

foot by your heirs, to claim, in right of their mother, the crown which I trust to leave safe upon the head of my son."

"And there, for all me or mine, may it remain forever, since none, who now, or henceforth may belong to me, can ever covet, or accept it. I fearlessly make this assertion, your majesty, and as fearlessly declare, that it never shall be violated."

"Cousin, you speak with an ignorant rashness, which only your youth excuses. But I am well read in human nature, and know that royalty holds forth many temptations, which even the strong cannot always resist. You have, too, and I shame to say it, a powerful party in my kingdom, who are eagerly watching for a favourable moment to bestir themselves in your cause.

"My cause, your majesty! call it not mine; I neither countenance nor abet it,—and as for the party—have I not ever disclaimed any connexion with it, spurned its overtures, and condemned its disloyal acts? Nor is it possible that any future circumstances should ever induce me to lend aid or support to its designs. To this declaration I pledge my truth and sincerity, and not only mine, but that of Seymour's also, and to convince your majesty that ambition has no place in our hearts, we are willing immediately, should your royal assent be given to our union, to become voluntary exiles from England, and to fix our residence in France, or wherever else shall be most agreeable to your majesty, till such time as it shall suit your highness' pleasure to recall us."

"It were wisely done, I trow, to thrust you into the arms of my loving brothers, either of France or Spain. It would be to furnish them with weapons, which they would not be slow to make free use of against me, and henceforth I should hear of the Lady Arabella Stuart—I do not say with your consent, cousin, or that it ever has been, or ever will be so—you are but the puppet, whose wires are played by others, and it is, therefore, I guard you with such caution from their arts—but henceforth, if jealous Spain, or meddling France, could avail themselves of your person or your claims, I should hear only of the Lady Arabella as a rallying point for all the disaffected knaves, who would fain ruin us, and enrich themselves, by a seven year's war, and in the end, hope to see a minion of the Pope sitting on the throne of fair and merry England. And so it is, cousin, mine you see why you must e'en content yourself to bide a while longer in your maiden state—or at least, till we can find a more fitting mate for you than this young scion of the house of Hertford. We like not over much the race, for they aim high, and let not small hindrances mar their flight, and if you know aught of their history, you may perchance remember what was said of their traitorous ancestor, the protector Somerset, 'that all his

honours had helped him too forward to hop headless',—a warning which it would not be ill for his aspiring descendant to bear in mind."

The beautiful lip of the Lady Arabella curled with proud disdain at the pusillanimity of the unliking James, and she calmly and haughtily replied:

"Since it is your majesty's pleasure to forbid my union with him whom my heart has chosen, and who is in birth, in education, in all fitting things, my equal—in some, my superior—I take heaven to witness, that to no other shall my hand ever be given, my faith voluntarily pledged. And now that your majesty has seen fit to cast a blight upon my dearest hopes, I humbly crave your royal permission to retire from court. Its gaieties are uncongenial with my feelings, neither can I endure to remain where, I am an object of constant and unjust suspicion.

"The blood of the Tudors is red upon your cheek, cousin, and it is too fair a one, to be seckred by such unholy heat. I meant not to anger you,—but as I have said, it is for your peace, as well as for my own, that I guard you with jealous care from the designs of those, who would use you only as a ladder for their own mounting ambition. You are well aware that by a disaffected party in this realm I have been termed an alien, and your claim to its crown, as having been born and bred on the soil of England, has been preferred before mine. I acknowledge that hitherto you have frowned upon their impious and seditious purposes; but the truest and firmest have been tempted, and it behooves me, as the lawful monarch of these realms, and the guardian of my children's rights, to be cautious how I lend any facilities, either direct or indirect, to conspirators, foreign or domestic, who would disturb the peace of our reign, or insinuate doubts of the divine right by which we hold our sovereignty. And now, Lady Arabella, I have condescended to give you reasons for my conduct, which I should not have rendered to every one, and I would but ask, if you acquiesce in their justice, and submit to the decree, which, as your guardian and your king, I have thought proper to pronounce."

"I can do no less than submit to the will of my sovereign, trusting that time may soften his resolves, and induce him again to restore to me the happiness of which he has now deemed it prudent to deprive me—and I humbly entreat that he will not extend his power so far as to force me into any alliance which my heart cannot sanction."

"Fear not that, fair cousin, I have no such purpose in view; and be not sanguine in the hope, that any change may be wrought in me, to favour Seymour; I have reasons numberless, for not caring to link his fate with yours."

The Lady Arabella's flushed cheek grew deadly pale at these words, which sounded like the death-knell of her hopes, and her lip quivered with strong