

"I will do so," cried the king, cheerfully, "provided you permit it, Kate! But before I do so, I make also one more condition—a condition for you, queen! Kate, you have disdained to impose a penance on me, but grant me at least the pleasure of being allowed to fulfil some wish of yours! Make me a request, that I may grant it you!"

"Well, then, my lord and king," said Catharine with a charming smile, "I beg you to think no more of the incidents of this day, and to forgive those whom I accused, only because their accusation was my vindication. They who brought charges against me have in this hour felt contrition for their own fault. Let that suffice, king, and forgive them, as I do!"

"You are a noble and great woman, Kate!" cried the king; and, as his glance swept over toward Gardiner with an almost contemptuous expression, he continued: "Your request is granted. But woe to them who shall dare accuse you again! And have you nothing further to demand, Kate?"

"Nay, one thing more, my lord and husband!" She leaned nearer to the king's ear, and whispered: "They have also accused your noblest and most faithful servant; they have accused Cranmer. Condemn him not, king, without having heard him; and if I may beg a favor of you, it is this: talk with Cranmer yourself. Tell him of what they have charged him, and hear his vindication."

"It shall be so, Kate," said the king, "and you shall be present! But let this be a secret between us, Kate, and we will carry it out in perfect silence. And now, then, John Heywood, let us hear your composition; and woe to you, if it does not accomplish what you promised—if it does not make us laugh! For you well know that you are then inevitably exposed to the rods of our injured ladies."

"They shall have leave to whip me to death, if I do not make you laugh!" cried John Heywood, gayly, as he drew out his manuscript.

Soon the hall rang again with loud laughter; and in

the universal merriment no one observed that Bishop Gardiner and Earl Douglas slipped quietly away.

In the anteroom without, they stopped and looked at each other long and silently; their countenances expressed the wrath and bitterness which filled them; and they understood this mute language of their features.

"She must die!" said Gardiner in a short and quick tone. "She has for once escaped from our snares; we will tie them all the tighter next time!"

"And I already hold in my hand the threads out of which we will form these snares," said Earl Douglas. "We have to-day falsely accused her of a love-affair. When we do it again, we shall speak the truth. Did you see the looks that Catharine exchanged with the heretical Earl Sudley, Thomas Seymour?"

"I saw them, earl!"

"For these looks she will die, my lord. The queen loves Thomas Seymour, and this love will be her death."

"Amen!" said Bishop Gardiner, solemnly, as he raised his eyes devoutly to heaven. "Amen! The queen has grievously and bitterly injured us to-day; she has insulted and abused us before all the court. We will requite her for it some day! The torture-chamber, which she has depicted in such lively colors, may yet one day open for her, too—not that she may behold another's agonies, but that she may suffer agonies herself. We shall one day avenge ourselves!"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### REVENGE.

MISS HOLLAND, the beautiful and much-admired mistress of the Duke of Norfolk, was alone in her magnificently adorned boudoir. It was the hour when ordinarily the



duke was wont to be with her; for this reason she was charmingly attired, and had wrapped herself in that light and voluptuous *negligée* which the duke so much liked, because it set off to so much advantage the splendid form of his friend.

But to-day the expected one did not make his appearance: in his stead his valet had just come and brought the fair miss a note from his master. This note she was holding in her hand, while with passionate violence she now walked up and down her boudoir. A glowing crimson blazed upon her cheeks, and her large, haughty eyes darted wild flashes of wrath.

She was disdained—she, Lady Holland, was forced to endure the disgrace of being dismissed by her lover.

There, there, in that letter which she held in her hand, and which burned her fingers like red-hot iron—there it stood in black and white, that he would see her no more; that he renounced her love; that he released her.

Her whole frame shook as she thought of this. It was not the anguish of a loving heart which made her tremble; it was the wounded pride of the woman.

He had abandoned her. Her beauty, her youth no longer had the power to enchain him—the man with white hairs and withered features.

He had written her that he was satiated and weary, not of her, but only of love in general; that his heart had become old and withered like his face; and that there was still in his breast no more room for love, but only for ambition.

Was not that a revolting, an unheard-of outrage—to abandon the finest woman in England for the sake of empty, cold, stern ambition?

