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HENRY VIII. AND HIS COURT.

CHAPTER I.

CHOOSING A CONFESSOR.

It was in the year 1543. King Henry the Eighth of England that day once more pronounced himself the happiest and most enviable man in his kingdom, for to-day he was once more a bridegroom, and Catharine Parr, the youthful widow of Baron Latimer, had the perilous happiness of being selected as the king's sixth consort.

Merrily chimed the bells of all the steeples of London, announcing to the people the commencement of that holy ceremony which sacredly bound Catharine Parr to the king as his sixth wife. The people, ever fond of novelty and show, crowded through the streets toward the royal palace to catch a sight of Catharine, when she appeared at her husband's side upon the balcony, to show herself to the English people as their queen, and to receive their homage in return.

Surely it was a proud and lofty success for the widow of a petty baron to become the lawful wife of the King of England, and to wear upon her brow a royal crown! But yet Catharine Parr's heart was moved with a strange fear, her cheeks were pale and cold, and before the altar her closely compressed lips scarcely had the power to part, and pronounce the binding "*I will.*"

At last the sacred ceremony was completed. The two spiritual dignitaries, Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, and

Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, then, in accordance with court etiquette, led the young bride into her apartments, in order to bless them, and once more to pray with her, before the worldly festivities should begin.

Catharine, however, pale and agitated, had yet sustained her part in the various ceremonies of the day with a true queenly bearing and dignity; and, as now with head proudly erect and firm step, she walked with a bishop at either side through the splendid apartments, no one suspected how heavy a burden weighed upon her heart, and what baleful voices were whispering in her breast.

Followed by her new court, she had traversed with her companions the state apartments, and now reached the inner rooms. Here, according to the etiquette of the time, she must dismiss her court, and only the two bishops and her ladies of honor were permitted to accompany the queen into the drawing-room. But farther than this chamber even the bishops themselves might not follow her. The king himself had written down the order for the day, and he who swerved from this order in the most insignificant point would have been proclaimed guilty of high treason, and perhaps have been led out to death.

Catharine, therefore, turned with a languid smile to the two high ecclesiastics, and requested them to await here her summons. Then beckoning to her ladies of honor, she withdrew into her boudoir.

The two bishops remained by themselves in the drawing-room. The circumstance of their being alone seemed to impress them both alike and unpleasantly; for a dark scowl gathered on the brows of both, and they withdrew, as if at a concerted signal, to the opposite sides of the spacious apartment.

A long pause ensued. Nothing was heard save the regular ticking of a large clock of rare workmanship which stood over the fireplace, and from the street afar off, the rejoicing of the people, who surged toward the palace like a roaring sea.

Gardiner had stepped to the window, and was looking up with his peculiar dark smile at the clouds which, driven by the tempest, were sweeping across the heavens.

Cranmer stood by the wall on the opposite side, and sunk in sad thoughts, was contemplating a large portrait of Henry the Eighth, the masterly production of Holbein. As he gazed on that countenance, indicative at once of so much dignity and so much ferocity; as he contemplated those eyes which shone with such gloomy severity, those lips on which was a smile at once voluptuous and fierce, there came over him a feeling of deep sympathy with the young woman whom he had that day devoted to such splendid misery. He reflected that he had, in like manner, already conducted two wives of the king to the marriage altar, and had blessed their union. But he reflected, too, that he had also, afterward, attended both these queens when they ascended the scaffold.

How easily might this pitiable young wife of the king fall a victim to the same dark fate! How easily might Catharine Parr, like Anne Boleyn and Catharine Howard, purchase her short-lived glory with an ignominious death! At any time an inconsiderate word, a look, a smile, might be her ruin. For the king's choler and jealousy were incalculable, and, to his cruelty, no punishment seemed too severe for those by whom he fancied himself injured.

Such were the thoughts which occupied Bishop Cranmer. They softened him, and caused the dark wrinkles to disappear from his brow.

He now smiled to himself at the ill-humor which he had felt shortly before, and upbraided himself for having been so little mindful of his holy calling, and for having exhibited so little readiness to meet his enemy in a conciliating spirit.

For Gardiner was his enemy: *that* Cranmer very well knew. Gardiner had often enough showed him this by his deeds, as he had also taken pains by his words to assure him of his friendship.

