

to lean on your arm, and see your dear sprightly face blanched by no fear or terrors of conscience. Come, Kate, you alone shall lead me, and to you alone will I trust myself."

"Sire, you are too heavy for the queen," said the fool, as he put his neck under the other arm. "Let me share with her the burden of royalty."

"But before we go," said Catharine, "I have, my husband, one request. Will you grant it?"

"I will grant you everything that you may ask, provided you will not require me to send you to the Tower."

"Sire, I wish to dismiss my maid of honor, Lady Jane Douglas, from my service—that is all," said the queen, as her eyes glanced with an expression of contempt, and yet at the same time of pain, at the form of her friend of other days, prostrate on the floor.

"She is dismissed!" said the king. "You will choose another maid of honor to-morrow. Come, Kate!"

And the king, supported by his consort and John Heywood, left the room with slow and heavy steps.

Earl Douglas watched them with a sullen, hateful expression. As the door closed after them he raised his arm threateningly toward heaven, and his trembling lips uttered a fierce curse and execration.

"Vanquished! vanquished again!" muttered he, gnashing his teeth. "Humbled by this woman whom I hate, and whom I will yet destroy! Yes, she has conquered this time; but we will commence the struggle anew, and our envenomed weapon shall nevertheless strike her at last!"

Suddenly he felt a hand laid heavily on his shoulder, and a pair of glaring, flaming eyes gazed at him.

"Father," said Lady Jane, as she threw her right hand threateningly toward heaven—"father, as true as there is a God above us, I will accuse you yourself to the king as a traitor—I will betray to him all your accursed plots—if you do not help me to deliver Henry Howard!"

Her father looked with an expression almost melancholy in her face, painfully convulsed and pale as marble. "I will help you!" said he. "I will do it, if you will help me also, and further my plans."

"Oh, only save Henry Howard, and I will sign myself away to the devil with my heart's blood!" said Jane Douglas, with a horrible smile. "Save his life, or, if you have not the power to do that, then at least procure me the happiness of being able to die with him."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### UNDECEIVED.

PARLIAMENT, which had not for a long time now ventured to offer any further opposition to the king's will—Parliament had acquiesced in his decree. It had accused Earl Surrey of high treason; and, on the sole testimony of his mother and his sister, he had been declared guilty of *lèse majesté* and high treason. A few words of discontent at his removal from office, some complaining remarks about the numerous executions that drenched England's soil with blood—that was all that the Duchess of Richmond had been able to bring against him. That he, like his father, bore the arms of the Kings of England—that was the only evidence of high treason of which his mother the Duchess of Norfolk could charge him.\*

These accusations were of so trivial a character, that the Parliament well knew they were not the ground of his arrest, but only a pretext for it—only a pretext, by which the king said to his pliant and trembling Parliament: "This man is innocent; but I will that you condemn him, and therefore you will account the accusation sufficient."

\* Tytler, p. 402. Burnet, vol. i, p. 95.



Parliament had not the courage to oppose the king's will. These members of Parliament were nothing more than a flock of sheep, who, in trembling dread of the sharp teeth of the dog, go straight along the path which the dog shows them.

The king wanted them to condemn the Earl of Surrey, and they condemned him.

They summoned him before their judgment-seat, and it was in vain that he proved his innocence in a speech spirited and glowing with eloquence. These noble members of Parliament would not see that he was innocent.

It is true, indeed, there were a few who were ashamed to bow their heads so unreservedly beneath the king's sceptre, which dripped with blood like a headsman's axe. There were still a few to whom the accusation appeared insufficient; but they were outvoted; and in order to give Parliament a warning example, the king, on the very same day, had these obstinate ones arrested and accused of some pretended crime. For this people, enslaved by the king's cruelty and savage barbarity, were already so degenerate and debased in self-consciousness, that men were always and without trouble found, who, in order to please the king and his bloodthirstiness and sanctimonious hypocrisy, degraded themselves to informers, and accused of crime those whom the king's dark frown had indicated to them as offenders.

So Parliament had doomed the Earl of Surrey to die, and the king had signed his death-warrant.

