

guilt. The only difficulty in the way is to bring the queen, without arousing her suspicion, to wear this rosette, and to give it to Surrey."

"She will do it if I beg her to do so, for she loves me; and I shall so represent it to her that she will do it as an act of kindness to me. Catharine is good-natured and agreeable, and cannot refuse a request."

"And I will apprise the king of it. That is to say, I shall take good care not to do this myself, for it is always dangerous to approach a hungry tiger in his cage and carry him his food, because he might in his voracity very readily devour our own hand together with the proffered meat."

"But how?" asked she with an expression of alarm. "Will he content himself with punishing Catharine alone; will he not also crush him—him whom he must look upon as her lover?"

"He will do so. But you yourself shall save him and set him free. You shall open his prison and give him freedom, and he will love you—you, the savior of his life."

"Father, father, it is a hazardous game that you are playing; and it may happen that you will become thereby your daughter's murderer. For, listen well to what I tell you; if *his* head falls, I die by my own hands; if you make me his murderess, you become thereby mine; and I will curse you and execrate you in hell! What to me is a royal crown if it is stained with Henry Howard's blood? What care I for renown and honor, if he is not there to see my greatness, and if his beaming eyes do not reflect back to me the light of my crown? Protect him, therefore; guard his life as the apple of your eye, if you wish me to accept the royal crown that you offer me, so that the King of England may become again a vassal of the Church!"

"And that the whole of devout Christendom may praise Jane Douglas, the pious queen who has succeeded in the holy work of bringing the rebellious and recreant son of the Church, Henry the Eighth, back to the Holy

Father in Rome, to the only consecrated lord of the Church, truly penitent. On, on, my daughter; do not despond. A high aim beckons you, and a brilliant fortune awaits you! Our holy mother, the Church, will bless and praise you, and Henry the Eighth will declare you his queen."

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRISONER.

STILL all was calm and quiet in the palace of Whitehall. Nothing was stirring, and nobody had heard how Lady Jane Douglas left her chamber and glided down the corridor.

No one has heard it, and no eye is awake, and none sees what is now taking place in the queen's room.

She is alone—all alone. The servants are all asleep in their chambers. The queen herself has bolted the doors of the anteroom on the inside, and no other door leads into her boudoir and bedroom, except through this anteroom. She is therefore perfectly secluded, perfectly secure.

Speedily and in haste she envelops herself in a long black mantle, the hood of which she draws well over her head and brow, and which completely covers and conceals her form.

And now she presses on a spring inserted in the frame of a picture. The picture flies back and shows an opening, through which a person can quite conveniently pass out.

Catharine does so. Then she carefully pushes the picture back to its place from the outside, and for a long time walks on in the passage hollowed out of the solid wall, till groping along she at last lays hold again of a knob in the wall. She presses on it; and now at her feet

opens a trap-door, through which a feeble light forces its way and renders visible a small narrow staircase there situated. Catharine enters and descends the steps with winged feet. Now at the foot of the staircase she again presses on a secret spring; and again a door opens, through which the queen passes into a large hall.

"Oh," whispered she, fetching a long breath, "the green summer house at last."

She quickly traversed it and opened the next door.

"John Heywood?"

"I am here, queen!"

"Hush, hush! gently as possible, that the watch, who walks up and down just behind the door, may not hear us. Come, we still have a long walk—let us make haste."

Again she pressed on a spring inserted in the wall; and again a door opens. But before Catharine bolts this door, she takes the lamp burning on the table there, which is to lighten the dark and difficult path through which they are now to wend their way.

Now she bolts the door behind them; and they enter a long, dark corridor, at the end of which is found still another staircase, and down which they both go. Numberless steps conduct them below; gradually the air becomes dense, the steps moist. The stillness of the grave is around them. No sound of life, not the least noise, is now perceptible.

They are in a subterranean passage, which stretches out in length before them farther than the eye can reach.

Catharine turns to John Heywood; the lamp lights up her face, which is pale, but exhibits an expression firm and resolute.

"John Heywood, reflect once more! I ask not whether you have courage, for I know that. I only wish to know whether you will employ this courage for your queen?"

"No, not for the queen, but for the noble woman who has saved my son."