But even if Gardiner hated him, it did not therefore follow that Cranmer was obliged to return that hatred; that he should denominate him his enemy, whom he, in virtue of their mutual high calling, was bound to honor and love as his brother.

The noble Cranmer was, therefore, ashamed of his momentary ill-humor. A gentle smile lighted up his peaceful countenance. With an air at once dignified and friendly, he crossed the room and approached the Bishop of Winchester.

Lord Gardiner turned toward him with morose looks, and, without advancing from the embrasure of the window in which he was standing, waited for Cranmer to advance to him. As he looked into that noble, smiling countenance, he had a feeling as if he must raise his fist and dash it into the face of this man, who had the boldness to wish to be his equal, and to contend with him for fame and honor.

But he reflected in good time that Cranmer was still the king's favorite, and therefore he must proceed to work against him with great caution.

So he forced these fierce thoughts back into his heart, and let his face again assume its wonted grave and impenetrable expression.

Cranmer now stood close before him, and his bright, beaming eye was fixed upon Gardiner's sullen countenance.

"I come to your highness," said Cranmer, in his gentle, pleasant voice, "to say to you that I wish with my whole heart the queen may choose you for her confessor and spiritual director, and to assure you that, should this be the case, there will not be in my soul, on that account, the least rancor, or the slightest dissatisfaction. I shall fully comprehend it, if her majesty chooses the distinguished and eminent Bishop of Winchester as her confessor, and the esteem and admiration which I entertain for you can only be enhanced thereby. In confirmation of this, permit me to offer you my hand."

He presented his hand to Gardiner, who, however, took it reluctantly and but for a moment.

"Your highness is very noble, and at the same time a very subtle diplomatist, for you only wish in an adroit and ingenious way to give me to understand how I am to act should the queen choose you for her spiritual director. But that she will do so, you know as well as I. It is, therefore, for me only a humiliation which etiquette imposes when she compels me to stand here and wait to see whether I shall be chosen, or contemptuously thrust aside."

"Why will you look at matters in so unfriendly a light?" said Cranmer, gently. "Wherefore will you consider it a mark of contempt, if you are not chosen to an office to which, indeed, neither merit nor worthiness can call us, but only the personal confidence of a young woman?"

"Oh! you admit that I shall not be chosen?" cried Gardiner, with a malicious smile.

"I have already told you that I am wholly uninformed as to the queen's wish, and I think it is known that the Bishop of Canterbury is wont to speak the truth."

"Certainly that is known, but it is known also that Catharine Parr was a warm admirer of the Bishop of Canterbury; and now that she has gained her end and become queen, she will make it her duty to show her gratitude to him."

"You would by that insinuate that I have made her queen. But I assure your highness, that here also, as in so many other matters which relate to myself, you are falsely informed."

"Possibly!" said Gardiner, coldly. "At any rate, it is certain that the young queen is an ardent advocate of the abominable new doctrine which, like the plague, has spread itself from Germany over all Europe, and scattered mischief and ruin through all Christendom. Yes, Catharine Parr, the present queen, leans to that heretic against

whom the Holy Father at Rome has hurled his crushing anathema. She is an adherent of the Reformation."

"You forget," said Cranmer, with an arch smile, "that this anathema was hurled against the head of our king also, and that it has shown itself equally ineffectual against Henry the Eighth as against Luther. Besides, I might remind you that we no longer call the Pope of Rome, 'Holy Father,' and that you yourself have recognized the king as the head of our church."

Gardiner turned away his face in order to conceal the vexation and rage which distorted his features. He felt that he had gone too far, that he had betrayed too much of the secret thoughts of his soul. But he could not always control his violent and passionate nature; and however much a man of the world and diplomatist he might be, still there were moments when the fanatical priest got the better of the man of the world, and the diplomat was forced to give way to the minister of the church.

Cranmer pitied Gardiner's confusion, and, following the native goodness of his heart, he said pleasantly: "Let us not strive here about dogmas, nor attempt to determine whether Luther or the pope is most in the wrong. We stand here in the chamber of the young queen. Let us, therefore, occupy ourselves a little with the destiny of this young woman whom God has chosen for so brilliant a lot."

