

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.

"It is called," said Earl Douglas, earnestly and solemnly—"it is called Howard!"

The king uttered a cry, and, forgetting his gout and his pains, arose from his chair.

"Howard!" said he, with a cruel smile. "Say you that a Howard threatens our life? Which one is it? Name me the traitor!"

"I name them both—father and son! I name the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Surrey! I say that they both are traitors, who threaten the life and honor of my king, and with blasphemous arrogance dare stretch out their hands even to the crown!"

"Ah, I knew it, I knew it!" screamed the king. "And it was this that made me sleepless, and ate into my body like red-hot iron."

And as he fastened on Douglas his eyes flashing with rage, he asked, with a grim smile: "Can you prove that these Howards are traitors? Can you prove that they aim at my crown?"

"I hope to be able to do so," said Douglas. "To be sure, there are no great convincing facts——"

"Oh," said the king, interrupting him with a savage laugh, "there is no need of great facts. Give into my hand but a little thread, and I will make out of it a cord strong enough to haul the father and son up to the gallows at one time."

"Oh, for the son there is proof enough," said the earl, with a smile; "and as regards the father, I will produce your majesty some accusers against him, who will be important enough to bring the duke also to the block. Will you allow me to bring them to you immediately?"

"Yes, bring them, bring them!" cried the king. "Every minute is precious that may lead these traitors sooner to their punishment."

Earl Douglas stepped to the door and opened it. Three veiled female figures entered and bowed reverentially.

"Ah," whispered the king, with a cruel smile, as he sank back again into his chair, "they are the three Fates that spin the Howards' thread of life, and will now, it is to be hoped, break it off. I will furnish them with the scissors for it; and if they are not sharp enough, I will, with my own royal hands, help them to break the thread."

"Sire," said Earl Douglas, as, at a sign from him, the three women unveiled themselves—"sire, the wife, the daughter, and the mistress of the Duke of Norfolk have come to accuse him of high treason. The mother and the sister of the Earl of Surrey are here to charge him with a crime equally worthy of death."

"Now verily," exclaimed the king, "it must be a grievous and blasphemous sin which so much exasperates the temper of these noble women, and makes them deaf to the voice of nature!"

"It is indeed such a sin," said the Duchess of Norfolk, in a solemn tone; and, approaching a few paces nearer to the king, she continued: "Sire, I accuse the duke, my divorced husband, of high treason and disloyalty to his king. He has been so bold as to appropriate your own royal coat-of-arms; and on his seal and equipage, and over the entrance of his palace, are displayed the arms of the kings of England."

"That is true," said the king, who, now that he was certain of the destruction of the Howards, had regained his calmness and self-possession, and perfectly reassumed the air of a strict, impartial judge. "Yes, he bears the royal arms on his shield, but yet, if we remember rightly, the crown and paraph of our ancestor Edward the Third are wanting."

"He has now added this crown and this paraph to his coat-of-arms," said Miss Holland. "He says he is entitled to them; for that, like the king, he also is descended in direct line from Edward the Third; and, therefore, the royal arms belong likewise to him."

"If he says that, he is a traitor who presumes to call

his king and master his equal," cried the king, coloring up with a grim joy at now at length having his enemy in his power.

"He is indeed a traitor," continued Miss Holland. "Often have I heard him say he had the same right to the throne of England as Henry the Eighth; and that a day might come when he would contend with Henry's son for that crown."

"Ah," cried the king, and his eyes darted flashes so fierce that even Earl Douglas shrank before them, "ah, he will contend with my son for the crown of England! It is well, now; for now it is my sacred duty, as a king and as a father, to crush this serpent that wants to bite me on the heel; and no compassion and no pity ought now to restrain me longer. And were there no other proofs of his guilt and his crime than these words that he has spoken to you, yet are they sufficient, and will rise up against him, like the hangman's aids who are to conduct him to the block."

"But there are yet other proofs," said Miss Holland, laconically.

The king was obliged to unbutton his doublet. It seemed as though joy would suffocate him.

"Name them!" commanded he.

"He dares deny the king's supremacy; he calls the Bishop of Rome the sole head and holy Father of the Church."

