had won her. He lost the animation of manner and buoyancy of spirit which had been his greatest charm, and the recollection of his kind friend, whose death he had been indeed cognizant of, haunted him; and though he had not been the instrument of it, he feared detection. Then, worse than all, would come the thought of Alice, her gentleness, and her sufferings; these things conspired to make him captious and irritable even to his indulgent master.

James' attachment was strong, and for a long time he bore, without any change, the rudeness of his creature; but by degrees his affections became weaned from him, and his sagacious courtiers perceiving the first symptoms of alienation, and disgusted with Somerset's conduct, plotted for his overthrow, and offered a new minion to the king, in George Villiers, a youth of one-and-twenty, who had just returned from his travels, and possessed the advantages of a handsome person, genteel air, and fashionable apparel. At a comedy he was placed full in James' eye, and immediately engaged the attention, and, in the same instant, the affections of the monarch. But the king was ashamed to own his sudden change, and still admitted Somerset to apparent intimacy, having no excuse to throw him off; but one soon offered: the apothecary's apprentice who mixed the poison for Overbury, had been bribed to leave England, and being taken sick in Holland, confessed the deed, and that he had been induced

to do it by Mrs. Turner, a creature of the Countess of Essex, and that she had administered it in some delicacies which she had carried to him, under the pretence of compassion for his situation.

The confession was transmitted to the minister of the low countries, and he being opposed to Somerset, forwarded it to the king, who determined to investigate the affair with the utmost rigour.

Mrs. Turner and the keeper of the tower were immediately seized, confessed their guilt, and were condemned to death; their confession implicated the Earl and Countess of Somerset, who were also tried and condemned to death; but the king could not bear to see one he had so loved die the death of a felon, and he commuted the punishment to a sentence of imprisonment for life, which after a few years was changed to banishment, when the guilty earl and his more guilty countess retired to the country on a small allowance,—their ardent love changed to intense hatred, they received the full punishment of their crimes in the wretched existence they were destined to endure.

Such was the meteor-like course of the favourite of King James; generous and noble in his disposition, he might have lived loved and honoured, but for yielding to ungoverned passion, which distorted all the better parts of his nature, and has rendered him a bye-word and beacon-light to all who would follow his steps.

And what became of the innocent victim of his unprincipled conduct, poor Alice Jamieson? She sought the burn-side day by day, and fed her fearful fancies; but as time rolled on, and she heard often from Rochester, and found that though elevated in rank he did not forget her, her fears were conquered; and when he wrote to her that he had obtained the king's permission to leave the court and should be with her immediately, she was happy. How great then was her disappointment when day after day passed, and he came not; months rolled on, then came rumours of the intended marriage of the king's favourite, and then the bitter certainty that the day he had pledged to meet her at the burn-side, he pronounced the nuptial vow to another.

Day by day did the fair lily droop, and ere many months, she was numbered with those that were, but are not. On her death-bed, she wrote a few words of love and forgiveness to Somerset, and they came to add double pangs to his remorse. All loved her; and for many years the village maidens sought her grave by the burn-side (for she had begged to be buried in that spot which had witnessed her happiest hours,) and adorned it with garlands of the sweetest flowers; and her hapless tale, handed down from generation to generation, is still told in the valley of her birth.