"You must then be my protector to-day if we meet

with dangers. But if it be God's will, we shall encounter no dangers. Let us go."

They go vigorously forward, silent all the way.

At length they come to a place where the passage grows broader, and spreads out into a little open chamber, on the side walls of which a few seats are placed.

"We have now accomplished half of the journey," said Catharine; "and here we will rest a little."

She placed the lamp on the small marble table in the middle of the passage, and sat down, pointing to John Heywood to take a seat near her.

"I am not the queen, here," said she; "and you are not the king's fool; but I am a poor weak woman, and you are my protector. You may, therefore, well have the right to sit by me."

But John shook his head with a smile, and sat down at her feet. "St. Catharine, savior of my son, I lie at thy feet, and devoutly return thanks to thee."

"John, are you acquainted with this subterranean passage?" asked the queen.

John gave a sad smile. "I am acquainted with it, queen."

"Ah, you know it? I supposed it was a secret of the king and queen."

"Then you will readily conceive that the fool knows it. For the King of England and the fool are twin brothers. Yes, queen, I know this passage; and I once wended it in anguish and tears."

"What! You yourself, John Heywood?"

"Yes, queen. And now I ask you, do you know the history of this underground passage? You are silent. Now, well for you that you do not know it. It is a long and bloody history, and if I should narrate to you the whole of it, the night would be too short for it. When this passage was built, Henry was still young, and possessed yet a heart. At that time, he loved not merely his wives, but his friends and servants also—specially Cromwell, the

all-powerful minister. He then resided at Whitehall, and Henry in the royal apartments of the Tower. But Henry was always longing for his favorite; and so Cromwell one day surprised him with this subterranean passage, the construction of which had occupied a hundred men a whole year. Ah, ah, the king was then very much moved, and thanked his powerful minister for this surprise with tears and hugs. There passed scarcely a day that Henry did not go to Cromwell through this passage. So he saw each day how the palace of Whitehall became more and more splendid and glorious; and when he returned to the Tower, he discovered that this residence was altogether unworthy of a king; but that his minister lived by far more magnificently than the King of England. That, queen, was the cause of Cromwell's fall! The king wanted Whitehall. The sly Cromwell noticed it, and made him a present of his gem, the palace on whose construction and decoration he had labored ten years. Henry accepted the present; but now Cromwell's fall was irrevocable. The king could not, of course, forgive Cromwell for having dared to offer him a present so valuable, that Henry could not or would not repay it. He remained, therefore, Cromwell's debtor; and since this tormented and vexed him, he swore Cromwell's ruin. When Henry moved into Whitehall, it was concluded that Cromwell must ascend the scaffold. Ah, the king is such an economical builder! A palace costs him nothing but the head of a subject. With Cromwell's head he paid for Whitehall; and Wolsey died for Hampton Court."

"Not on the scaffold, though, John."

"Oh, no; Henry preferred merely to break his heart, and not his head. First, he had that wonderful pleasure-villa, Hampton Court, with all its treasures, presented him by Wolsey; then he removed him from all his offices, and deprived him of all his honors. Finally, he was to go to the Tower as a prisoner; but he died on his way thither. No, you are right! Wolsey did not die on the scaffold, he

was put to death much more slowly and more cruelly. He was not killed with the sword, but pricked to death with pins!"

"Did you not say, John, that you had travelled this way once before?"

"Yes, queen, and I did it to bid farewell to the noblest of men, and the truest of friends, Thomas More! I begged and besought Cromwell so long that he had compassion on my anguish, and allowed me to go through this passage to Thomas More, that I might at least receive the blessing and last kiss of affection of this saint. Ah, queen, speak no more of it to me! From that day I became a fool; for I saw it was not worth the trouble to be an honest man, when such men as More are executed as criminals. Come, queen, let us go on!"

"Yes, on, John!" said she, rising. "But do you know then whither we are going?"

"Ah, queen, do I not then know you? and did I not tell you that Anne Askew is to be stretched upon the rack to-morrow, unless she recant?"

"I see that you have understood me," said she, giving him a friendly nod. "Yes, I am going to Anne Askew."

"But how will you, without being seen and discovered, find out her cell?"

