

A quick step at this instant approached—a manly arm encircled her—she was pressed to a fond and throbbing heart, and the words, “my Arabella! my beloved, we are once more happy,” were uttered with a tender and impassioned accent in her ear. For one brief moment she remained passive in his arms, then with a sudden bound she darted away, wildly exclaiming :

“Seymour, this must not, cannot be. Ah, why have you sought me, only to increase our misery, and rend our hearts, by another, and a final separation !”

“My Arabella, we separate no more—nay, look not thus doubtingly, my love, for never, unless your lips pronounce the sentence of my banishment,—no never, will I quit you more. How I have suffered since the hour of our cruel separation, heaven only knows, and welcome death, sooner than a repetition of the pangs I have for months past endured.”

“Ah, would it might be, that we were never again to be disunited ! But I am pledged to the king, by a binding, though an extorted promise, to see you no more, and what perils may we not brave, by daring even for one brief hour to violate it.”

“For myself I care not,” he exclaimed, “welcome, far more welcome, the headsman’s axe to this poor neck, than the crushing tyranny that would put gyes and fetters on the freeborn and pure affections of my soul. Let us endure it no longer, my Arabella ; the sun in his daily circuit smiles upon many a fairer land than this mist-clad isle which, we call our home ; let us then seek those shores where we may find peace, and see the beautiful blossoms of our love expand in an atmosphere of joy and quiet. Breathe but one low word of assent, and my happiness is insured.”

“Ah, Seymour, how willingly would I sacrifice all for you ; but I fear, let us fly whither we will, the wrath of the king will pursue us, and blast our stolen joys. Think you, it would be a vain thing to make one last appeal to him—he may have changed, perhaps, or his conscience may ere this have told him, that it belongs not even to princes, to doom the innocent to utter wretchedness.”

“Deceive not yourself by such a hope, my Arabella, since I have tried in vain, both by entreating letters, and the intercession of friends, to move him to our wishes. He is fixed as adamant in his purpose, and we are forever disunited if we wait for him to yield. Consent to be mine, then, dearest one—irrevocably mine, by holy and indissoluble ties, and no power on earth shall dare to tear asunder, those whom God has solemnly united.”

Arabella shook her head with a sad and doubting smile, and unable longer to struggle against the mingled emotions that oppressed her heart, she burst into a passion of tears, and leaning on the shoulder of her lover, wept without restraint. With all the tender blandishments of love, Seymour sought to

soothe and reassure her. He spoke of the misery of an eternal separation—of the wretchedness she had endured her life long, and which still to its end must be hers, from the jealousy and injustice of the king ; he told again, of his own unbounded affection, and how, for weary months he had pined for her presence, and sought her in a thousand places, yet still with baffled hope ; how at last, he had learned that she sojourned with the Lady Gervase, when he repaired hither, and fearing to be recognized and betrayed, he had purchased the disguise of a gipsy and joined the tribe who were located in the glen below. He spoke with deep and tender emotion of the joy which had been his when he again beheld her, as she stood to witness the sports of the may-day revelers, and of the gush of happiness which had come over him, when once more he felt her slender fingers trembling within his, and read in the glow of her cheek, and the glad glance of her soft eye, that he was recognized, even through his wild and strange attire.

The Lady Arabella listened in tearful silence to the low and gentle tones of her lover, while he recounted his sufferings and his love, and when he paused, she could not find it in her heart to extinguish at once, and forever, all the fond hopes and cherished anticipations, to which he had given utterance, and she yielded to his earnest solicitation, to meet him in the grove at an early hour on the coming morning, when their decision for the future was to be finally made. The fast gathering shadows of evening now warned them to part—a tender farewell was taken, and the promise of another meeting reiterated, when with a flying step, the Lady Arabella retraced her way to the Hall.

She found Lady Gervase anxiously expecting her in the library, and Father Everard with little Janson, awaiting only her report of the gipsy girl, to set forth to the glen, with such alleviations as her situation required. Arabella gave all the information necessary, and when the priest had departed, and she was left alone with her friend, finding it a vain effort to subdue the emotions which her interview with Seymour had awakened, she plead fatigue as an excuse for retiring, and gladly sought the solitude of her own apartment. She loved not concealment, yet she feared, should any untoward event occur, to involve Lady Gervase in censure or difficulty, by making her a confidant, of her renewed intercourse with her lover. She, therefore, spoke of it, only to a faithful attendant, who had been about her person from infancy, and who was familiar with the peculiar trials and disappointments of her life. This woman had long been indignant at the restraints imposed by the king on her young mistress’ freedom of choice, in the concerns of the heart ; she had been particularly annoyed at the rejection of Seymour ; declaring she could see no reason why, if others had been spurned, he was not in all points