"Brilliant?" said Gardiner, shrugging his shoulders. "Let us first wait for the termination of her career, and then decide whether it has been brilliant. Many a queen before this has fancied that she was resting on a couch of myrtles and roses, and has suddenly become conscious that she was lying on a red-hot gridiron, which consumed her."

"It is true," murmured Cranmer, with a slight shudder, "it is a dangerous lot to be the king's consort. But just on that account let us not make the perils of her position still greater, by adding to them our own enmity and hate. Just on that account I beg you (and on my part I pledge you my word for it) that, let the choice of the queen

be as it may, there may be no feeling of anger, and no desire for revenge in consequence. My God, the poor women are such odd beings, so unaccountable in their wishes and in their inclinations!"

"Ah! it seems you know the women very intimately," cried Gardiner, with a malicious laugh. "Verily, were you not Archbishop of Canterbury, and had not the king prohibited the marriage of ecclesiastics as a very grave crime, one might suppose that you had a wife yourself, and had gained from her a thorough knowledge of female character."

Cranmer, somewhat embarrassed, turned away, and seemed to evade Gardiner's piercing look. "We are not speaking of myself," said he at length, "but of the young queen, and I entreat for her your good wishes. I have seen her to-day almost for the first time, and have never spoken with her, but her countenance has touchingly impressed me, and it appeared to me, her looks besought us to remain at her side, ready to help her on this difficult pathway, which five wives have already trod before her, and in which they found only misery and tears, disgrace, and blood."

"Let Catharine beware then that she does not forsake the right way, as her five predecessors have done!" exclaimed Gardiner. "May she be prudent and cautious, and may she be enlightened by God, that she may hold the true faith, and have true wisdom, and not allow herself to be seduced into the crooked path of the godless and heretical, but remain faithful and steadfast with those of the true faith!"

"Who can say who are of the true faith?" murmured Cranmer, sadly. "There are so many paths leading to heaven, who knows which is the right one?"

"That which *we* tread!" cried Gardiner, with all the overweening pride of a minister of the church. "Woe to the queen should she take any other road! Woe to her if she lends her ear to the false doctrines which come ringing

over here from Germany and Switzerland, and in the worldly prudence of her heart imagines that she can rest secure! I will be her most faithful and zealous servant, if she is with me; I will be her most implacable enemy if she is against me."

"And will you call it *being against you*, if the queen does not choose you for her confessor?"

"Will you ask me to call it, being for me?"

"Now God grant that she may choose you!" exclaimed Cranmer, fervently, as he clasped his hands and raised his eyes to heaven. "Poor, unfortunate queen! The first proof of thy husband's love may be thy first misfortune! Why gave he thee the liberty of choosing thine own spiritual director? Why did he not choose for thee?"

And Cranmer dropped his head upon his breast, and sighed deeply.

At this instant the door of the royal chamber opened, and Lady Jane, daughter of Earl Douglas, and first maid of honor to the queen, made her appearance on the threshold.

Both bishops regarded her in breathless silence. It was a serious, a solemn moment, the deep importance of which was very well comprehended by all three.

"Her majesty the queen," said Lady Jane, in an agitated voice, "her majesty requests the presence of Lord Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, in her cabinet, in order that she may perform her devotions with him."

"Poor queen!" murmured Cranmer, as he crossed the room to go to Catharine—"poor queen! she has just made an implacable enemy."

Lady Jane waited till Cranmer had disappeared through the door, then hastened with eager steps to the bishop of Winchester, and dropping on her knee, humbly said, "Grace, your highness, grace! My words were in vain, and were not able to shake her resolution."

Gardiner raised up the kneeling maiden, and forced a smile. "It is well," said he, "I doubt not of your zeal. You are a true handmaid of the church, and she will love

and reward you for it as a mother! It is then decided. The queen is——"

"Is a heretic," whispered Lady Jane. "Woe to her!"

"And will you be true, and will you faithfully adhere to us?"

"True, in every thought of my being, and every drop of my heart's blood."

"So shall we overcome Catharine Parr, as we overcame Catharine Howard. To the block with the heretic! We found means of bringing Catharine Howard to the scaffold; you, Lady Jane, must find the means of leading Catharine Parr the same way."

