

which he was ignorant, prompted her passive consent to a measure which it was but too evident she regarded with shuddering abhorrence. And reluctant as he was to renounce the favourite project of her marriage, the idea of sacrificing her, for beautiful and gentle as she was, he could view it in no other light, was so painful to him, that with a generosity, of which in after years he would not have been capable, he resolved not upon the instant, to take advantage of her yielding disposition.

"I have unwittingly, perhaps, been too urgent with you on this subject," he said, "and I would not for my own benefit, or your elevation, put such force upon your inclinations, as in an after moment shall cause you repentance or regret. We rest to-night at my Lord Ratcliff's castle, and there will be time before tomorrow, to weigh this matter well and wisely in your mind. I will therefore think nought of the discourse we have just now held concerning it, but take as your final answer, what you shall say to me on the morn, and bear it as such to the Duke De Longueville. And if you shall then say nay, and in your stead I cannot find another guarantee, which the Frenchman shall think fitting to accept for the king, his master—why, then in God's name let the treaty end, and by St. Mary we will give them another *Journée des Esperons*, to teach them who they lightly challenge to the combat."

"I am beholden to your majesty, for this most brotherly indulgence, and since it is your grace's pleasure that I reserve my final answer for the morrow, I am bounden to obey; yet I have already well and duly weighed the matter, and shall swerve not a tittle from the purpose now expressed. I have naught to live for in England, save your love, and that will follow me to France; therefore, with God's and your Majesty's leave, I will go, and if so it please you to tell the Duke De Longueville, I will make ready with what speed he shall desire."

"And if you hold of the same mind tomorrow, fair sister, I will not say you nay," returned Henry, elated by her firmness, and half persuading himself that she was in truth willing to stifle all humbler regrets, for the ambition of so exalting himself.

"But woman's heart," he added, "is like the changing sea, and the next wave that breaks over it may wash away the traces left by this, so you will do well to meditate fully on this step to night, for tomorrow my royal word will be pledged, and after that, even if repentance come, there can be no retreat, either for you or me."

"Be it as your grace desires, and let tomorrow then decide."

"Amen," returned the king, "and for the remainder of our ride let us hold discourse on other topics."

Mary, glad to drop a subject so unpleasant, and

the discussion of which had cost her the most painful effort, willingly assented, but she gained little by the exchange, for Henry immediately commenced speaking of the feats which he had recently performed in Flanders, of the valorous conduct of his nobles, and above all the rest extolled the gallant bearing of the Duke of Suffolk. Nor did he fail to praise the beauty and high spirit of Margaret of Savoy, and confessed it had been his aim to enthrall her and Suffolk in a mutual passion, and with self congratulation insinuated, that the high views thus opened to the ambition of the duke, would ere long be realized by a marriage with the illustrious object of his love. The unhappy Mary listened with an aching heart, seldom speaking, and sedulously averting her face from the inquiring eye of the king. All she heard, rivetted still more firmly her resolution of espousing Louis. Suffolk had proved himself unfaithful and unworthy, and though still fondly beloved, she felt an impatient desire, to escape from these scenes where she was exposed to constant encounters with him, and where his presence, and that of the objects connected with him, rendered abortive her anxious effort to forget, or at least to regard him with indifference.

It was nightfall before the royal party reached Lord Ratcliff's hospitable castle. Disguised as outlaws they had quitted it in the morning, and set forth to surprise the queen and her ladies in the woods of Havering Eower, and a godly entertainment had been prepared for their return, consisting, to use the words of an old chronicler, "of sumptuous, fine, and delicate meats." But neither of the banquet, nor of the games and sports, which according to the taste and custom of the age, succeeded it, did Mary partake. Weary, and sick at heart, she pleaded indisposition, and to the chagrin of all the young courtiers, but more especially of Suffolk, retired immediately to her apartment. Shortly dismissing her attendants, she abandoned herself to the grief which would no longer bear restraint, and wept long and violently over the ruin of her fondest hopes, and in view of the fearful fate to which she was passively resigning herself. The sounds of music and revelry which reached her solitude from the distant apartments of the castle, broke with harsh dissonance upon her ear, and the image of the gay and gallant Suffolk, mingling with the fair and graceful in that joyous band, presented itself with painful distinctness to her sad and desolate heart, till with wild and passionate earnestness she paced the floor of her apartment, longing to fly to some sequestered spot, where she might forget and be forgotten by the world. When at length the last note of merriment had died away, and all was still, her feelings became more calm, but not less sorrowful, and sitting down beside a table which stood beneath an antique lamp of chased and bur-