

worthy to become the husband of her lady. Her advice, in the present circumstances, was given accordingly, and it found a warm response in the devoted heart of Arabella.

Yet she could not resolve to yield to Seymour's wishes for a clandestine union. Implicit obedience to her sovereign, she had not only been taught to consider a duty, but it was a long confirmed habit, which she had not courage to defy. Cruel and unjust, as she now felt his commands, she trembled at the fearful consequences, both to Seymour and herself, should she dare to violate them, and wished rather to trust to the softening influence of time, which might at length incline the king to permit, if not to sanction, their attachment. Yet, again to part—to live on in absence and uncertainty, trusting to an almost baseless hope—the thought was terrible, and she shrunk from it in dismay.

In this state of irresolution and excitement, midnight found her. She had paced her apartment with unquiet step, till weary of its narrow limits, she stole softly out upon a balcony, where standing in the calm moonlight, she watched the soft shadows that slept upon the lawn, and found refreshment in the dewy air that played upon her cheek. She felt her troubled spirit hushed in the deep quiet of nature, and tranquillized by the sweet communion which in that lonely hour she had held with its author, and hoping now to find that repose which during the earlier hours of the night, she had courted in vain, she turned to re-enter her apartment, when the appearance of two figures, that suddenly emerged from an angle of the building, and advanced into the clear moonlight, caught her attention. They came forward, and passing beneath the balcony, on which she paused to observe them, moved across the lawn in the direction of the oak grove. In the person of one, who wore the slouched hat and loose coat of a gipsy, she instantly recognized Seymour; the other, she knew by his tonsured head, for it was bare as he passed, to be Father Everard. In a few minutes they were hidden from her view by intervening trees, but the priest shortly appeared, retracing his way alone, and again passing round the angle of the building, she saw him no more. Unable to solve the conjectures which arose in her mind, relative to the companionship of Father Everard and her lover, she wisely dismissed them, waiting for the morning's interview to explain the mystery, and retiring to her couch, shortly forgot her cares and hopes, in calm and quiet sleep.

But with the first ray of light she was again awake. Her morning duties performed and her toilet made, she set forth with a beating heart, attended by her faithful Jean, to fulfil her appointment with Seymour. The Lady Gervase was a late riser, but it was no strange thing to see the fair Arabella go forth with the first sunbeam, to imprint with her airy step the early dew, and listen to the matin song

of the lark, as he soared upward, to meet the rosy cloud of morning. Of course, the few individuals who were now stirring, beheld without surprise or curiosity, the Lady Arabella and her attendant issue from a postern gate, and take their way across the lawn. Not even yet, had she resolved what answer to render to her lover; her heart decided in his favour, but her extorted promise to the king, and the dread of some fatal issue to their happiness, should they presume to set at nought the royal mandate, had nearly fixed her in the purpose of resisting Seymour's importunities, and enduring still, the pain of a lengthened separation.

Thus revolving painful thoughts, and tortured by distracting fears, she reached the grove of oaks, at whose entrance her attendant paused, while she pursued her way to the little shaded dingle, near its centre, where Seymour was to await her coming. At the first sound of her approaching step, he sprang forth to meet her, and casting his arm around her trembling form, bore her to a mossy seat, and threw himself upon the turf at her feet. The dark hue which on the preceding evening had stained his complexion, was removed—the gipsy hat was in his hand, leaving exposed the classic contour of his noble head, and the intellectual beauty of his manly face, which now, upraised to hers, beamed with the silent eloquence of deep and rapturous love. As Arabella met that fervent and expressive gaze, her heart thrilled like the chords of an æolian harp, when the soft breeze of summer awakens it to melody, and though her eye sought the ground, her smile, her lovely blush, told how dear to her soul was the tender homage of his love.

"Ah, would I might interpret as I wish that flitting blush, and the sunny smile that beams upon me from those dove-like eyes," he said in almost whispered tones, "would that they told me, she who is my life had come to cast herself upon this faithful breast, to accept the shelter of these loving arms, that like a shield, would guard her from all ill, and from every blast that threatened to annoy her.

"Alas," she said in a low and trembling accent, "how gladly would I nestle, even as a weary bird, within that gentle covert! but ah, I fear it may not be—I was born to be the mark of jealous eyes, an object of contention to worldly and intriguing hearts, and do I right to link my fate with yours, when doubtless I must then involve you also, in my bitter doom."

"I fear it not, my Arabella—I ask but to share your fate whatever it may be, to receive the blessing of your plighted love, and by the holy sanction of a husband's name, be permitted avert from you the jealous scrutiny that has so long and cruelly disturbed your peace."

"But can we do we, right, to brave the fearful vengeance of the king?"

"Believe me, dearest, it will expire like the spent fury of a tempest, when he can no longer disunite