

as one whom all must envy for the peerless prize his valour and accomplishments have won. For these letters, I will myself take charge of their safety, and entrust them to a special messenger, who shall deliver them with speed and care to the hands of your royal brother."

Mary thanked him, and their conference ended; but long after his departure she sat busily recalling all that had passed between herself and the noble Francis, during their brief acquaintance. All his generous devotion to her happiness and wishes, the delicate solicitude with which, in the midst of a censorious court, he had sought to avert from her every breath of censure or reproach, and the manly forbearance, the magnanimity of soul, which he has shewn in stifling his growing tenderness, submitting with a child's docility to her gentle rebuke, and striving to atone for a momentary error, by devoting all his energies to promote her happiness, though it involved that also of his rival. She felt, indeed, that she owed him a deep and mighty debt of gratitude, and long after she sought her couch, her thoughts still dwelt upon him, and when sleep at length visited her eyes, it was to revive the conversation of the evening, strangely blended with that which she had last held with Suffolk, on the balcony of York House, and disturbed by the angry countenance of King Henry, which seemed at every point to meet her with a menacing aspect.

A few days succeeding her last interview with Francis, as she was sitting with her ladies, one bright afternoon on a balcony that overhung the palace garden, her page announced a messenger from England, bearing despatches, which he was directed to deliver in person to her majesty. She instantly arose, and attended only by her page, reentered the apartment which opened from the balcony, and where the English messenger already awaited her appearance. Her heart beat quickly as she glanced towards him, and before she could still its throbbings, he had advanced, and was kneeling at her feet, with an air of humble deference, due to her queenly dignity.

"Brandon!" exclaimed Mary, with low yet thrilling emphasis—then recollecting the presence of the page, she checked the warm gush of feeling that was bursting from her heart. "Rise, my lord," she said, in a tone that struggled for calmness, "I understand you come to me the bearer of my brother's will, and I would learn if rumour has for once told truth, and if it is still his purpose to impose on me new duties, and require yet further sacrifices, than those I have already made to pleasure him."

"My sovereign made no mention to me of such designs," said Suffolk, as he rose, and with a courteous gesture declining the seat to which she motioned him, remained standing before her. "True, it is whispered abroad, that Henry has in contemplation a foreign union for your majesty—but this

I am not authorized officially to communicate, nor can I say whether these letters, which I have now the honour to deliver, contain any intimation of such a purpose."

As he spoke, he drew forth the packet, and presented it on one knee. Mary received it with a graceful gesture of acknowledgment, saying, as she broke the seal, "By your leave, my lord, I will glance over the contents of his majesty's letter, and learn if he still thinks to sport, as though it were an idle plaything, with my happiness," and rising, she retreated to a window, apparently for the benefit of the light which streamed through its narrow panes, but in reality to hide the deep emotion, the wounded pride, caused by the cold and studied demeanour of him, towards whom her heart leaped forth with all a woman's fond and gushing tenderness. She thought some fearful change had come over him, and remembered not, that he stood before her in an official capacity, and that never had he dared to betray the trust reposed in him by his sovereign—the fear lest she, who had sat upon one of the proudest thrones in Christendom, might spurn the renewal of a suit, to which, as the princess of England she had deigned to listen, would have deterred him from the expression of one impassioned thought, with which his heart was bursting.

As Mary moved towards the window, Suffolk followed her with a sad and tender gaze, that expressed all, and more than all, his trembling lips longed, yet feared to utter, and when she turned again towards him, she met that beaming look which told how fondly and how truly she was still beloved. Her eyes, which had been raised to his with a cold and haughty expression, drooped beneath the fervent gaze which they encountered, and a bright carnation suffused the cheek, which an instant before might have outvied the Parian stone, in its quiet, colourless beauty. Aware that feelings might be revealed, which she would not that any stranger eye should gaze upon, she motioned her page to the ante-room, and, advancing with the open letter in her hand, to her former seat, said, with all the calmness she could command:

"I am happy to find no intimation in his majesty's letter, of the designs which rumour has imputed to him—nor do I think, knowing me as he does, and having pledged me his promise to the contrary, he can harbour such. No, I have been once the reluctant but obedient victim of his policy—so obedient, that I have earned the right in future, to consult alone the wishes of my heart, and this right I am resolved, with God's aid, stoutly to maintain."

Their eyes met, and it was as if an electric spark of joy were struck from the hearts of each, and obeying its impulse, he would have precipitated himself at her feet, but instantly checking himself, he drew back, with a subdued and saddened air.

"I pray your grace will pardon me," he said,