She opened the letter once more. Once more she read that place. Then grinding her teeth with tears of anger in her eyes: “He shall pay me for this! I will take vengeance for this insult!”

She thrust the letter into her bosom, and touched the silver bell.

“Have my carriage brought round!” was her order to the servant who entered; and he withdrew in silence.

“I will avenge myself!” muttered she, as with trembling hands she wrapped herself in her large Turkish shawl. “I will avenge myself; and, by the Eternal! it shall be a bloody and swift vengeance! I will show him that I, too, am ambitious, and that my pride is not to be humbled. He says he will forget me. Oh, I will compel him to think of me, even though it be only to curse me!”

With hasty step she sped through the glittering apartments, which the liberality of her lover had furnished so magnificently, and descended to the carriage standing ready for her.

“To the Duchess of Norfolk’s!” said she to the footman standing at the door of the carriage, as she entered it.

The servant looked at her in astonishment and inquiringly.

“To the *Duke* of Norfolk; is it not, my lady?”

“No, indeed, to the duchess!” cried she with a frown, as she leaned back on the cushion.

After a short time, the carriage drew up before the palace of the duchess, and with haughty tread and commanding air she passed through the porch.

“Announce me to the duchess immediately,” was her order to the lackey who was hurrying to meet her.

“Your name, my lady?”

“Miss Arabella Holland.”

The servant stepped back, and stared at her in surprise.

“Miss Arabella Holland! and you order me to announce you to the duchess?”

A contemptuous smile played a moment about the thin lips of the beautiful miss. “I see you know me,” said she, “and you wonder a little to see me here. Wonder as much as you please, good friend; only conduct me immediately to the duchess.”



"I doubt whether her ladyship receives calls to-day," stammered the servant, hesitatingly.

"Then go and ask; and, that I may learn her answer as soon as possible, I will accompany you."

With a commanding air, she motioned to the servant to go before her; and he could not summon up courage to gainsay this proud beauty.

In silence they traversed the suite of stately apartments, and at length stood before a door hung with tapestry.

"I must beg you to wait here a moment, my lady, so that I can announce you to the duchess, who is there in her boudoir."

"No, indeed; I will assume that office myself," said Miss Holland, as with strong hand she pushed back the servant and opened the door.

The duchess was sitting at her writing-table, her back turned to the door through which Arabella had entered. She did not turn round; perhaps she had not heard the door open. She continued quietly writing.

Miss Arabella Holland with stately step crossed the room, and now stood close to the chair of the duchess.

"Duchess, I would like to speak with you," said she, coolly and calmly.

The duchess uttered a cry and looked up. "Miss Holland!" cried she amazed, and hastily rising. "Miss Holland! you here with me, in my house! What do you want here? How dare you cross my threshold?"

"I see you still hate me, my lady," said Arabella, smiling. "You have not yet forgiven me that the duke, your husband, found more delight in my young, handsome face, than in yours, now growing old—that my sprightly, wanton disposition pleased him better than your cold, stately air."

The duchess turned pale with rage, and her eyes darted lightning. "Silence, you shameless creature! silence, or I will call my servants to rid me of you!"

"You will not call them; for I have come to be reconciled with you, and to offer you peace."

"Peace with you!" sneered the duchess—"peace with that shameless woman who stole from me my husband, the father of my children?—who loaded me with the disgrace of standing before the whole world as a repudiated and despised wife, and of suffering myself to be compared with you, that the world might decide which of us two was worthier of his love? Peace with you, Miss Holland?—with the impudent strumpet who squanders my husband's means in lavish luxury, and, with scoffing boldness, robs my children of their lawful property?"

"It is true, the duke is very generous," said Miss Holland, composedly. "He loaded me with diamonds and gold."

"And meanwhile I was doomed almost to suffer want," said the duchess, grinding her teeth.

"Want of love, it may be, my lady, but not want of money; for you are very magnificently fitted up; and every one knows that the Duchess of Norfolk is rich enough to be able to spare the trifles that her husband laid at my feet. By Heaven! my lady, I would not have deemed it worth the trouble to stoop for them, if I had not seen among these trifles his heart. The heart of a man is well worth a woman's stooping for! You have neglected that, my lady, and therefore you lost your husband's heart. I picked it up. That is all. Why will you make a crime of that?"