"Ah, does he so?" exclaimed the king, laughing. "Well, we shall see now whether this holy Father will save this faithful son from the scaffold which we will erect for him. Yes, yes, we must give the world a new example of our incorruptible justice, which overtakes every one, however high and mighty he may be, and however near our throne he may stand. Really, really, it grieves our heart to lay low this oak which we had planted so near our throne, that we might lean upon it and support ourselves by it; but justice demands this sacrifice, and we will make it—not in wrath and spite, but only to meet the

sacred and painful duty of our royalty. We have greatly loved this duke, and it grieves us to tear this love from our heart."

And with his hand, glittering with jewels, the king wiped from his eyes the tears which were not there.

"But how?" asked the king, then, after a pause, "will you have the courage to repeat your accusation publicly before Parliament? Will you, his wife, and you, his mistress, publicly swear with a sacred oath to the truth of your declaration?"

"I will do so," said the duchess, solemnly, "for he is no longer my husband, no longer the father of my children, but simply the enemy of my king; and to serve *him* is my most sacred duty."

"I will do so," cried Miss Holland, with a bewitching smile; "for he is no longer my lover, but only a traitor, an atheist, who is audacious enough to recognize as the holy head of Christendom that man at Rome who has dared to hurl his curse against the sublime head of our king. It is this, indeed, that has torn my heart from the duke, and that has made me now hate him as ardently as I once loved him."

With a gracious smile, the king presented both his hands to the two women. "You have done me a great service to-day, my ladies," said he, "and I will find a way to reward you for it. I will give you, duchess, the half of his estate, as though you were his rightful heir and lawful widow. And you, Miss Holland, I will leave in undisputed possession of all the goods and treasures that the enamored duke has given you."

The two ladies broke out into loud expressions of thanks and into enthusiastic rapture over the liberal and generous king, who was so gracious as to give them what they already had, and to bestow on them what was already their own property.

"Well, and are you wholly mute, my little duchess," asked the king after a pause, turning to the Duchess of

Richmond, who had withdrawn to the embrasure of a window.

"Sire," said the duchess, smiling, "I was only waiting for my cue."

"And this cue is——"

"Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey! As your majesty knows, I am a merry and harmless woman; and I understand better how to laugh and joke than to talk much seriously. The two noble and fair ladies have accused the duke, my father; and they have done so in a very dignified and solemn manner. I wish to accuse my brother, Henry Howard; but you must exercise forbearance, if my words sound less solemn and elevated. They have told you, sire, that the Duke of Norfolk is a traitor and a criminal who denominates the Pope of Rome, and not you, my exalted king, the head of the Church. Now, the Earl of Surrey is neither a traitor nor a papist; and he has neither devised criminal plots against the throne of England, nor has he denied the supremacy of the king. No, sire, the Earl of Surrey is no traitor and no papist!"

The duchess paused, and looked with a malicious and droll smile into the astonished faces of those present.

A dark frown gathered on the king's brow, and his eyes, which just before had looked so cheerful, were now fixed with an angry expression on the young duchess.

"Why, then, my lady, have you made your appearance here?" asked he. "Why have you come here, if you have nothing further to say than what I already know—that the Earl of Surrey is a very loyal subject, and a man without any ambition, who neither courts the favor of my people nor thinks of laying his traitorous hands on my crown?"

The young duchess shook her head with a smile. "I know not whether he does all that," said she. "I have indeed heard that he said, with bitter scorn, that you, my king, wanted to be the protector of religion, yet you yourself were entirely without religion and without belief. Also, he of late broke out into bitter curses against you, be-

cause you had robbed him of his field-marshal's staff, and given it to Earl Hertford, that noble Seymour. Also, he meant to see whether the throne of England were so firm and steady that it had no need of his hand and his arm to prop it. All that I have of course heard from him; but you are right, sire, it is unimportant—it is not worth mentioning, and therefore I do not even make it as an accusation against him."

"Ah, you are always a mad little witch, Rosabella!" cried the king, who had regained his cheerfulness. "You say you will not accuse him, and yet you make his head a plaything that you poise upon your crimson lips. But take care, my little duchess—take care, that this head does not fall from your lips with your laughing, and roll down to the ground; for I will not stop it—this head of the Earl of Surrey, of whom you say that he is no traitor."

"But is it not monotonous and tiresome, if we accuse the father and son of the same crime?" asked the duchess, laughing. "Let us have a little variation. Let the duke be a traitor; the son, my king, is by far a worse criminal!"

"Is there, then, a still worse and more execrable crime than to be a traitor to his king and master, and to speak of the anointed of the Lord without reverence and love?"

