

ful ban-dogs are on the scent of as nice a pattern of conspiracy and treason as we have ever yet seen."

"Come then, Mr. Secretary," said Burleigh, "let us take council as to who shall be nominated on this commission."

II.

Four men of forbidding aspect sat drinking in a tavern in Cheapside. They rather aped the men of fashion in their showy dresses and rapiers. But their vulgar swagger and loud blustering tones proclaimed their vulgarity and ruffianism. They were by no means the sort of persons a quiet citizen would desire to encounter on a dark night in a quiet street. In physical aspect, cruelty and sensuality were stamped on the countenances of all four. A large measure of spiced sack stood on the table before them to which they made frequent application. As the company filed in they suddenly dropped their voices, and seemed engaged in discussing some topic of special importance, which did not, however, prevent them from indulging in frequent low chuckling laughter.

"Well, Giffard," said one, a short, thick-set fellow, with a low brow, a small treacherous eye, a huge mouth and massive chin, "how do your gud-gueons take the bait?"

"Voraciously, Master Poley," was the reply, and the others laughed. "Master Anthony Babington, is a most valuable catch: he has already drawn nine other fools like himself into the same net with him."

"And a pretty plot it is too," said another—"nothing less than dethroning and compassing the death of the Queen. We have managed this thing nicely, my masters; and Sir Francis Walsingham should be grateful."

"The headsman, Master Greatly, said a fourth, a cunning, vicious looking fellow, with a hang-dog expression of countenance, "will have plenty of work on hands. I only wish that that insolent Scotch upstart, Master Hugh Huntley, who lords it so boldly among the gay roysterers, in tavern and gaming-room, and never losses a crown, were caught in the same net."

"Ah, Maude," said Giffard, "you haven't forgotten the cudgeling which

the sturdy Scot gave you on Eastcheap for insulting the silk-mercer's buxom wife. How you did roar, and how you did swear and swagger:—but your rusty bilboa lay as harmlessly by your side as if it had been a dagger of lath."

This sally produced roars of laughter from all but the victim of it.

Maude only tossed off his glass while he muttered—

"May the foul fiend have me, if I be not bitterly avenged of him yet."

"Never mind, Maude," said Giffard consolingly, "with the help of simple, honest Master Anthony Babington, the headsman will avenge thee by and by."

"Is it not true," asked one of the former speakers, "that Master Babington has been carrying down letters to various malcontents in Derbyshire from the Queen of Scots?"

"Most true, worthy Master Poley," answered Giffard. "And furthermore she has been trapped into personal correspondence with himself, and even given him letters to the ambassadors of France and Spain, begging them to assist the conspirators with men and arms. Oh! he is a rare decoy duck is mad foolish Master Anthony. I warrant you we shall have rare sport for his worship, Sir Francis Walsingham, our patron."

These wretches were the bloodhounds hired by Sir Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State, to hunt to death the unfortunate Queen of Scots who, flying from her rebellious and brutal nobles to seek protection at the Court of England, was seized by her jealous rival (who hated her for her beauty and accomplishments) and transferred to a prison-chamber in Fotheringay, where (innocent of all offence) the unhappy Queen had now lingered nineteen years. Mary was the object of constant intrigues and persecution, until at last her sanguinary English jailors, tired of having her ever before them, and her name ever in their ears, trumped up false charges against her, and without any pretense of a legitimate trial, took her out of prison carried her across the Thames—and the headsman did the rest.

III.

At the same time and hour a different scene was being enacted at another tar-