"That is enough!" cried the duchess. "It does not become me to dispute with you; I desire only to know what gave you the courage to come to me?"

"My lady, do you hate me only? Or do you also hate the duke your husband?"

"She asks me whether I hate him!" cried the duchess, with a wild, scornful laugh. "Yes, Miss Holland, yes! I hate him as ardently as I despise you. I hate him so much that I would give my whole estate—ay, years of my



life—if I could punish him for the disgrace he has put upon me.”

“Then, my lady, we shall soon understand each other; for I too hate him,” said Miss Holland, quietly seating herself on the velvet divan, and smiling as she observed the speechless astonishment of the duchess.

“Yes, my lady, I hate him; and without doubt still more ardently, still more intensely than you yourself; for I am young and fiery; you are old, and have always managed to preserve a cool heart.”

The duchess was convulsed with rage; but silently, and with an effort, she gulped down the drop of wormwood which her wicked rival mingled in the cup of joy which she presented to her.

“You do hate him, Miss Holland?” asked she, joyfully.

“I hate him, and I have come to league myself with you against him. He is a traitor, a perfidious wretch, a perjurer. I will take vengeance for my disgrace!”

“Ah, has he then deserted you also?”

“He has deserted me also.”

“Well, then, God be praised!” cried the duchess, and her face beamed with joy. “God is great and just; and He has punished you with the same weapons with which you sinned! For your sake, he deserted me; and for the sake of another woman, he forsakes you.”

“Not so, my lady!” said Miss Holland, proudly. “A woman like me is not forsaken on account of a woman; and he who loves me will love no other after me. There, read his letter!”

She handed the duchess her husband’s letter.

“And what do you want to do now?” asked the duchess, after she had read it.

“I will have revenge, my lady! He says he no longer has a heart to love; well, now, we will so manage, that he may no longer have a head to think. Will you be my ally, my lady?”

“I will.”

“And I also will be,” said the Duchess of Richmond, who just then opened the door and came out of the adjoining room.

Not a word of this entire conversation had escaped her, and she very well understood that the question was not about some petty vengeance, but her father’s head. She knew that Miss Holland was not a woman that, when irritated, pricked with a pin; but one that grasped the dagger to strike her enemy a mortal blow.

“Yes, I too will be your ally,” cried the Duchess of Richmond; “we have all three been outraged by the same man. Let, then, our revenge be a common one. The father has insulted you; the son, me. Well, then, I will help you to strike the father, if you in return will assist me to destroy the son.”

“I will assist you,” said Arabella, smiling; “for I also hate the haughty Earl of Surrey, who prides himself on his virtue, as if it were a golden fleece which God himself had stuck on his breast. I hate him; for he never meets me but with proud disregard; and he alone is to blame for his father’s faithlessness.”

“I was present when with tears he besought the duke, our father, to free himself from your fetters, and give up this shameful and disgraceful connection with you,” said the young duchess.

Arabella answered nothing. But she pressed her hands firmly together, and a slight pallor overspread her cheeks.

“And why are you angry with your brother?” asked the old duchess, thoughtfully.

“Why am I angry with him, do you ask, my mother? I am not angry with him; but I execrate him, and I have sworn to myself never to rest till I have avenged myself. My happiness, my heart, and my future, lay in his hands; and he has remorselessly trodden under his haughty feet these—his sister’s precious treasures. It lay with him to



make me the wife of the man I love; and he has not done it, though I lay at his feet weeping and wringing my hands."

"But it was a great sacrifice that you demanded," said her mother. "He had to give his hand to a woman he did not love, so that you might be Thomas Seymour's wife."

"Mother, you defend him; and yet he it is that blames you daily; and but yesterday it seemed to him perfectly right and natural that the duke had forsaken you, our mother."

"Did he do that?" inquired the duchess, vehemently. "Well, now, as he has forgotten that I am his mother, so will I forget that he is my son. I am your ally! Revenge for our injured hearts! Vengeance on father and son!"

She held out both hands, and the two young women laid their hands in hers.

"Vengeance on father and son!" repeated they both; and their eyes flashed, and crimson now mantled their cheeks.

"I am tired of living like a hermit in my palace, and of being banished from court by the fear that I may encounter my husband there."

"You shall encounter him there no more," said her daughter, laconically.