"I will find them," said Lady Jane, quietly. "She loves and trusts me. I will betray her friendship in order to remain true to my religion."

"Catharine Parr then is lost," said Gardiner, aloud.

"Yes, she is lost," responded Earl Douglas, who had just entered, and caught the last words of the bishop. "Yes, she is lost, for we are her inexorable and ever-vigilant enemies. But I deem it not altogether prudent to utter words like these in the queen's drawing-room. Let us therefore choose a more favorable hour. Besides, your highness, you must betake yourself to the grand reception-hall, where the whole court is already assembled, and now only awaits the king to go in formal procession for the young queen, and conduct her to the balcony. Let us go, then."

Gardiner nodded in silence, and betook himself to the reception-hall.

Earl Douglas with his daughter followed him. "Catharine Parr is lost," whispered he in Lady Jane's ear. "Catharine Parr is lost, and you shall be the king's seventh wife."

Whilst this was passing in the drawing-room, the young queen was on her knees before Cranmer, and with him sending up to God fervent prayers for prosperity and peace. Tears filled her eyes, and her heart trembled as if before some approaching calamity.

CHAPTER II.

THE QUEEN AND HER FRIEND.

AT last this long day of ceremonies and festivities drew near its close, and Catharine might soon hope to be, for the time, relieved from this endless presenting and smiling, from this ever-renewed homage.

At her husband's side she had shown herself on the balcony to receive the greetings of the people, and to bow her thanks. Then in the spacious audience-chamber her newly appointed court had passed before her in formal procession, and she had exchanged a few meaningless, friendly words with each of these lords and ladies. Afterward she had, at her husband's side, given audience to the deputations from the city and from Parliament. But it was only with a secret shudder that she had received from their lips the same congratulations and praises with which the authorities had already greeted five other wives of the king.

Still she had been able to smile and seem happy, for she well knew that the king's eye was never off of her, and that all these lords and ladies who now met her with such deference, and with homage apparently so sincere, were yet, in truth, all her bitter enemies. For by her marriage she had destroyed so many hopes, she had pushed aside so many who believed themselves better fitted to assume the lofty position of queen! She knew that these victims of disappointment would never forgive her this; that she, who was but yesterday their equal, had to-day soared above them as queen and mistress; she knew that all these were watching with spying eyes her every word and action, in order, it might be, to forge therefrom an accusation or a death-warrant.

But nevertheless she smiled! She smiled, though she felt that the choler of the king, so easily kindled and so cruelly vindictive, ever swung over her head like the sword of Damocles.

She smiled, so that this sword might not fall upon her.

At length all these presentations, this homage and rejoicing were well over, and they came to the more agreeable and satisfactory part of the feast.

They went to dinner. That was Catharine's first moment of respite, of rest. For when Henry the Eighth seated himself at table, he was no longer the haughty monarch and the jealous husband, but merely the proficient *artiste* and the impassioned gourmand; and whether the pastry was well seasoned, and the pheasant of good flavor, was for him then a far more important question than any concerning the weal of his people, and the prosperity of his kingdom.

But after dinner came another respite, a new enjoyment, and this time a more real one, which indeed for a while banished all gloomy forebodings and melancholy fears from Catharine's heart, and suffused her countenance with the rosy radiance of cheerfulness and happy smiles. For King Henry had prepared for his young wife a peculiar and altogether novel surprise. He had caused to be erected in the palace of Whitehall a stage, whereon was represented, by the nobles of the court, a comedy from Plautus. Heretofore there had been no other theatrical exhibitions than those which the people performed on the high festivals of the church, the morality and the mystery plays. King Henry the Eighth was the first who had a stage erected for worldly amusement likewise, and caused to be represented on it subjects other than mere dramatized church history. As he freed the church from its spiritual head, the pope, so he wished to free the stage from the church, and to behold upon it other more lively spectacles than the roasting of saints and the massacre of inspired nuns.

And why, too, represent such mock tragedies on the stage, when the king was daily performing them in reality? The burning of Christian martyrs and inspired virgins was, under the reign of the Christian king Henry, such a usual

and every-day occurrence, that it could afford a piquant entertainment neither to the court nor to himself.