Early next morning he was to be executed; and in the Tower-yard the workmen were already busy in erecting the scaffold on which the noble earl was to be beheaded.

Henry Howard was alone in his cell. He had done with life and earthly things. He had set his house in order and made his will; he had written to his mother and sister, and forgiven them for their treachery and accusation; he had addressed a letter to his father, in which he exhorted him, in words as noble as they were touching, to

steadfastness and calmness, and bade him not to weep for him, for death was his desire, and the grave the only refuge for which he longed.

He had then, as we have said, done with life; and earthly things no longer disturbed him. He felt no regret and no fear. Life had left him nothing more to wish; and he almost thanked the king that he would so soon deliver him from the burden of existence.

The future had nothing more to offer him; why then should he desire it? Why long for a life which could be for him now only an isolated, desolate, and gloomy one? For Geraldine was lost to him! He knew not her fate; and no tidings of her had penetrated to him through the solitary prison walls. Did the queen still live? Or had the king in his wrath murdered her on that very night when Henry was carried to the Tower, and his last look beheld his beloved lying at her husband's feet, swooning and rigid.

What had become of the queen—of Henry Howard's beloved Geraldine? He knew nothing of her. He had hoped in vain for some note, some message from her; but he had not dared to ask any one as to her fate. Perhaps the king desisted from punishing her likewise. Perhaps his murderous inclination had been satisfied by putting Henry Howard to death; and Catharine escaped the scaffold. It might, therefore, have been ruinous to her, had he, the condemned, inquired after her. Or, if she had gone before him, then he was certain of finding her again, and of being united with her forevermore beyond the grave.

He believed in a hereafter, for he loved; and death did not affright him, for after death came the reunion with her, with Geraldine, who either was already waiting for him there above, or would soon follow him.

Life had nothing more to offer him. Death united him to his beloved. He hailed death as his friend and savior, as the priest who was to unite him to his Geraldine.



He heard the great Tower clock of the prison which with threatening stroke made known the hour; and each passing hour he hailed with a joyous throb of the heart. The evening came and deep night descended upon him—the last night that was allotted to him—the last night that separated him from his Geraldine.

The turnkey opened the door to bring the earl a light, and to ask whether he had any orders to give. Heretofore it had been the king's special command not to allow him a light in his cell; and he had spent these six long evenings and nights of his imprisonment in darkness. But to-day they were willing to give him a light; to-day they were willing to allow him everything that he might still desire. The life which he must leave in a few hours was to be once more adorned for him with all charms and enjoyments which he might ask for. Henry Howard had but to wish, and the jailer was ready to furnish him everything.

But Henry Howard wished for nothing; he demanded nothing, save that they would leave him alone—save that they would remove from his prison this light which dazzled him, and which opposed to his enrapturing dreams the disenchanting reality.

The king, who had wanted to impose a special punishment in condemning him to darkness—the king had, contrary to his intention, become thereby his benefactor. For with darkness came dreams and fantasies. With the darkness came Geraldine.

When night and silence were all around him, then there was light within; and an enchanting whisper and a sweet, enticing voice resounded within him. The gates of his prison sprang open, and on the wings of thought Henry Howard soared away from that dismal and desolate place. On the wings of thought he came to *her*—to his Geraldine.

Again she was by him, in the large, silent hall. Again night lay upon them, like a veil concealing, blessing, and enveloping them; and threw its protection over their embraces and their kisses. Solitude allowed him to hear

again the dear music of her voice, which sang for him so enchanting a melody of love and ecstasy.

Henry Howard must be alone, so that he can hear his Geraldine. Deep darkness must surround him, so that his Geraldine can come to him.

He demanded, therefore, for his last night, nothing further than to be left alone, and without a light. The jailer extinguished the light and left the cell. But he did not shove the great iron bolt across the door. He did not put the large padlock on it, but he only left the door slightly ajar, and did not lock it at all.

Henry Howard took no notice of this. What cared he, whether this gate was locked or no—he who no longer had a desire for life and freedom!