"They shall not laugh and jeer at me," cried Arabella. "And when they learn that he has forsaken me, they shall also know how I have avenged myself for it."

"Thomas Seymour can never become my husband so long as Henry Howard lives; for he has mortally offended him, as Henry has rejected the hand of his sister. Perhaps I may become his wife, if Henry Howard is no more," said the young duchess. "So let us consider. How shall we begin, so as to strike them surely and certainly?"

"When three women are agreed, they may well be certain of their success," said Arabella, shrugging her shoulders. "We live—God be praised for it—under a noble and high-minded king, who beholds the blood of his sub-

jects with as much pleasure as he does the crimson of his royal mantle, and who has never yet shrunk back when a death-warrant was to be signed."

"But this time he will shrink back," said the old duchess. "He will not dare to rob the noblest and most powerful family of his kingdom of its head."

"That very risk will stimulate him," said the Duchess of Richmond, laughing; "and the more difficult it is to bring down these heads, so much the more impatiently will he hanker after it. The king hates them both, and he will thank us, if we change his hatred into retributive justice."

"Then let us accuse both of high treason!" cried Arabella. "The duke is a traitor; for I will and can swear that he has often enough called the king a bloodthirsty tiger, a relentless tyrant, a man without truth and without faith, although he coquettishly pretends to be the fountain and rock of all faith."

"If he has said that, and you have heard him, you are in duty bound to communicate it to the king, if you do not want to be a traitress yourself," exclaimed the young duchess, solemnly.

"And have you not noticed that the duke has for some time borne the same coat-of-arms as the king?" asked the Duchess of Norfolk. "It is not enough for his haughty and ambitious spirit to be the first servant of this land; he strives to be lord and king of it."

"Tell that to the king, and by to-morrow the head of the traitor falls. For the king is as jealous of his kingdom as ever a woman was of her lover. Tell him that the duke bears his coat-of-arms, and his destruction is certain."

"I will tell him so, daughter."

"We are sure of the father, but what have we for the son?"

"A sure and infallible means, that will as certainly dispatch him into eternity as the hunter's tiny bullet slays



the proudest stag. Henry loves the queen; and I will furnish the king proof of that," said the young duchess.

"Then let us go to the king!" cried Arabella, impetuously.

"No, indeed! That would make a sensation, and might easily frustrate our whole plan," said the Duchess of Richmond. "Let us first talk with Earl Douglas, and hear his advice. Come; every minute is precious! We owe it to our womanly honor to avenge ourselves. We cannot and will not leave unpunished those who have despised our love, wounded our honor, and trodden under foot the holiest ties of nature!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

THE Princess Elizabeth was sitting in her room, melancholy and absorbed in thought. Her eyes were red with weeping; and she pressed her hand on her heart, as if she would repress its cry of anguish.

With a disconsolate, perplexed look she gazed around her chamber, and its solitude was doubly painful to her to-day, for it testified to her forsaken condition, to the disgrace that still rested on her. For were it not so, to-day would have been to the whole court a day of rejoicing, of congratulations.

To-day was Elizabeth's birthday; fourteen years ago to-day, Anne Boleyn's daughter had seen the light of this world.

"Anne Boleyn's daughter!" That was the secret of her seclusion. That was why none of the ladies and lords of the court had remembered her birthday; for that would have been at the same time a remembrance of Anne

Boleyn, of Elizabeth's beautiful and unfortunate mother, who had been made to atone for her grandeur and prosperity by her death.

Moreover, the king had called his daughter Elizabeth a bastard, and solemnly declared her unworthy of succeeding to the throne.

Her birthday, therefore, was to Elizabeth only a day of humiliation and pain. Reclining on her divan, she thought of her despised and joyless past, of her desolate and inglorious future.

She was a princess, and yet possessed not the rights of her birth; she was a young maiden, and yet doomed, in sad resignation, to renounce all the delights and enjoyments of youth, and to condemn her passionate and ardent heart to the eternal sleep of death. For when the Infante of Spain sued for her hand, Henry the Eighth had declared that the bastard Elizabeth was unworthy of a princely husband. But in order to intimidate other suitors also, he had loudly and openly declared that no subject should dare be so presumptuous as to offer his hand to one of his royal daughters, and he who dared to solicit them in marriage should be punished as a traitor.