But the representation of a Roman comedy, that, however, was a new and piquant pleasure, a surprise for the young queen. He had the "Cureulio" played before his wife, and if Catharine indeed could listen to the licentious and shameless jests of the popular Roman poet only with bashful blushes, Henry was so much the more delighted by it, and accompanied the obscenest allusions and the most indecent jests with his uproarious laughter and loud shouts of applause.

At length this festivity was also over with, and Catharine was now permitted to retire with her attendants to her private apartments.

With a pleasant smile, she dismissed her cavaliers, and bade her women and her second maid of honor, Anna Askew, go into her boudoir and await her call. Then she gave her arm to her friend Lady Jane Douglas, and with her entered her cabinet.

At last she was alone, at last unwatched. The smile disappeared from her face, and an expression of deep sadness was stamped upon her features.

"Jane," said she, "pray thee shut the doors and draw the window curtains, so that nobody can see me, nobody hear me, no one except yourself, my friend, the companion of my happy childhood. Oh, my God, my God, why was I so foolish as to leave my father's quiet, lonely castle and go out into the world, which is so full of terror and horror?"

She sighed and groaned deeply; and burying her face in her hands, she sank upon the ottoman, weeping and trembling.

Lady Jane observed her with a peculiar smile of malicious satisfaction.

"She is queen and she weeps," said she to herself. "My God, how can a woman possibly feel unhappy, and she a queen?"

She approached Catharine, and, seating herself on the tabouret at her feet, she impressed a fervent kiss on the queen's drooping hand.

"Your majesty weeping!" said she, in her most insinuating tone. "My God, you are then unhappy; and I received with a loud cry of joy the news of my friend's unexpected good fortune. I thought to meet a queen, proud, happy, and radiant with joy; and I was anxious and fearful lest the queen might have ceased to be my friend. Wherefore I urged my father, as soon as your command reached us, to leave Dublin and hasten with me hither. Oh, my God! I wished to see you in your happiness and in your greatness."

Catharine removed her hands from her face, and looked down at her friend with a sorrowful smile. "Well," said she, "are you not satisfied with what you have seen? Have I not the whole day displayed to you the smiling queen, worn a dress embroidered with gold? did not my neck glitter with diamonds? did not the royal diadem shine in my hair? and sat not the king by my side? Let that, then, be sufficient for the present. You have seen the queen all day long. Allow me now for one brief, happy moment to be again the feeling, sensitive woman, who can pour into the bosom of her friend all her complaint and her wretchedness. Ah, Jane, if you knew how I have longed for this hour, how I have sighed after you as the only balm for my poor smitten heart, smitten even to death, how I have implored Heaven for this day, for this one thing—'Give me back my Jane, so that she can weep with me, so that I may have one being at my side who understands me, and does not allow herself to be imposed upon by the wretched splendor of this outward display!'"

"Poor Catharine!" whispered Lady Jane, "poor queen!"

Catharine started and laid her hand, sparkling with brilliants, on Jane's lips. "Call me not thus!" said she. "Queen! My God, is not all the fearful past heard again

in that word? Queen! Is it not as much as to say, condemned to the scaffold and a public criminal trial? Ah, Jane! a deadly tremor runs through my members. I am Henry the Eighth's sixth queen; I shall also be executed, or, loaded with disgrace, be repudiated."

Again she hid her face in her hands, and her whole frame shook; so she saw not the smile of malicious satisfaction with which Lady Jane again observed her. She suspected not with what secret delight her friend heard her lamentations and sighs.

"Oh! I am at least revenged!" thought Jane, while she lovingly stroked the queen's hair. "Yes, I am revenged! She has robbed me of a crown, but she is wretched; and in the golden goblet which she presses to her lips she will find nothing but wormwood! Now, if this sixth queen dies not on the scaffold, still we may perhaps so work it that she dies of anxiety, or deems it a pleasure to be able to lay down again her royal crown at Henry's feet."

Then said she aloud: "But why these fears, Catharine? The king loves you; the whole court has seen with what tender and ardent looks he has regarded you to-day, and with what delight he has listened to your every word. Certainly the king loves you."

Catharine seized her hand impulsively. "The king loves me," whispered she, "and I, I tremble before him. Yes, more than that, his love fills me with horror! His hands are dipped in blood; and as I saw him to-day in his crimson robes I shuddered, and I thought, How soon, and my blood, too, will dye this crimson!"