He leaned back on his seat, and dreamed with eyes open. There below in the yard they were working on the scaffold which Henry Howard was to ascend as soon as day dawned. The dull monotony of the strokes of the hammers fell on his ear. Now and then the torches, which lighted the workmen at their melancholy task, allowed to shine up into his cell a pale glimmer of light, which danced on the walls in ghost-like shapes.

"There are the ghosts of all those that Henry has put to death," thought Henry Howard; "they gather around me; like will-o'-the-wisps, they dance with me the dance of death, and in a few hours I shall be forever theirs."

The dull noise of hammers and saws continued steadily on, and Henry Howard sank deeper and deeper in reverie.

He thought, he felt, and desired nothing but Geraldine. His whole soul was concentrated in that single thought of *her*. It seemed to him he could bid his spirit see her, as though he could command his senses to perceive her. Yes, she was there; he felt—he was conscious of her presence. Again he lay at her feet, and leaned his head on her knee, and listened again to those charming revelations of her love.

Completely borne away from the present, and from



existence, he saw, he felt, only *her*. The mystery of love was perfected, and, under the veil of night, Geraldine had again winged her way to him, and he to her.

A happy smile played about his lips, which faltered forth rapturous words of greeting. Overcome by a wonderful hallucination, he saw his beloved approaching him; he stretched out his arms to clasp her; and it did not arouse him when he felt instead of her only the empty air.

"Why do you float away from me again, Geraldine?" asked he, in a low tone. "Wherefore do you withdraw from my arms, to whirl with the will-o'-the-wisps in the death-dance? Come, Geraldine, come; my soul burns for you. My heart calls you with its last faltering throb. Come, Geraldine, oh, come!"

What was that? It was as though the door were gently opened, and the latch again gently fastened. It was as though a foot were moving softly over the floor—as though the shape of a human form shaded for a moment the flickering light which danced around the walls.

Henry Howard saw it not.

He saw naught but his Geraldine, whom he with so much fervency and longing wished by his side. He spread his arms; he called her with all the ardor, all the enthusiasm of a lover.

Now he uttered a cry of ecstasy. His prayer of love was answered. The dream had become a reality. His arms no longer clasped the empty air; they pressed to his breast the woman whom he loved, and for whom he was to die.

He pressed his lips to her mouth and she returned his kisses. He threw his arms around her form, and she pressed him fast, fast to her bosom.

Was this a reality? Or was it madness that was creeping upon him and seizing upon his brain, and deceiving him with fantasies so enchanting?

Henry Howard shuddered as he thought this, and, falling upon his knees, he cried in a voice trembling with

agony and love: "Geraldine, have pity on me! Tell me that this is no dream, that I am not mad—that you are really—you are Geraldine—you—the king's consort, whose knees I now clasp! Speak, oh speak, my Geraldine!"

"I am she!" softly whispered she. "I am Geraldine—am the woman whom you love, and to whom you have sworn eternal truth and eternal love! Henry Howard, my beloved, I now remind you of your oath! Your life belongs to me. This you have vowed, and I now come to demand of you that which is my own!"

"Ay, my life belongs to you, Geraldine! But it is a miserable, melancholy possession, which you will call yours only a few hours longer."

She threw her arms closely around his neck; she raised him to her heart; she kissed his mouth, his eyes. He felt her tears, which trickled like hot fountains over his face; he heard her sighs, which struggled from her breast like death-groans.

"You must not die!" murmured she, amid her tears. "No, Henry, you must live, so that I too can live; so that I shall not become mad from agony and sorrow for you! My God, my God, do you not then feel how I love you? Know you not, then, that your life is my life, and your death my death?"

He leaned his head on her shoulder, and, wholly intoxicated with happiness, he scarcely heard what she was speaking.

She was again there! What cared he for all the rest?

"Geraldine," softly whispered he, "do you recollect still how we first met each other? how our hearts were united in one throb, how our lips clung to each other in one kiss? Geraldine, my life, my loved one, we then swore that naught could separate us, that our love should survive the grave! Geraldine, do you remember that still?"

