

into Catharine's arms. "Yes, I will love you for it; and I will pray God that He may one day give me the opportunity to show my gratitude, and to reward you for your magnanimity and goodness."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### INTRIGUES.

FOR a few days past the king's gout had grown worse, and, to his wrath and grief, it confined him as a prisoner to his rolling chair.

The king was, therefore, very naturally gloomy and dejected, and hurled the lightnings of his wrath on all those who enjoyed the melancholy prerogative of being in his presence. His pains, instead of softening his disposition, seemed only to heighten still more his natural ferocity; and often might be heard through the palace of Whitehall the king's angry growl, and his loud, thundering invectives, which no longer spared any one, nor showed respect for any rank or dignity.

Earl Douglas, Gardiner, and Wriothesley very well knew how to take advantage of this wrathful humor of the king for their purposes, and to afford the cruel monarch, tortured with pain, one satisfaction at least—the satisfaction of making others suffer also.

Never had there been seen in England so many burnt at the stake as in those days of the king's sickness; never had the prisons been so crowded; never had so much blood flowed as King Henry now caused to be shed.\*

\* During the king's reign, and at the instigation of the clergy, twenty-eight hundred persons were burnt and executed, because they would not recognize the religious institutions established by the king as the only right and true ones.—Leti, vol. i, p. 34.

But all this did not yet suffice to appease the bloodthirstiness of the king, and his friends and counsellors, and his priests.

Still there remained untouched two mighty pillars of Protestantism that Gardiner and Wriothesley had to overthrow. These were the queen and Archbishop Cranmer.

Still there were two powerful and hated enemies whom the Seymours had to overcome; these were the Duke of Norfolk and his son, the Earl of Surrey.

But the various parties that in turn besieged the king's ear and controlled it, were in singular and unheard-of opposition, and at the same time inflamed with bitterest enmity, and they strove to supplant each other in the favor of the king.

To the popish party of Gardiner and Earl Douglas, everything depended on dispossessing the Seymours of the king's favor; and they, on the other hand, wanted above all things to continue in power the young queen, already inclined to them, and to destroy for the papists one of their most powerful leaders, the Duke of Norfolk.

The one party controlled the king's ear through the queen; the other, through his favorite, Earl Douglas.

Never had the king been more gracious and affable to his consort—never had he required more Earl Douglas's presence than in those days of his sickness and bodily anguish.

But there was yet a third party that occupied an important place in the king's favor—a power which every one feared, and which seemed to keep itself perfectly independent and free from all foreign influences. This power was John Heywood, the king's fool, the epigrammatist, who was dreaded by the whole court.

Only *one* person had influence with him. John Heywood was the friend of the queen. For the moment, then, it appeared as if the "heretical party," of which the queen was regarded as the head, was the most powerful at court.

It was therefore very natural for the popish party to



cherish an ardent hatred against the queen; very natural for them to be contriving new plots and machinations to ruin her and hurl her from the throne.

But Catharine knew very well the danger that threatened her, and she was on her guard. She watched her every look, her every word; and Gardiner and Douglas could not examine the queen's manner of life each day and hour more suspiciously than she herself did.

She saw the sword that hung daily over her head; and, thanks to her prudence and presence of mind, thanks to the ever-thoughtful watchfulness and cunning of her friend Heywood! she had still known how to avoid the falling of that sword.

Since that fatal ride in the wood of Epping Forest, she had not again spoken to Thomas Seymour alone; for Catharine very well knew that everywhere, whithersoever she turned her steps, some spying eye might follow her, some listener's ear might be concealed, which might hear her words, however softly whispered, and repeat them where they might be interpreted into a sentence of death against her.

She had, therefore, renounced the pleasure of speaking to her lover otherwise than before witnesses, and of seeing him otherwise than in the presence of her whole court.

What need had she either for secret meetings? What mattered it to her pure and innocent heart that she was not permitted to be alone with him? Still she might see him, and drink courage and delight from the sight of his haughty and handsome face; still she might be near him, and could listen to the music of his voice, and intoxicate her heart with his fine, euphonious and vigorous discourse.

Catharine, the woman of eight-and-twenty, had preserved the enthusiasm and innocence of a young girl of fourteen. Thomas Seymour was her first love; and she loved him with that purity and guileless warmth which is indeed peculiar to the first love only.

It sufficed her, therefore, to see him; to be near him;

to know that he loved her; that he was true to her; that all his thoughts and wishes belonged to her, as hers to him.

And that she knew. For there ever remained to her the sweet enjoyment of his letters—of those passionately written avowals of his love. If she was not permitted to say also to him how warmly and ardently she returned this love, yet she could write it to him.

It was John Heywood, the true and discreet friend, that brought her these letters, and bore her answers to him, stipulating, as a reward for this dangerous commission, that they both should regard him as the sole confidant of their love; that both should burn up the letters which he brought them. He had not been able to hinder Catharine from this unhappy passion, but wanted at least to preserve her from the fatal consequences of it. Since he knew that this love needed a confidant, he assumed this rôle, that Catharine, in the vehemence of her passion and in the simplicity of her innocent heart, might not make others sharers of her dangerous secret.