So Elizabeth was condemned to remain unmarried; and nevertheless she loved; nevertheless she harbored only this one wish, to be the wife of her beloved, and to be able to exchange the proud title of princess for the name of Countess Seymour.

Since she loved him, a new world, a new sun had arisen on her; and before the sweet and enchanting whispers of her love, even the proud and alluring voices of her ambition had to be silent. She no longer thought of it, that she would never be a queen; she was only troubled that she could not be Seymour's wife.

She no longer wanted to rule, but she wanted to be happy. But her happiness reposed on him alone—on Thomas Seymour.

Such were her thoughts, as she was in her chamber



on the morning of her birthday, alone and lonely; and her eyes reddened by tears, her painfully convulsed lips, betrayed how much she had wept to-day; how much this young girl of fourteen years had already suffered.

But she would think no more about it; she would not allow the lurking, everywhere-prying, malicious, and wicked courtiers the triumph of seeing the traces of her tears, and rejoicing at her pains and her humiliation. She was a proud and resolute soul; she would rather have died than to have accepted the sympathy and pity of the courtiers.

"I will work," said she. "Work is the best balm for all pains."

And she took up the elaborate silk embroidery which she had begun for her poor, unfortunate friend, Anne of Cleves, Henry's divorced wife. But the work occupied only her fingers, not her thoughts.

She threw it aside and seized her books. She took Petrarch's Sonnets; and his love complaints and griefs enchained and stirred her own love-sick heart.

With streaming tears, and yet smiling and full of sweet melancholy, Elizabeth read these noble and tender poems. It appeared to her as if Petrarch had only said what she herself so warmly felt. There were her thoughts, her griefs. He had said them in his language; she must now repeat them in her own. She seated herself, and with hands trembling with enthusiasm, fluttering breath, perfectly excited and glowing, in glad haste she began a translation of Petrarch's first sonnet.\*

\* Elizabeth, who even as a girl of twelve years old spoke four languages, was very fond of composing verses, and of translating the poems of foreign authors. But she kept her skill in this respect very secret, and was always very angry if any one by chance saw one of her poems. After her death there were found among her papers many translations, especially of Petrarch's Sonnets, which were the work of her earliest youth.—Leti, vol. i, p. 150.

A loud knock interrupted her; and in the hastily opened door now appeared the lovely form of the queen.

"The queen!" exclaimed Elizabeth with delight. "Have you come to me at such an early morning hour?"

"And should I wait till evening to wish my Elizabeth happiness on her festival? Should I first let the sun go down on this day, which gave to England so noble and so fair a princess?" asked Catharine. "Or you thought, perhaps, I did not know that this was your birthday, and that to-day my Elizabeth advances from the years of childhood, as a proud maiden full of hope?"

"Full of hope?" said Elizabeth, sadly. "Anne Boleyn's daughter has no hopes; and when you speak of my birthday, you remind me at the same time of my despised birth!"

"It shall be despised no longer!" said Catharine, and, as she put her arm tenderly around Elizabeth's neck, she handed her a roll of parchment.

"Take that, Elizabeth; and may this paper be to you the promise of a joyful and brilliant future! At my request, the king has made this law, and he therefore granted me the pleasure of bringing it to you."

Elizabeth opened the parchment and read, and a radiant expression overspread her countenance.

"Acknowledged! I am acknowledged!" cried she. "The disgrace of my birth is taken away! Elizabeth is no more a bastard—she is a royal princess!"

"And she may some day be a queen!" said Catharine, smiling.

"Oh," cried Elizabeth, "it is not that which stirs me with such joy. But the disgrace of my birth is taken away; and I may freely hold up my head and name my mother's name! Now thou mayst sleep calmly in thy grave, for it is no longer dishonored! Anne Boleyn was no strumpet; she was King Henry's lawful wife, and Elizabeth is the king's legitimate daughter! I thank Thee, my God—I thank Thee!"



And the young, passionate girl threw herself on her knees, and raised her hands and her eyes to heaven.