"John, even the unhappy have friends. Yes, the queen herself has a few; and so chance, or it may be even God's will, has so arranged matters, that Anne Askew is occupying, just at this time, that small room in which the secret passage terminates."

"Is she alone in that room?"

"Yes, all alone. The guard stands without before the door."

"And should they hear you, and open the door?"

"Then without doubt I am lost, unless God supports me."

They walked on in silence, both too much occupied

with their own thoughts to interrupt them by conversation.

But this long, extended walk at length wearied Catharine. She leaned exhausted against the wall.

"Will you do me a favor, queen?" asked John Heywood. "Permit me to carry you. Your little feet can bear you no farther; make me your feet, your majesty!"

She refused with a friendly smile. "No, John, these are the passion-stations of a saint; and you know one must make the round of them in the sweat of his face, and on his knees."

"Oh, queen, how noble and how courageous you are!" exclaimed John Heywood. "You do good without display, and you shun no danger, if it avails toward the accomplishment of noble work."

"Yet, John," said she, with a bewitching smile, "I dread danger; and just on that account I begged you to accompany me. I shudder at the long, desolate way, at the darkness and grave-like stillness of this passage. Ah, John, I thought to myself, if I came here alone, the shades of Anne Boleyn and Catharine would be roused from their sleep by me who wear their crown; they would hover about me, and seize me by the hand and lead me to their graves, to show me that there is yet room there for me likewise. You see, then, that I am not at all courageous, but a cowardly and trembling woman."

"And nevertheless, you came, queen."

"I reckoned on you, John Heywood. It was my duty to risk this passage, to save, perchance, the life of the poor enthusiastic girl. For it shall not be said that Catharine deserts her friends in misfortune, and that she shrinks back at danger. I am but a poor, weak woman, John, who cannot defend her friends with weapons, and, therefore, I must resort to other means. But see, John, here the path forks! Ah, my God! I know it only from the description that was given me, but no one said anything of this to me. John, which way must we now turn?"

"This way, queen; and here we are at the end of our journey. That path there leads to the torture-chamber, that is to say, to a small grated window, through which one can overlook that room. When King Henry was in special good-humor, he would resort with his friend to this grating to divert himself a little with the tortures of the damned and blasphemers. For you well know, queen, only such as have blasphemed God, or have not recognized King Henry as the pope of their Church, have the honor of the rack as their due. But hush! here we are at the door, and here is the spring that opens it."

Catharine set her lamp on the ground and pressed the spring.

The door turned slowly and noiselessly on its hinges, and softly, like shades, the two entered.

They now found themselves in a small, circular apartment, which seemed to have been originally a niche formed in the wall of the Tower, rather than a room. Through a narrow grated opening in the wall only a little air and light penetrated into this dungeon, the bald, bare walls of which showed the stones of the masonry. There was no chair, no table in the whole space; only yonder in that corner on the earth they had heaped up some straw. On this straw lay a pale, tender creature; the sunken, thin cheeks, transparently white as alabaster; the brow so pure and clear; the entire countenance so peaceful; the bare, meagre arms thrown back over the head; the hands folded over the forehead; the head bent to one side in quiet, peaceful slumber; the delicate, tender form wrapped in a long black dress, gently stretched out, and on her lips a smile, such as only the happy know.

That was Anne Askew, the criminal, the condemned—Anne Askew, who was an atheist only for this, because she did not believe in the king's vast elevation and godlikeness, and would not subject her own free soul to that of the king.

"She sleeps," whispered Catharine, deeply moved.

Wholly involuntarily she folded her hands as she stepped to the couch of the sufferer, and a low prayer trembled on her lips.

"So sleep the just!" said Heywood. "Angels comfort them in their slumbers; and the breath of God refreshes them. Poor girl; how soon, and they will wrench these noble, fair limbs, and torture thee for the honor of God, and open to tones of distress that mouth which now smiles so peacefully!"

"No, no," said the queen, hastily. "I have come to save her, and God will assist me to do it. I cannot spare her slumbers any longer. I must wake her."

She bent down and pressed a kiss on the young girl's forehead. "Anne, awake; I am here! I will save you and set you free. Anne, Anne, awake!"

She slowly raised her large, brilliant eyes, and nodded a salutation to Catharine.