Jane smiled. "You are sick, Catharine," said she. "This good fortune has taken you by surprise, and your overstrained nerves now depict before you all sorts of frightful forms. That is all."

"No, no, Jane; these thoughts have ever been with me. They have attended me ever since the king selected me for his wife."

"And why, then, did you not refuse him?" asked Lady Jane. "Why did you not say 'no' to the king's suit?"

"Why did I not do it, ask you? Ah, Jane, are you such a stranger at this court as not to know, then, that one must either fulfil the king's behests or die? My God, they envy me! They call me the greatest and most potent woman of England. They know not that I am poorer and more powerless than the beggar of the street, who at least has the power to refuse whom she will. I could not refuse. I must either die or accept the royal hand which was extended to me; and I would not die yet, I have still so many claims on life, and it has hitherto made good so few of them! Ah, my poor, hapless existence! what has it been, but an endless chain of renunciations and deprivations, of leafless flowers and dissolving views? It is true, I have never learned to know what is usually called misfortune. But is there a greater misfortune than not to be happy; than to sigh through a life without wish or hope; to wear away the endless, weary days of an existence without delight, yet surrounded with luxury and splendor?"

"You were not unfortunate, and yet you are an orphan, fatherless and motherless?"

"I lost my mother so early that I scarcely knew her. And when my father died I could hardly consider it other than a blessing, for he had never shown himself a father, but always only as a harsh, tyrannical master to me."

"But you were married?"

"Married!" said Catharine, with a melancholy smile. "That is to say, my father sold me to a gouty old man, on whose couch I spent a few comfortless, awfully wearisome years, till Lord Neville made me a rich widow. But what did my independence avail me, when I had bound myself in new fetters? Hitherto I had been the slave of my father, of my husband; now I was the slave of my wealth. I ceased to be a sick-nurse to become steward of my estate. Ah! this was the most tedious period of my

life. And yet I owe to it my only real happiness, for at that period I became acquainted with you, my Jane, and my heart, which had never yet learned to know a tenderer feeling, flew to you with all the impetuosity of a first passion. Believe me, my Jane, when this long-missing nephew of my husband came and snatched away from me his hereditary estate, and, as the lord, took possession of it, then the thought that I must leave you and your father, the neighboring proprietor, was my only grief. Men commiserated me on account of my lost property. I thanked God that He had relieved me of this load, and I started for London, that I might at last live and feel, that I might learn to know real happiness or real misery."

"And what did you find?"

"Misery, Jane, for I am queen."

"Is that your sole unhappiness?"

"My only one, but it is great enough, for it condemns me to eternal anxiety, to eternal dissimulation. It condemns me to feign a love which I do not feel, to endure caresses which make me shudder, because they are an inheritance from five unfortunate women. Jane, Jane, do you comprehend what it is to be obliged to embrace a man who has murdered three wives and put away two? to be obliged to kiss this king whose lips open just as readily to utter vows of love as sentences of death? Ah, Jane, I speak, I live, and still I suffer all the agonies of death! They call me a queen, and yet I tremble for my life every hour, and conceal my anxiety and fear beneath the appearance of happiness! My God, I am five-and-twenty, and my heart is still the heart of a child; it does not yet know itself, and now it is doomed never to learn to know itself; for I am Henry's wife, and to love another is, in other words, to wish to mount the scaffold. The scaffold! Look, Jane. When the king approached me and confessed his love and offered me his hand, suddenly there rose before me a fearful picture. It was no more the king whom I saw before me, but the hangman; and it seemed