John Heywood therefore watched over Catharine's safety and happiness, as she watched over Thomas Seymour and her friends. He protected and guarded her with the king, as she guarded Cranmer, and protected him from the constantly renewed assaults of his enemies.

This it was that they could never forgive the queen—that she had delivered Cranmer, the noble and liberal-minded Archbishop of Canterbury, from their snares. More than once Catharine had succeeded in destroying their intriguing schemes, and in rending the nets that Gardiner and Earl Douglas, with so sly and skilful a hand, had spread for Cranmer.

If, therefore, they would overthrow Cranmer, they must first overthrow the queen. For this there was a real means—a means of destroying at once the queen and the hated Seymours, who stood in the way of the papists.

If they could prove to the king that Catharine entertained criminal intercourse with Thomas Seymour, then



were they both lost; then were the power and glory of the papists secured.

But whence to fetch the proofs of this dangerous secret, which the crafty Douglas had read only in Catharine's eyes, and for which he had no other support than his bare conviction? How should they begin to influence the queen to some inconsiderate step, to a speaking witness of her love?

Time hung so heavily on the king's hands! It would have been so easy to persuade him to some cruel deed—to a hasty sentence of death!

But it was not the blood of the Seymours for which the king thirsted. Earl Douglas very well knew that. He who observed the king day and night—he who examined and sounded his every sigh, each of his softly murmured words, every twitch of his mouth, every wrinkle of his brow—he well knew what dark and bloody thoughts stirred the king's soul, and whose blood it was for which he thirsted.

The royal tiger would drink the blood of the Howards; and that they still lived in health, and abundance, and glory, while he, their king and master, lonely and sad, was tossing on his couch in pain and agony—that was the worm which gnawed at the king's heart, which made his pains yet more painful, his tortures yet keener.

The king was jealous—jealous of the power and greatness of the Howards. It filled him with gloomy hatred to think that the Duke of Norfolk, when he rode through the streets of London, was everywhere received with the acclamations and rejoicing of the people, while he, the king, was a prisoner in his palace. It was a gnawing pain for him to know that Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, was praised as the handsomest and greatest man of England; that he was called the noblest poet; the greatest scholar; while yet he, the king, had also composed his poems and written his learned treatises, aye, even a particular devout

book, which he had printed for his people, and ordered them to read instead of the Bible.\*

It was the Howards who everywhere disputed his fame. The Howards supplanted him in the favor of his people, and usurped the love and admiration which were due to the king alone, and which should be directed toward no one but him. He lay on his bed of pain, and without doubt the people would have forgotten him, if he had not by the block, the stake, and the scaffold, daily reminded them of himself. He lay on his bed of pain, while the duke, splendid and magnificent, exhibited himself to the people and transported them with enthusiasm by the lavish and kingly generosity with which he scattered his money among the populace.

Yes, the Duke of Norfolk was the king's dangerous rival. The crown was not secure upon his head so long as the Howards lived. And who could conjecture whether in time to come, when Henry closed his eyes, the exultant love of the people might not call to the throne the Duke of Norfolk, or his noble son, the Earl of Surrey, instead of the rightful heir—instead of the little boy Edward, Henry's only son?

When the king thought of that, he had a feeling as though a stream of fire were whirling up to his brain; and he convulsively clenched his hands, and screamed and roared that he would take vengeance—vengeance on those hated Howards, who wanted to snatch the crown from his son.

Edward, the little boy of tender age—he alone was the divinely consecrated, legitimate heir to the king's crown. It had cost his father so great a sacrifice to give his people this son and successor! In order to do it, he had sacrificed Jane Seymour, his own beloved wife; he had let the mother be put to death, in order to preserve the son, the heir of his crown.

And the people did not once thank the king for this sacrifice that Jane Seymour's husband had made for them.

\* Burnet, vol. i, p. 95.



The people received with shouts the Duke of Norfolk, the father of that adulterous queen whom Henry loved so much that her infidelity had struck him like the stab of a poisoned dagger.

These were the thoughts that occupied the king on his bed of pain, and upon which he dwelt with all the wilfulness and moodiness of a sick man.

"We shall have to sacrifice these Howards to him!" said Earl Douglas to Gardiner, as they had just again listened to a burst of rage from their royal master. "If we would at last succeed in ruining the queen, we must first destroy the Howards."

The pious bishop looked at him inquiringly, and in astonishment.

Earl Douglas smiled. "Your highness is too exalted and noble to be always able to comprehend the things of this world. Your look, which seeks only God and heaven, does not always see the petty and pitiful things that happen here on the earth below."

"Oh, but," said Gardiner, with a cruel smile, "I see them, and it charms my eye when I see how God's vengeance punishes the enemies of the Church here on earth. Set up then, by all means, a stake or a scaffold for these Howards, if their death can be to us a means to our pious and godly end. You are certain of my blessing and my assistance. Only I do not quite comprehend how the Howards can stand in the way of our plots which are formed against the queen, inasmuch as they are numbered among the queen's enemies, and profess themselves of the Church in which alone is salvation."