"Catharine Parr!" said she, with a smile. "I expected only a letter from you; and have you come yourself?"

"The guards have been dismissed, and the turnkeys changed, Anne; for our correspondence had been discovered."

"Ah, you will write to me no more in future! And yet your letters were my only comfort," sighed Anne Askew. "But that also is well; and perhaps it will only make the path that I have to tread still easier. The heart must set itself free from all earthly bonds, that the soul may move its pinions freely and easily, and return to God."

"Hear me, Anne, hear," said Catharine in a low and hurried voice. "A terrible danger threatens you! The king has given orders to move you, by means of the rack, to recant."

"Well, and what more?" asked Anne, with smiling face.

"Unfortunate, you know not what you are saying! You know not what fearful agonies await you! You know

not the power of pains, which are perhaps still mightier than the spirit, and may overcome it."

"And if I did know them now, what would it avail me?" asked Anne Askew. "You say they will put me to the rack. Well, then, I shall have to bear it, for I have no power to change their will."

"Yet, Anne, yet you have the power! Retract what you have said, Anne! Declare that you repent, and that you perceive that you have been deluded! Say that you will recognize the king as lord of the Church; that you will swear to the six articles, and never believe in the Pope of Rome. Ah, Anne, God sees your heart and knows your thoughts. You have no need to make them known by your lips. He has given you life, and you have no right to throw it away; you must seek to keep it so long as you can. Recant, then! It is perfectly allowable to deceive those who would murder us. Recant, then, Anne, recant! When they in their haughty arrogance demand of you to say what they say, consider them as lunatics, to whom you make apparent concessions only to keep them from raving. Of what consequence is it whether you do or do not say that the king is the head of the Church? From His heavens above, God looks down and smiles at this petty earthly strife which concerns not Him, but men only. Let scholars and theologians wrangle; we women have nothing to do with it. If we only believe in God, and bear Him to our hearts, the form in which we do it is a matter of indifference. But in this case the question is not about God, but merely about external dogmas. Why should you trouble yourself with these? What have you to do with the controversies of the priests? Recant, then, poor enthusiastic child, recant!"

While Catharine, in a low tone and with fluttering breath, thus spoke, Anne Askew had slowly arisen from her couch, and now stood, like a lily, so slender and delicate, confronting the queen.

Her noble countenance expressed deep indignation.

Her eyes shot lightning, and a contemptuous smile was on her lips.

"What! Can you thus advise me?" said she. "Can you wish me to deny my faith, and abjure my God, only to escape earthly pain? And your tongue does not refuse to utter this, and your heart does not shrink with shame while you do it? Look at these arms; what are they worth that I should not sacrifice them to God? See these feeble limbs! Are they so precious that I, like a disgusting niggard, should spare them? No, no, God is my highest good—not this feeble, decaying body! For God I sacrifice it. I should recant? Never! Faith is not enveloped in this or that garb; it must be naked and open. So may mine be. And if I then am chosen to be an example of pure faith, that denies not, and makes profession—well, then, envy me not this preëminence. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' If I am one of the chosen, I thank God for it, and bless the erring mortals who wish to make me such by means of the torture of the rack. Ah, believe me, Catharine, I rejoice to die, for it is such a sad, desolate, and desperate thing to live. Let me die, Catharine—die, to enter into blessedness!"

"But, poor, pitiable child! this is more than death; it is the torture of earth that threatens you. Oh, be-think you, Anne, that you are only a feeble woman. Who knows whether the rack may not yet conquer your spirit, and whether you, with your mangled limbs, may not by the fury of the pain yet be brought to that point that you will recant and abjure your faith?"

"If I could do that," cried Anne Askew, with flashing eyes, "believe me, queen, as soon as I came to my senses I would lay violent hands on myself, in order to give myself over to eternal damnation, as the punishment of my recantation! God has ordered that I shall be a sign of the true faith. Be His command fulfilled!"

"Well, then, so be it," said Catharine resolutely. "Do not recant, but save yourself from your executioners! I,

Anne, I, will save you! I cannot bear—I cannot think of it—that this dear noble form should be sacrificed to a vile delusion of man; that they will torture to the honor of God a noble likeness of the same God! Oh, come, come, I will save you! I, the queen! Give me your hand. Follow me out of this dungeon. I know a path that leads out of this place; and I will conceal you so long in my own apartments that you can continue your flight without danger."