"Spirit of my glorified mother," said she, solemnly, "I call thee! Come to me! Overshadow me with thy smile, and bless me with thy breath! Queen Anne of England, thy daughter is no longer a bastard, and no one dares venture more to insult her. Thou wert with me when I wept and suffered, my mother; and often in my disgrace and humiliation, it was as if I heard thy voice, which whispered comfort to me; as if I saw thy heavenly eyes, which poured peace and love into my breast! Oh, abide with me now also, my mother—now, when my disgrace is taken away, abide with me in my prosperity; and guard my heart, that it may be kept pure from arrogance and pride, and remain humble in its joy! Anne Boleyn, they laid thy beautiful, innocent head upon the block; but this parchment sets upon it again the royal crown; and woe, woe to those who will now still dare insult thy memory!"

She sprang from her knees and rushed to the wall opposite, on which was a large oil painting, which represented Elizabeth herself as a child playing with a dog.

"Oh, mother, mother!" said she, "this picture was the last earthly thing on which thy looks rested; and to these painted lips of thy child thou gavest thy last kiss, which thy cruel hangman would not allow to thy living child. Oh, let me sip up this last kiss from that spot; let me touch with my mouth the spot that thy lips have consecrated!"

She bent down and kissed the picture.

"And now come forth out of thy grave, my mother," said she, solemnly. "I have been obliged so long to hide, so long to veil thee! Now thou belongest to the world and to the light! The king has acknowledged me as his lawful daughter; he cannot refuse me to have a likeness of my mother in my room."

As she thus spoke, she pressed on a spring set in the broad gilt frame of the picture; and suddenly the painting

was seen to move and slowly open like a door, so as to render visible another picture concealed beneath it, which represented the unfortunate Anne Boleyn in bridal attire, in the full splendor of her beauty, as Holbein had painted her, at the desire of her husband the king.

"How beautiful and angelic that countenance is!" said Catharine, stepping nearer. "How innocent and pure those features! Poor queen! Yet thine enemies succeeded in casting suspicion on thee and bringing thee to the scaffold. Oh, when I behold thee, I shudder; and my own future rises up before me like a threatening spectre! Who can believe herself safe and secure, when Anne Boleyn was not secure; when even she had to die a dishonorable death? Ah, do but believe me, Elizabeth, it is a melancholy lot to be Queen of England; and often indeed have I asked the morning whether I, as still Queen of England, shall greet the evening. But no—we will not talk of myself in this hour, but only of you, Elizabeth—of your future and of your fortune. May this document be acceptable to you, and realize all the wishes that slumber in your bosom!"

"One great wish of mine it has fulfilled already," said Elizabeth, still occupied with the picture. "It allows me to show my mother's likeness unveiled! That I could one day do so was her last prayer and last wish, which she intrusted to John Heywood for me. To him she committed this picture. He alone knew the secret of it, and he has faithfully preserved it."

"Oh, John Heywood is a trusty and true friend," said Catharine, heartily; "and it was he who assisted me in inclining the king to our plan and in persuading him to acknowledge you."

With an unutterable expression Elizabeth presented both hands to her. "I thank you for my honor, and the honor of my mother," said she; "I will love you for it as a daughter; and never shall your enemies find with me an open ear and a willing heart. Let us two conclude with



each other a league offensive and defensive! Let us keep true to each other; and the enemies of the one shall be the enemies of the other also. And where we see danger we will combat it in common; and we will watch over each other with a true sisterly eye, and warn one another whenever a chance flash brings to light an enemy who is stealing along in the darkness, and wants with his dagger to assassinate us from behind."

"So be it!" said Catharine, solemnly. "We will remain inseparable, and true to one another, and love each other as sisters!"

And as she imprinted a warm kiss on Elizabeth's lips, she continued: "But now, princess, direct your looks once more to that document, of which at first you read only the beginning. Do but believe me, it is important enough for you to read it quite to the end; for it contains various arrangements for your future, and settles on you a suite and a yearly allowance, as is suitable for a royal princess."

"Oh, what care I for these things?" cried Elizabeth, merrily. "That is my major-domo's concern, and he may attend to it."

"But there is yet another paragraph that will interest you more," said Catharine, with a slight smile; "for it is a full and complete reparation to my proud and ambitious Elizabeth. You recollect the answer which your father gave to the King of France when he solicited your hand for the dauphin?"

