

ing the courtship of Henry VIII. was the commencement of the severe calamities that befell her mistress, Anne Boleyn. Scripture points out as an especial odium the circumstance of a handmaid taking the place of her mistress. Odious enough was the case when Anne Boleyn supplanted the right royal Katharine of Arragon, but a sickening sensation of horror must pervade every right-feeling mind, when the proceedings of the discreet Jane Seymour are considered. She received the addresses of her mistress's husband, knowing him to be such; she passively beheld the mortal anguish of Anne Boleyn when that unhappy queen was in a state which peculiarly demanded feminine sympathy; she knew that the discovery of Henry's inconstancy had nearly destroyed her, whilst the shock actually destroyed her infant; she saw a series of murderous accusations got up against the queen, which finally brought her to the scaffold, yet she gave her hand to the regal ruffian before his wife's corpse was cold. Yes; four-and-twenty hours had not elapsed since the sword was reddened with the blood of her mistress, when Jane Seymour became the bride of Henry VIII. And let it be remembered that a royal marriage could not have been celebrated without previous preparation, which must have proceeded simultaneously with the heart-rending events of Anne Boleyn's last agonized hours. The wedding-cakes must have been baking, the wedding-dinner providing, the wedding-clothes preparing, while the life-blood was yet running warm in the veins of the victim, whose place was to be rendered vacant by a violent death. The picture is repulsive enough, but it becomes tenfold more abhorrent when the woman who caused the whole tragedy is loaded with panegyric.

Jane Seymour had arrived at an age when the timidity of girlhood could no longer be pleaded as excuse for passive acquiescence in such outrages on common decency. All genealogies<sup>1</sup> concur in naming her as the eldest of sir John Seymour's numerous family. As such, she could not have been younger than Anne Boleyn, who was much older than is generally asserted. Jane was the eldest of the eight children

<sup>1</sup> Collins' Peerage, vol. i. p. 167.