"Yes, your majesty, there is a still worse crime; and of that I accuse the Earl of Surrey. He is an adulterer!"

"An adulterer!" repeated the king, with an expression of abhorrence. "Yes, my lady, you are right; that is a more execrable and unnatural crime, and we shall judge it strictly. For it shall not be said that modesty and virtue found no protector in the king of this land, and that he will not as a judge punish and crush all those who dare sin against decency and morals. Oh, the Earl of Surrey is an adulterer, is he?"

"That is to say, sire, he dares with his sinful love to pursue a virtuous and chaste wife. He dares to raise his wicked looks to a woman who stands as high above him as the sun above mortals, and who, at least by the greatness

and high position of her husband, should be secure from all impure desires and lustful wishes."

"Ah," cried the king, indignantly, "I see already whither that tends. It is always the same accusation; and now I say, as you did just now, let us have a little variation! The accusation I have already often heard; but the proofs are always wanting."

"Sire, this time, it may be, we can give the proofs," said the duchess, earnestly. "Would you know, my noble king, who the Geraldine is to whom Henry Howard addresses his love-songs? Shall I tell you the real name of this woman to whom, in the presence of your sacred person and of your whole court, he uttered his passionate protestations of love and his oath of eternal faithfulness? Well, now, this Geraldine—so adored, so deified—is the queen!"

"That is not true!" cried the king, crimson with anger; and he clenched his hands so firmly about the arms of his chair that it cracked. "That is not true, my lady!"

"It is true!" said the duchess, haughtily and saucily. "It is true, sire, for the Earl of Surrey has confessed to me myself that it is the queen whom he loves, and that Geraldine is only a melodious appellation for Catharine."

"He has confessed it to you yourself?" inquired the king, with gasping breath. "Ah, he dares love his king's wife? Woe to him, woe!"

He raised his clenched fist threateningly to heaven, and his eyes darted lightning. "But how!" said he, after a pause—"has he not recently read before us a poem to his Geraldine, in which he thanks her for her love, and acknowledges himself eternally her debtor for the kiss she gave him?"

"He has read before your majesty such a poem to Geraldine."

The king uttered a low cry, and raised himself in his seat. "Proofs," said he, in a hoarse, hollow voice—"proofs—or, I tell you, your own head shall atone for this accusation!"

"This proof, your majesty, *I* will give you!" said Earl Douglas, solemnly. "It pleases your majesty, in the fullness of your gentleness and mercy, to want to doubt the accusation of the noble duchess. Well, now, I will furnish you infallible proof that Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, really loves the queen, and that he really dares to extol and adore the king's wife as *his* Geraldine. You shall with your own ears, sire, hear how Earl Surrey swears his love to the queen."

The scream which the king now uttered was so frightful, and gave evidence of so much inward agony and rage, that it struck the earl dumb, and made the cheeks of the ladies turn pale.

"Douglas, Douglas, beware how you rouse the lion!" gasped the king. "The lion might rend you yourself in pieces!"

"This very night I will give you the proof that you demand, sire. This very night you shall hear how Earl Surrey, sitting at the feet of his Geraldine, swears to her his love."

"It is well!" said the king. "This night, then! Woe to you, Douglas, if you cannot redeem your word!"

"I will do so, your majesty. For this, it is only necessary that you will be graciously pleased to swear to me that you will not, by a sigh or a breath, betray yourself. The earl is suspicious; and the fear of an evil conscience has sharpened his ear. He would recognize you by your sigh, and his lips would not speak those words and avowals which you desire to hear."

"I swear to you that I will not by any sigh or breath betray my presence!" said the king, solemnly. "I swear this to you by the holy mother of God! But now let that suffice. Air—air—I suffocate! Everything swims before my eyes. Open the window, that a little air may flow in! Ah! that is good! This air at least is pure, and not infected with sin and slander!"

And the king had Earl Douglas roll him to the opened

window, and inspired in long draughts that pure fresh air. Then he turned to the ladies with an agreeable smile.

"My ladies," said he, "I thank you! You have to-day shown yourselves my true and devoted friends! I shall ever remember it, and I beg of you, if at any time you need a friend and protector, to apply to us with all confidence. We shall never forget what great service you have to-day rendered us."

He nodded to them in a friendly manner, whilst, with a majestic wave of the hand, he dismissed them, and concluded the audience.

"And now, Douglas," exclaimed the king, vehemently, as soon as the ladies had retired—"now I have had enough of this dreadful torture! Oh, you say I am to punish the traitors—these Surreys—and you inflict on me the most frightful pains of the rack!"