"Do I recollect it!" cried Elizabeth, her features quickly becoming gloomy. "King Henry said: 'Anne Boleyn's daughter is not worthy to accept the hand of a royal prince.'"

"Well, then, Elizabeth, that the reparation made to you may be complete, the king, while he grants you your lawful title and honor, has decreed that you are permitted to marry only a husband of equal birth; to give your hand only to a royal prince, if you would preserve your right of succeeding to the throne. Oh, certainly, there could

be no more complete recantation of the affront once put upon you. And that he consented to do this, you owe to the eloquent intercession of a true and trusty friend; you have John Heywood to thank for it."

"John Heywood!" cried Elizabeth, in a bitter tone. "Oh, I thank you, queen, that it was not you who determined my father to this decision. John Heywood did it, and you call him my friend? You say that he is a true and devoted servant to us both? Beware of his fidelity, queen, and build not on his devotedness; for I tell you his soul is full of falsehood; and while he appears to bow before you in humbleness, his eyes are only searching for the place on your heel where he can strike you most surely and most mortally. Oh, he is a serpent, a venomous serpent; and he has just wounded me mortally and incurably. But no," continued she, energetically, "I will not submit to this fraud; I will not be the slave of this injurious law! I will be free to love and to hate as my heart demands; I will not be shackled, nor be compelled to renounce this man, whom I perhaps love, and to marry that one, whom I perhaps abhor."

With an expression of firm, energetic resolve, she took the roll of parchment and handed it back to Catharine.

"Queen, take this parchment back again; return it to my father, and tell him that I thank him for his provident goodness, but will decline the brilliant lot which this act offers me. I love freedom so much, that even a royal crown cannot allure me when I am to receive it with my hands bound and my heart not free."

"Poor child!" sighed Catharine, "you know not, then, that the royal crown always binds us in fetters and compresses our heart in iron clamps? Ah, you want to be free, and yet a queen! Oh, believe me, Elizabeth, none are less free than sovereigns! No one has less the right and the power to live according to the dictates of his heart than a prince."

"Then," exclaimed Elizabeth, with flashing eyes,



"then I renounce the melancholy fortune of being, perchance, one day queen. Then I do not subscribe to this law, which wants to guide my heart and limit my will. What! shall the daughter of King Henry of England allow her ways to be traced out by a miserable strip of parchment? and shall a sheet of paper be able to intrude itself between me and my heart? I am a royal princess; and why will they compel me to give my hand only to a king's son? Ay, you are right; it is not my father that has made this law, for my father's proud soul has never been willing to submit to any such constraint of miserable etiquette. He has loved where he pleased; and no Parliament—no law—has been able to hinder him in this respect. I will be my father's own daughter. I will not submit to this law!"

"Poor child!" said Catharine, "nevertheless you will be obliged to learn well how to submit; for one is not a princess without paying for it. No one asks whether our heart bleeds. They throw a purple robe over it, and though it be reddened with our heart's blood, who then sees and suspects it? You are yet so young, Elizabeth; you yet hope so much!"

"I hope so much, because I have already suffered so much—my eyes have been already made to shed so many tears. I have already in my childhood had to take beforehand my share of the pain and sorrow of life; now I will demand my share of life's pleasure and enjoyment also."

"And who tells you that you shall not have it? This love forces on you no particular husband; it but gives you the proud right, once disputed, of seeking your husband among the princes of royal blood."

"Oh," cried Elizabeth, with flashing eyes, "if I should ever really be a queen, I should be prouder to choose a husband whom I might make a king, than such a one as would make me a queen.\* Oh, say yourself, Catharine, must it not be a high and noble pleasure to confer glory and greatness on one we love, to raise him in the omnipo-

\* Elizabeth's own words.—Leti, vol. ii, p. 62.

tence of our love high above all other men, and to lay our own greatness, our own glory, humbly at his feet, that he may be adorned therewith and make his own possession what is ours?"

"By Heaven, you are as proud and ambitious as a man!" said Catharine, smiling. "Your father's own daughter! So thought Henry when he gave his hand to Anne Boleyn; so thought he when he exalted me to be his queen. But it behooves him thus to think and act, for he is a man."

"He thought thus, because he loved—not because he was a man."

"And you, too, Elizabeth—do you, too, think thus because you love?"