"The Earl of Surrey is an apostate, who has opened his ear and heart to the doctrines of Calvin!"

"Then let his head fall, for he is a criminal before God, and no one ought to have compassion on him! And what is there that we lay to the charge of the father?"

"The Duke of Norfolk is well-nigh yet more dangerous than his son; for although a Catholic, he has not never-

theless the right faith; and his soul is full of unholy sympathy and injurious mildness. He bewails those whose blood is shed because they were devoted to the false doctrine of the priests of Baal; and he calls us both the king's blood-hounds."

"Well, then, cried Gardiner with an uneasy, dismal smile, "we will show him that he has called us by the right name; we will rend him in pieces!"

"Besides, as we have said, the Howards stand in the way of our schemes in relation to the queen," said Earl Douglas, earnestly. "The king's mind is so completely filled with this one hatred and this one jealousy, that there is no room in it for any other feeling, for any other hate. It is true he signs often enough these death-warrants which we lay before him; but he does it, as the lion, with utter carelessness and without anger, crushes the little mouse that is by chance under his paws. But if the lion is to rend in pieces his equal, he must beforehand be put into a rage. When he is raging, then you must let him have his prey. The Howards shall be his first prey. But, then, we must exert ourselves, that when the lion again shakes his mane his wrath may fall upon Catharine Parr and the Seymours."

"The Lord our God will be with us, and enlighten us, that we may find the right means to strike His enemies a sure blow!" exclaimed Gardiner, devoutly folding his hands.

"I believe the right means are already found," said Earl Douglas, with a smile; "and even before this day descends to its close, the gates of the Tower will open to receive this haughty and soft-hearted Duke of Norfolk and this apostate Earl Surrey. Perchance we may even succeed in striking at one blow the queen together with the Howards. See! an equipage stops before the grand entrance, and I see the Duchess of Norfolk and her daughter, the Duchess of Richmond, getting out of the carriage. Only see! they are making signs to us. I have promised



to conduct these two noble and pious ladies to the king, and I shall do so. Whilst we are there, pray for us, your highness, that our words, like well-aimed arrows, may strike the king's heart, and then rebound upon the queen and the Seymours!"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE ACCUSATION.

IN vain had the king hoped to master his pains, or at least to forget them, while he tried to sleep. Sleep had fled from the king's couch; and as he now sat in his rolling-chair, sad, weary, and harassed with pain, he thought, with gloomy spite, that the Duke of Norfolk told him but yesterday that sleep was a thing under his control, and he could summon it to him whenever it seemed good to him.

This thought made him raving with anger; and grinding his teeth, he muttered: "He can sleep; and I, his lord and king—I am a beggar that in vain whines to God above for a little sleep, a little forgetfulness of his pains! But it is this traitorous Norfolk that prevents me from sleeping. Thoughts of him keep me awake and restless. And I cannot crush this traitor with these hands of mine; I am a king, and yet so powerless and weak, that I can find no means of accusing this traitor, and convicting him of his sinful and blasphemous deeds. Oh, where may I find him—that true friend, that devoted servant, who ventures to understand my unuttered thoughts, and fulfil the wishes to which I dare not give a name?"

Just as he was thus thinking, the door behind him opened and in walked Earl Douglas. His countenance was proud and triumphant, and so wild a joy gleamed from his eyes that even the king was surprised at it.

"Oh," said he, peevishly, "you call yourself my friend;

and you are cheerful, Douglas, while your king is a poor prisoner whom the gout has chained with brazen bands to this chair."

"You will recover, my king, and go forth from this imprisonment as the conqueror, dazzling and bright, that by his appearance under God's blessing treads all his enemies in the dust—that triumphs over all those who are against him, and would betray their king!"

"Are there, then, any such traitors, who threaten their king?" asked Henry, with a dark frown.

"Ay, there are such traitors!"

"Name them to me!" said the king, trembling with passionate impatience. "Name them to me, that my arm may crush them and my avenging justice overtake the heads of the guilty."

"It is superfluous to mention them, for you, King Henry, the wise and all-knowing—you know their names."

And bending down closer to the king's ear, Earl Douglas continued: "King Henry, I certainly have a right to call myself your most faithful and devoted servant, for I have read your thoughts. I have understood the noble grief that disturbs your heart, and banishes sleep from your eyes and peace from your soul. You saw the foe that was creeping in the dark; you heard the low hiss of the serpent that was darting his venomous sting at your heel. But you were so much the noble and intrepid king, that you would not yourself become the accuser—nay, you would not once draw back the foot menaced by the serpent. Great and merciful, like God Himself, you smiled upon him whom you knew to be your enemy. But I, my king—I have other duties. I am like the faithful dog, that has eyes only for the safety of his master, and falls upon every one that comes to menace him. I have seen the serpent that would kill you, and I will bruise his head!"

"And what is the name of this serpent of which you speak?" asked the king; and his heart beat so boisterously that he felt it on his trembling lips.