"Sire, there was no other means of delivering up this Surrey to you. You were wishing that he were a criminal; and I shall prove to you that he is so."

"Oh, I shall then be able at least to tread his hated head under my feet" said the king, grinding his teeth. "I shall no more tremble before this malicious enemy, who goes about among my people with his hypocritical tongue, while I, tortured with pain, sit in the dungeon of my sick-room. Yes, yes, I thank you, Douglas, that you will hand him over to my arm of vengeance; and my soul is full of joy and serenity at it. Ah, why were you obliged to cloud this fair, this sublime hour? Why was it necessary to weave the queen into this gloomy web of guilt and crime? Her cheerful smile and her radiant looks have ever been an enjoyment so dear to my eyes."

"Sire, I do not by any means say that the queen is guilty. Only there was no other means to prove to you Earl Surrey's guilt than that you should hear for yourself his confession of love to the queen."

"And I will hear it!" cried the king, who had now already overcome the sentimental emotion of his heart.

"Yes, I will have full conviction of Surrey's guilt; and woe to the queen, should I find her also guilty! This night, then, earl! But till then, silence and secrecy! We will have father and son seized and imprisoned at the same hour; for otherwise the imprisonment of the one might easily serve as a warning to the other, and he might escape my just wrath. Ah, they are so sly—these Howards—and their hearts are so full of cunning and malice! But now they shall escape me no more; now they are ours! How it does me good to think that! And how briskly and lightly my heart leaps! It is as though a stream of new life were rushing through my veins, and a new power were infused into my blood. Oh, it was these Howards that made me sick. I shall be well again when I know that they are in the Tower. Yes, yes, my heart leaps with joy, and this is to be a happy and blessed day. Call the queen hither to me, that I may once more enjoy her rosy face before I make it turn pale with terror. Yes, let the queen come, and let her adorn herself; I want to see her once more in the full splendor of her youth and her royalty, before her star goes out in darkness. I will once more delight myself with her before I make her weep. Ah, know you, Douglas, that there is no enjoyment keener, more devilish, and more heavenly, than to see such a person who smiles and suspects nothing, while she is already condemned; who still adorns her head with roses, while the executioner is already sharpening the axe that is to lay that head low; who still has hopes of the future, and of joy and happiness, while her hour of life has already run out; while I have already bidden her stop and descend into the grave! So, call the queen to me; and tell her that we are in a merry mood, and want to jest and laugh with her! Call all the ladies and lords of our court; and have the royal saloons opened; and let them be radiant with the brilliancy of the lights; and let us have music—loud, crashing music—for we want at least to make this a merry day for us since it seems as though we should have a sad

and unhappy night. Yes, yes, a merry day we will have; and after that, let come what come may! The saloons shall resound with laughter and joyfulness; and naught but rejoicing and fun shall be heard in the great royal saloons. And invite also the Duke of Norfolk, my noble cousin, who shares with me my royal coat-of-arms. Yes, invite him, that I may enjoy once more his haughty and imposing beauty and grandeur before this august sun is extinguished and leaves us again in night and darkness. Then invite also Wriothesley, the high chancellor, and let him bring with him a few gallant and brave soldiers of our body-guard. They are to be the noble duke's suite, when he wishes to leave our feast and go homeward—homeward—if not to his palace, yet to the Tower, and to the grave. Go, go, Douglas, and attend to all this for me! And send me here directly my merry fool, John Heywood. He must pass away the time for me till the feast begins. He must make me laugh and be gay."

"I will go and fulfil your orders, sire," said Earl Douglas. "I will order the feast, and impart your commands to the queen and your court. And first of all, I will send John Heywood to you. But pardon me, your majesty, if I venture to remind you that you have given me your royal word not to betray our secret by a single syllable, or even by a sigh."

"I gave my word, and I will keep it!" said the king. "Go now, Earl Douglas, and do what I have bidden you!"

Wholly exhausted by this paroxysm of cruel delight, the king sank back in his seat, and moaning and groaning he rubbed his leg, the piercing pains of which he had for a moment forgotten, but which now reminded him of their presence with so much the more cruel fury.

"Ah, ah!" moaned the king. "He boasts of being able to sleep when he pleases. Well, this time we will be the one to lull this haughty earl to sleep. But it will be a sleep out of which he is never to awake again!"