"Yes, I love!" exclaimed Elizabeth, as with an impulsive movement she threw herself into Catharine's arms, and hid her blushing face in the queen's bosom. "Yes, I love! I love like my father—regardless of my rank, of my birth; but feeling only that my lover is of equally high birth in the nobility of his sentiment, in his genius and noble mind; that he is my superior in all the great and fine qualities which should adorn a man, and yet are conferred on so few. Judge now, queen, whether that law there can make me happy. He whom I love is no prince—no son of a king."

"Poor Elizabeth!" said Catharine, clasping the young girl fervently in her arms.

"And why do you bewail my fate, when it is in your power to make me happy?" asked Elizabeth, urgently. "It was you who prevailed on the king to relieve me of the disgrace that rested on me; you will also have power over him to set aside this clause which contains my heart's sentence of condemnation."

Catharine shook her head with a sigh. "My power does not reach so far," said she, sadly. "Ah, Elizabeth, why did you not put confidence in me? Why did you not let me know sooner that your heart cherished a love which



is in opposition to this law? Why did you not tell your friend your dangerous secret?"

"Just because it is dangerous I concealed it from you; and just on that account I do not even now mention the name of the loved one. Queen, you shall not through me become a guilty traitoress against your husband; for you well know that he punishes every secret concealed from him as an act of high treason. No, queen; if I am a criminal, you shall not be my accomplice. Ah, it is always dangerous to be the confidant of such a secret. You see that in John Heywood. He alone was my confidant, and he betrayed me. I myself put the weapons into his hands, and he turned them against me."

"No, no," said Catharine, thoughtfully; "John Heywood is true and trusty, and incapable of treachery."

"He has betrayed me!" exclaimed Elizabeth, impetuously. "He knew—he only—that I love, and that my beloved, though of noble, still is not of princely birth. Yet it was he, as you said yourself, who moved the king to introduce this paragraph into the act of succession."

"Then, without doubt, he has wished to save you from an error of your heart."

"No, he has been afraid of the danger of being privy to this secret, and at the cost of my heart and my happiness he wanted to escape this danger. But oh, Catharine, you are a noble, great and strong woman; you are incapable of such petty fear—such low calculation; therefore, stand by me; be my savior and protectress! By virtue of that oath which we have just now mutually taken—by virtue of that mutual clasp of the hands just given—I call you to my help and my assistance. Oh, Catharine, allow me this high pleasure, so full of blessing, of being at some time, perhaps, able to make him whom I love great and powerful by my will. Allow me this intoxicating delight of being able with my hand to offer to his ambition at once power and glory—it may be even a crown. Oh, Catharine,

on my knees I conjure you—assist me to repeal this hated law, which wants to bind my heart and my hand!"

In passionate excitement she had fallen before the queen, and was holding up her hands imploringly to her.

Catharine, smiling, bent down and raised her up in her arms. "Enthusiast," said she, "poor young enthusiast! Who knows whether you will thank me for it one day, if I accede to your wish; and whether you will not some time curse this hour which has brought you, perhaps, instead of the hoped-for pleasure, only a knowledge of your delusion and misery?"

"And were it even so," cried Elizabeth, energetically, "still it is better to endure a wretchedness we ourselves have chosen, than to be forced to a happy lot. Say, Catharine—say, will you lend me your assistance? Will you induce the king to withdraw this hated clause? If you do it not, queen, I swear to you, by the soul of my mother, that I will not submit to this law; that I will solemnly, before all the world, renounce the privilege that is offered me; that I——"

"You are a dear, foolish child," interrupted Catharine—"a child, that in youthful presumption might dare wish to fetch the lightnings down from heaven, and borrow from Jupiter his thunderbolt. Oh, you are still too young and inexperienced to know that fate regards not our murmurs and our sighs, and, despite our reluctance and our refusal, still leads us in its own ways, not our own. You will have to learn that yet, poor child!"

"But I will not!" cried Elizabeth, stamping on the floor with all the pettishness of a child. "I will not ever and eternally be the victim of another's will; and fate itself shall not have power to make me its slave!"

"Well, we will see now," said Catharine, smiling. "We will try this time, at least, to contend against fate; and I will assist you if I can."

"And I will love you for it as my mother and my sister at once," cried Elizabeth, as with ardor she threw herself