

"if for a moment I forget that I stand in your presence only as the messenger of my king—the queen of——"

"Suffolk! what mockery is this?" interrupted Mary, no longer able to struggle against her rising tenderness—"is the empty title of queen, bought with a price more precious than Golconda's gems, and worn, as the wretched galley slave endures his chains—is this hollow and unmeaning sound, to exalt me so far above the sister of Henry the Eighth, the gay, unfettered Mary of England, that I must be forever doomed to the vain display of heartless ceremony, and condemned to hear the chilling accents of courtly homage, from lips that have ever addressed me in the language of friendship and affection. I pray you then, cast off this robe of state, and speak to me as——"

She paused abruptly, and averted her glowing face from his eager and delighted gaze.

"As when?" he asked in accents, animated as his own, and bending his knee before her as he spoke—"as on that ever memorable night, when beneath the canopy of heaven, and in presence only of its silent host, I poured out my secret soul at the feet of the princess Mary, and heard that cruel sentence, which, till this blessed hour, has robbed my heart of peace, and quenched in utter gloom the fondest of my cherished hopes?"

Of Mary's reply, and of the impassioned fervour with which Suffolk, thus privileged, plead his suit, our limits do not permit us to treat—suffice it to say, in that brief hour of confidential intercourse, the hearts of both were unveiled, and every hope and fear, lost in the full and perfect communion of tender and undoubting love. When at length they parted, it was with glad and buoyant hearts, with smiling lips, with plighted faith, and united resolves, to resist the machinations of king and prelate, and stand by each other as firmly and unshrinkingly as though the church had already ratified their vows. The duke delayed not an instant to seek audience of the king, and relate to him all that had passed in the interview with Mary—and though Francis had not yet been able to conquer his attachment for the beautiful queen, he generously expressed his pleasure at the happy prospects of the lovers, and promised, and magnanimously resolved, to lend the whole weight of his influence to their cause.

In the meantime Suffolk interceded with Mary for an immediate marriage—he feared the ambition of Henry, and gave more credence than he chose to avow, to the rumour which still gained ground, of a contemplated marriage with a reigning prince, for which it was asserted, the King of England was even then in treaty. Mary caught the alarm, and the more readily, as Francis himself allowed there was strong reason for fear. Therefore, without longer deliberation, she yielded her consent, en-

treating only that the ceremony might take place with as much privacy as possible.

How different were these auspicious nuptials, from that gorgeous and heartless display of pageantry which attended her espousal with the King of France. No crowd now followed her steps—no sumptuous canopy was borne above her head—no splendid escutcheons, blazoned with the united-arms of France and England, met the view—but all was inward peace and quietness,

"The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy."

But few of all that bustling throng, who, a few short months before, had crowded to behold the triumphal progress of that royal bride, now stood around her, as with heightened beauty, for happiness had made it radiant, she knelt before the altar, to plight her willing vows to the first and only object of her love. Neither waving banners, nor draperies of crimson, nor cloth of gold, hung from the lofty walls and arches of the chapel, but, with that rare and exquisite taste, that ever so distinguished him, Francis had ordered it to be adorned with flowers, in honour of the nuptials, and every where the choicest and the sweetest, met the eye, among which, ever predominated the lily and the rose, closely entwined, and vying with each other in beauty and fragrance. Mary was attired with as much simplicity as became her rank, and the only ornament that adorned her beautiful hair was a wreath of orient pearls, that had been the gift of Francis. The principal ladies and nobles of the court were present at the ceremony, and the king himself gave away the bride.

Mary had written to declare her intentions to Henry, and a few days after the marriage had been solemnized, letters were received from him, forbidding the union, and commanding them both to return immediately to England, where his royal pleasure should be made known to them. It was too late, and Mary immediately wrote again to her brother, entreating forgiveness for the step she had taken, with the generous self-devotion of her sex, exculpating the duke from blame, and imploring that his wrath, if fall it must, should descend wholly upon her.

It did indeed burst forth with all the violence of Henry's most impetuous nature; but fortunately the objects of his anger were not present to feel the fury of the tempest, and as its first fierce gust subsided, the force of that affection, which from early childhood he had borne them both, gradually revived and softened his resentments. To this innate and kindly feeling, their supplicating letters, and the earnest appeal of Francis, added strength, and at length succeeded in conquering every angry emotion, which their disobedience had awakened. He even began to view the connection with pleasure and approbation, and cordially invited the youthful pair to