"I remember it, my Henry! But you shall not die yet; and not in death, but in life, shall your love for me be



proved! Ay, we will live, live! And *your* life shall be *my* life, and where *you* are, there will I be also! Henry, do you remember that you vowed this to me with a solemn oath!"

"I remember it, but I cannot keep my word, my Geraldine! Hear you how they are sawing and hammering there below? Know you what that indicates, dearest?"

"I know it, Henry! It is the scaffold that they are building there below. The scaffold for you and me. For I too will die if you will not live; and the axe that seeks your neck shall find mine also, if you wish not that we both live!"

"Do I wish it! But how can we, beloved?"

"We can, Henry, we can! All is ready for the flight! It is all arranged, everything prepared! The king's signet-ring has opened to me the gates of the prison; the omnipotence of gold has won over your jailer. He will not see it, when two persons instead of one leave this dungeon. Unmolested and without hinderance, we will both leave the Tower by ways known only to him, over secret corridors and staircases, and will go aboard a boat which is ready to take us to a ship, which lies in the harbor prepared to sail, and which as soon as we are aboard weighs anchor and puts to sea with us. Come, Henry, come! Lay your arm in mine, and let us leave this prison!"

She threw both her arms around his neck, and drew him forward. He pressed her fast to his heart and whispered: "Yes, come, come, my beloved! Let us fly! To you belongs my life, you alone!"

He raised her up in his arms, and hastened with her to the door. He pushed it hastily open with his foot and hurried forward down the corridor; but having arrived just at the first turn he reeled back in horror.

Before the door were standing soldiers with shouldered arms. There stood also the lieutenant of the Tower, and two servants behind him with lighted candles.

Geraldine gave a scream, and with anxious haste rearranged the thick veil that had slipped from her head.

Henry Howard also had uttered a cry, but not on account of the soldiers and the frustrated flight.

His eyes, stretched wide open, stared at this figure at his side, now so closely veiled.

It seemed to him as though like a spectre a strange face had risen up close by him—as though it were not the beloved head of the queen that rested there on his shoulder. He had seen this face only as a vision, as the fantasy of a dream; but he knew with perfect certainty that it was not *her* countenance, not the countenance of his Geraldine.

The lieutenant of the Tower motioned to his servants, and they carried the lighted candles into the earl's cell.

Then he gave Henry Howard his hand and silently led him back into the prison.

Henry Howard exhibited no reluctance to follow him; but his hand had seized Geraldine's arm, and he drew her along with him; his eye rested on her with a penetrating expression, and seemed to threaten her.

They were now again in the room which they had before left with such blessed hopes.

The lieutenant of the Tower motioned to the servants to retire, then turned with solemn earnestness to Earl Surrey.

"My lord," said he, "it is at the king's command that I bring you these lights. His majesty knows all that has happened here this night. He knew that a plot was formed to rescue you; and while they believed they were deceiving him, the plotters themselves were deceived. They had succeeded under various artful false pretences in influencing the king to give his signet-ring to one of his lords. But his majesty was already warned, and he already knew that it was not a man, as they wanted to make him believe, but a woman, who came, not to take leave of you, but to deliver you from prison.—My lady, the jailer whom you imagined that you had bribed was a faithful



servant of the king. He betrayed your plot to me; and it was I who ordered him to make a show of favoring your deed. You will not be able to release Earl Surrey; but if such is your command, I will myself see you to the ship that lies in the harbor for you ready to sail. No one will hinder you, my lady, from embarking on it; Earl Surrey is not permitted to accompany you!—My lord, soon the night is at an end, and you know that it will be your last night. The king has ordered that I am not to prevent this lady, if she wishes to spend this night with you in your room. But she is allowed to do so only on the condition that the lights in your room remain burning. That is the king's express will, and these are his own words: 'Tell Earl Surrey that I allow him to love his Geraldine, but that he is to open his eyes to see her! That he may see, you will give him a light; and I command him not to extinguish it so long as Geraldine is with him. Otherwise he may confound her with another woman; for in the dark one cannot distinguish even a harlequin from a queen!'—You have now to decide, my lord, whether this lady remains with you, or whether she goes, and the light shall be put out!"