"No, no, queen, you shall not conceal her with you!" said John Heywood. "You have been graciously pleased to allow me to be your confidant; envy me not, then, a share in your noble work also. Not with you shall Anne Askew find refuge, but with me. Oh, come, Anne, follow your friends. It is life that calls you, that opens the doors to you, and desires to call you by a thousand names to itself! Do you not hear them, all those sweet and alluring voices; do you not see them, all those noble and smiling faces, how they greet you and beckon to you? Anne Askew, it is the noble husband that calls you! You know him not as yet, but he is waiting for you there in the world without. Anne Askew, there are your children, who are stretching their tender arms out to you. You have not yet borne them; but love holds them in her arms, and will bring them to meet you. It is the wife and the mother that the world yet demands of you, Anne. You ought not to shun the holy calling which God has given you. Come, then, and follow us—follow your queen, who has the right to order her subject. Follow the friend, who has sworn that he will watch over you and protect you as a father!"

"Father in heaven, protect me!" exclaimed Anne Askew, falling on her knees and stretching her hands upward. "Father in heaven! they would tear away Thy child, and alienate my heart from Thee! They are leading me into temptation and alluring me with their words. Protect me, my Father; make my ear deaf, that I may

not hear them! Give me a sign that I am Thine; that no one has any longer power over me, save Thou alone! A sign, that Thou, Father, callest me!"

And as if God had really heard her prayer, a loud knocking was now perceived at the outer door, and a voice cried: "Anne Askew, awake! and hold yourself ready! The high chancellor and the Bishop of Winchester come to fetch you away!"

"Ah, the rack!" groaned Catharine, as with a shudder she buried her face in her hands.

"Yes, the rack!" said Anne, with a blissful smile. "God calls me!"

John Heywood had approached the queen and impetuously seized her hand. "You see it is in vain," said he, urgently. "Make haste then to save yourself! Hasten to leave this prison before the door there opens."

"No," said Catharine, firmly and resolutely. "No, I stay. She shall not surpass me in courage and greatness of soul! She will not deny her God; well, then, I also will be a witness of my God. I will not in shame cast my eyes to the ground before this young girl; like her, I will frankly and openly profess my faith; like her I will say: 'God alone is Lord of his Church,' God——"

There was a movement without; a key was heard to turn in the lock.

"Queen, I conjure you," besought John Heywood, "by all that is holy to you, by your love, come, come!"

"No, no!" cried she, vehemently.

But now Anne seized her hand, and stretching the other arm toward heaven, she said in a loud, commanding voice: "In the name of God, I order you to leave me!"

While Catharine drew back wholly involuntarily, John Heywood pushed her to the secret door, and urging her out almost with violence, he drew the door to behind them both.

Just as the secret door had closed, the other on the opposite side opened.

"With whom were you speaking?" asked Gardiner, peering around the room with a sharp look.

"With the tempter, that wished to alienate me from God," said she—"with the tempter, who at the approach of your footsteps wanted to fool my heart with fear, and persuade me to recant!"

"You are, then, firmly resolved? you do not retract?" asked Gardiner; and a savage joy shone in his pale, hard countenance.

"No, I do not recant!" said she, with a face beaming with smiles.

"Then, in the name of God and of the king, I take you into the torture-chamber!" cried Chancellor Wriothesley, as he advanced and laid his heavy hand on Anne's shoulder. "You would not hear the voice of love warning you and calling you, so we will now try to arouse you from your madness by the voice of wrath and damnation."

He beckoned to the attendants on the rack, who stood behind him in the open door, and ordered them to seize her and carry her to the torture-chamber.

Anne, smiling, turned them back. "Nay, not so!" said she. "The Saviour went on foot, and bore His cross to the place of execution. I will tread His path. Show me the way, I follow you. But let no one dare touch me. I will show you that not by constraint, but gladly and freely, I tread the path of suffering, which I shall endure for the sake of my God. Rejoice, oh my soul!—sing, my lips! for the bridegroom is near, and the feast is about to begin."

And in exultant tones Anne Askew began to sing a hymn, that had not died away when she entered the torture-chamber.