to me that I saw three corpses lying at his feet, and with a loud scream I sank senseless before him. When I revived, the king was holding me in his arms. The shock of this unexpected good fortune, he thought, had made me faint. He kissed me and called me his bride; he thought not for a moment that I could refuse him. And I—despise me, Jane—I was such a dastard, that I could not summon up courage for a downright refusal. Yes, I was so craven also, as to be unwilling to die. Ah, my God, it appeared to me that life at that moment beckoned to me with thousands of joys, thousands of charms, which I had never known, and for which my soul thirsted as for the manna in the wilderness. I would live, live at any cost. I would gain myself a respite, so that I might once more share happiness, love, and enjoyment. Look, Jane, men call me ambitious. They say I have given my hand to Henry because he is king. Ah, they know not how I shuddered at this royal crown. They know not that in anguish of heart I besought the king not to bestow his hand upon me, and thereby rouse all the ladies of his kingdom as foes against me. They know not that I confessed that I loved him, merely that I might be able to add that I was ready, out of love to him, to sacrifice my own happiness to his, and so conjured him to choose a consort worthy of himself, from the hereditary princesses of Europe.* But Henry rejected my sacrifice. He wished to make a queen, in order to possess a wife, who may be his own property—whose blood, as her lord and master, he can shed. So I am queen. I have accepted my lot, and henceforth my existence will be a ceaseless struggle and wrestling with death. I will at least sell my life as dearly as possible; and the maxim which Cranmer has given me shall hereafter be my guide on the thorny path of life."

"And how runs this maxim?" asked Jane.

"Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves," replied

* "*La vie d'Élisabeth, Reine d'Angleterre, traduite de l'Italien de Monsieur Grégoire Leti,*" vol. ii. Amsterdam, 1694.

Catharine, with a languid smile, as she dropped her head upon her breast and surrendered herself to her painful and foreboding reflections.

Lady Jane stood opposite to her, and gazed with cruel composure upon the painfully convulsed countenance and at times violently trembling form of the young queen for whom all England that day kept festival, and who yet was sitting before her so wretched and full of sorrow.

Suddenly Catharine raised her head. Her countenance had now assumed an entirely different expression. It was now firm, resolute, and dauntless. With a slight inclination of the head she extended her hand to Lady Jane, and drew her friend more closely to her.

"I thank you, Jane," said she, as she imprinted a kiss upon her forehead—"I thank you! You have done my heart good and relieved it of its oppressive load of secret anguish. He who can give his grief utterance, is already half cured of it. I thank you, then, Jane! Henceforth, you will find me calm and cheerful. The woman has wept before you, but the queen is aware that she has a task to accomplish as difficult as it is noble, and I give you my word for it, she will accomplish it. The new light which has risen on the world shall no more be dimmed by blood and tears, and no more in this unhappy land shall men of sense and piety be condemned as insurgents and traitors! This is the task which God has set me, and I swear that I will accomplish it! Will you help me in this, too, Jane?"

Lady Jane responded faintly in a few words, which Catharine did not understand, and as she looked up to her, she noticed, with astonishment, the corpse-like pallor which had suddenly overspread the countenance of her maid of honor.

Catharine gave a start, and fixed on her face a surprised and searching look.

Lady Jane cast down her eyes before that searching and flashing glance. Her fanaticism had for the moment got the better of her, and much as she was wont at other

times to hide her thoughts and feelings, it had, at that moment, carried her away and betrayed her to the keen eye of her friend.

"It is now a long while since we saw each other," said Catharine, sadly. "Three years! It is a long time for a young girl's heart! And you were those three years with your father in Dublin, at that rigidly popish court. I did not consider that! But however much your opinions may have changed, your heart, I know, still remains the same, and you will ever be the proud, high-minded Jane of former days, who could never stoop to tell a lie—no, not even if this lie would procure her profit and glory. I ask you then, Jane, what is your religion? Do you believe in the Pope of Rome, and the Church of Rome as the only channel of salvation? or do you follow the new teaching which Luther and Calvin have promulgated?"

Lady Jane smiled. "Would I have risked appearing before you, if I still reckoned myself of the Roman Catholic Church? Catharine Parr is hailed by the Protestants of England as the new patroness of the persecuted doctrine, and already the Romish priests hurl their anathemas against you, and execrate you and your dangerous presence here. And you ask me, whether I am an adherent of that church which maligns and damns you? You ask me whether I believe in the pope, who has laid the king under an interdict—the king, who is not only my lord and master, but also the husband of my precious and noble Catharine? Oh, queen, you love me not when you can address such a question to me."

And as if overcome by painful emotion, Lady Jane sank down at Catharine's feet, and hid her head in the folds of the queen's robe.

Catharine bent down to raise her and take her to her heart. Suddenly she started, and a deathly paleness overspread her face. "The king," whispered she, "the king is coming!"