

place of Bridewell, where affairs of moment await our coming. Moreover, his Grace of York, gives a mask tomorrow eve, in honour of the Duke de Longueville, from which we must not absent ourselves, for the banquet will lack flavour, and the state apartments brilliancy, should the bright eyes and rosy smiles that circle the sylvan board of Robin Hood, not grace the bishop's entertainment?"

As the king named the Duke De Longueville, he glanced significantly towards the princess, who had received too many intimations that her hand was to become the cement of that peace, now in treaty between England and France, not to understand his meaning. She felt there was no escape, but Suffolk was lost to her, and thus persuaded, her future destiny was at this moment a matter of indifference. The queen now made a motion to withdraw, which was instantly obeyed, and the whole party repaired forthwith to the castle, in the court of which stood ready trapped, the steeds of knights and ladies, awaiting the arrival of their riders. The dresses of the maskers were speedily changed, the ladies arrayed in hood and mantle, and the whole party mounted and away, followed by a long train of attendants of either sex. The moment of explanation to which Suffolk had so impatiently looked forward was now, as he thought, at hand, and he had already reined up his proud Arabian, by the side of Mary's beautiful jennet, the gift to her, of Charles of Castile, at the period of their betrothment, when a summons from the king called him away, and with reluctance not to be described, he quitted the envied station he had attained.

"I have somewhat to whisper in the ear of the princess that brooks not delay," said the king gaily, as Suffolk approached; "so to your knightly guidance I entrust the care of her majesty, and deem you beholden to me for so great an honour?"

Without awaiting his reply, the king turned his steed and joined the princess, leaving the vexed and mortified duke to assume, with reluctance he could ill conceal, his station beside the queen. Happily for him, Catherine seemed even more inclined than usual, to indulge the gravity and taciturnity peculiar to her character, and which she doubtless felt a relief, after the adventures and unusual excitements of the day. As the courtly train, at an easy pace, pursued its way towards London, Suffolk cast an occasional glance of inquiry towards the king and Mary, who rode somewhat apart from the rest, apparently absorbed in earnest conversation. What could be the topic which engrossed them? Strange surmises sprang up in his heart, and undefined fears were awakened, founded on the rumors which were abroad, of a contemplated marriage between the princess and the king of France. But why should this thought disturb him? She so young, so beautiful, so free from every sordid feeling or desire, to wed, for the vain pomp of royalty, infirmity and age.

No, it could never be, and he would not sully her purity by connecting with her so preposterous a thought.

Henry, in the meantime, with all the insinuating address of which he was master, had opened to Mary the subject of the French alliance—a subject which at present chiefly occupied his thoughts, and fed with brilliant hopes, the dreams of his ambition. But the arbitrary right which he assumed of prescribing to his subjects in the affair of marriage, without regard to any previously formed attachment, as best suited his own policy or caprice, he could not exercise in the present instance without some compunctious visitings of conscience, heightened by the natural yearnings of affection. Mary was very dear to him, and her youth, her gaiety and sweetness, together with her incomparable beauty, made her the delight and ornament of his court, and he had struggled long with himself before he could resolve to sacrifice this lovely creature to the superannuated prince who demanded her. But the desire which he felt to see his sister raised to the throne of France was irrepressible, nor were the suggestions of the artful Wolsey wanting, to induce him to surrender the more generous affections of his nature, of which he was not, at this time destitute, to the meaner passions of avarice and ambition. Wolsey hated Suffolk for his noble qualities, for his distinguished fortunes, and above all, for the friendship and confidence reposed in him by his sovereign. He early detected the attachment subsisting between the duke and the Princess Mary, and he was resolved, if possible, to blight the aspiring hopes of the hated favourite, and prevent his attaining that yet more exalted station to which a union with the princess must necessarily raise him. The crafty almoner, therefore, zealously forwarded the projected marriage with Louis the Twelfth of France. He ceased not to urge upon Henry the advantages to himself, of so splendid an alliance for his sister, the harmony in which it would bind the two powers, and the magnificence of the dowry offered to the bride. His arguments were but too effective. Henry was willing to believe himself governed by a wise and proper policy, and accordingly, silencing what he termed his selfish scruples, permitted the treaty to proceed, the articles to be drawn up, and every preliminary settled, before he gained the final consent of Mary. It was for this purpose that he now sought a private conversation with her, and the embarrassment which he felt in introducing it, might have told him that he had hitherto, and still was, acting with a cruel disregard to her wishes and happiness. After some minutes of silence, he turned and looked earnestly upon her face, revolving in what manner to open his subject, while she, conscious of his gaze, averted her eyes, trembling at that, to which she was about to listen.

"Our rude pastimes have wearied you, my sweet