While the king thus wailed and suffered, Earl Doug-

las hastened with quick, firm step through the suite of royal apartments. A proud, triumphant smile played about his lips, and a joyful expression of victory flashed from his eyes.

"Triumph! triumph! we shall conquer!" said he, as he now entered his daughter's chamber and extended his hand to Lady Jane. "Jane, we have at last reached the goal, and you will soon be King Henry's seventh wife!"

A rosy shimmer flitted for a moment over Lady Jane's pale, colorless cheeks, and a smile played about her lips—a smile, however, which was more sad than loud sobs could have been."

"Ah," said she in a low tone, "I fear only that my poor head will be too weak to wear a royal crown."

"Courage, courage, Jane, lift up your head, and be again my strong, proud daughter!"

"But, I suffer so much, my father," sighed she. "It is hell that burns within me!"

"But soon, Jane, soon you shall feel again the bliss of heaven! I had forbidden you to grant Henry Howard a meeting, because it might bring us danger. Well, then, now your tender heart shall be satisfied. To-night you shall embrace your lover again!"

"Oh," murmured she, "he will again call me his Geraldine, and it will not be I, but the queen, that he kisses in my arms!"

"Yes, to-day, it will still be so, Jane; but I swear to you that to-day is the last time that you are obliged to receive him thus."

"The last time that I see him?" asked Jane, with an expression of alarm.

"No, Jane, only the last time that Henry Howard loves in you the queen, and not you yourself."

"Oh, he will never love me!" murmured she, sadly.

"He will love you, for you it will be that will save his life. Hasten, then, Jane, haste! Write him quickly one of those tender notes that you indite with so masterly a

hand. Invite him to a meeting to-night at the usual time and place."

"Oh, I shall at last have him again!" whispered Lady Jane; and she stepped to the writing-table and with trembling hand began to write.

But suddenly she stopped, and looked at her father sharply and suspiciously.

"You swear to me, my father, that no danger threatens him if he comes?"

"I swear to you, Jane, that you shall be the one to save his life! I swear to you, Jane, that you shall take vengeance on the queen—vengeance for all the agony, the humiliation and despair that you have suffered by her. To-day she is yet Queen of England! To-morrow she will be nothing more than a criminal, who sighs in the confinement of the Tower for the hour of her execution. And you will be Henry's seventh queen. Write, then, my daughter, write! And may love dictate to you the proper words!"

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### THE FEAST OF DEATH.

FOR a long time the king had not appeared in such good spirits as on this festive evening. For a long time he had not been so completely the tender husband, the good-natured companion, the cheerful *bon-vivant*.

The pains of his leg seemed to have disappeared, and even the weight of his body seemed to be less burdensome than usual, for more than once he rose from his chair, and walked a few steps through the brilliantly lighted saloon, in which the ladies and lords of his court, in festive attire, were moving gently to and fro; in which music and laughter resounded.

How tender he showed himself toward the queen to-day; with what extraordinary kindness he met the Duke of Norfolk; with what smiling attention he listened to the Earl of Surrey, as he, at the king's desire, recited some new sonnets to Geraldine!

This marked preference for the noble Howards enraptured the Roman Catholic party at court, and filled it with new hopes and new confidence.

But one there was who did not allow himself to be deceived by this mask which King Henry had to-day put on over his wrathful face.

John Heywood had faith neither in the king's cheerfulness nor in his tenderness. He knew the king; he was aware that those to whom he was most friendly often had the most to fear from him. Therefore, he watched him; and he saw, beneath this mask of friendliness, the king's real angry countenance sometimes flash out in a quick, hasty look.

The resounding music and the mad rejoicing no more deceived John Heywood. He beheld Death standing behind this dazzling life; he smelt the reek of corruption concealed beneath the perfume of these brilliant flowers.

John Heywood no longer laughed and no longer chatted. He watched.

For the first time in a long while the king did not need to-day the exciting jest and the stinging wit of his fool in order to be cheerful and in good humor.

So the fool had time and leisure to be a reasonable and observant man; and he improved the time.

He saw the looks of mutual understanding and secure triumph that Earl Douglas exchanged with Gardiner, and it made him mistrustful to notice that these favorites of the king, at other times so jealous, did not seem to be at all disturbed by the extraordinary marks of favor which the Howards were enjoying this evening.

Once he heard how Gardiner asked Wriothesley, as he passed by, "And the soldiers of the Tower?" and how he