"She shall remain with me, and I very much need the light!" said Earl Surrey; and his penetrating look rested steadily on the veiled figure, which shook at his words, as if in an ague.

"Have you any other wish besides this, my lord?"

"None, save that I may be left alone with her."

The lieutenant bowed and left the room.

They were now alone again, and stood confronting each other in silence. Naught was heard but the beating of their hearts, and the sighs of anguish that burst from Geraldine's trembling lips.

It was an awful, a terrible pause. Geraldine would gladly have given her life could she thereby have extinguished the light and veiled herself in impenetrable darkness.

But the earl would see. With an angry, haughty look,

he stepped up to her, and, as with commanding gesture he raised his arm, Geraldine shuddered and submissively bowed her head.

"Unveil your face!" said he, in a tone of command.

She did not stir. She murmured a prayer, then raised her clasped hands to Henry and in a low moan, said: "Mercy! mercy!"

He extended his hand and seized the veil.

"Mercy!" repeated she, in a voice of still deeper supplication—of still greater distress.

But he was inexorable. He tore the veil from her face and stared at her. Then with a wild shriek he reeled back and covered his face with his hands.

Jane Douglas durst not breathe or stir. She was pale as marble; her large, burning eyes were fastened with an unutterable expression of entreaty upon her lover, who stood before her with covered head, and crushed with anguish. She loved him more than her life, more than her eternal salvation; and yet she it was that had brought him to this hour of agony.

At length Earl Surrey let his hands fall from his face, and with a fierce movement dashed the tears from his eyes.

As he looked at her, Jane Douglas wholly involuntarily sank upon her knees, and raised her hands imploringly to him. "Henry Howard," said she, in a low whisper, "I am Geraldine! Me have you loved; my letters have you read with ecstasy, and to me have you often sworn that you loved my mind yet more than my appearance. And often has my heart been filled with rapture, when you told me you would love me however my face might change, however old age or sickness might alter my features. You remember, Henry, how I once asked you whether you would cease to love me, if now God suddenly put a mask before my face, so that you could not recognize my features. You replied to me: 'Nevertheless, I should love and adore you; for what in you ravishes me, is not your face, but you yourself—yourself with your glorious being



and nature. It is your soul and your heart which can never change, which lie before me like a holy book, clear and bright!' That was your reply to me then, as you swore to love me eternally. Henry Howard, I now remind you of your oath! I am your Geraldine. It is the same soul, the same heart; only God has put a mask upon my face!"

Earl Surrey had listened to her with eager attention, with increasing amazement.

"It is she! It is really!" cried he, as she ceased. "It is Geraldine!"

And wholly overcome, wholly speechless with anguish, he sank into a seat.

Geraldine flew to him; she crouched at his feet; she seized his drooping hand and covered it with kisses. And amid streaming tears, often interrupted by her sighs and her sobs, she recounted to him the sad and unhappy history of her love; she unveiled before him the whole web of cunning and deceit, that her father had drawn around them both. She laid her whole heart open and unveiled before him. She told him of her love, of her agonies, of her ambition, and her remorse. She accused herself; but she pleaded her love as an excuse, and with streaming tears, clinging to his knees, she implored him for pity, for forgiveness.

He thrust her violently from him, and stood up in order to escape her touch. His noble countenance glowed with anger; his eyes darted lightning; his long flowing hair shaded his lofty brow and his face like a sombre veil. He was beautiful in his wrath, beautiful as the archangel Michael trampling the dragon beneath his feet. And thus he bent down his head toward her; thus he gazed at her with flashing and contemptuous looks.

"I forgive you?" said he. "Never will that be! Ha, shall I forgive you?—you, who have made my entire life a ridiculous lie, and transformed the tragedy of my love into a disgusting farce? Oh, Geraldine, how I have loved you;

and now you have become to me a loathsome spectre, before which my soul shudders, and which I must execrate! You have crushed my life, and even robbed my death of its sanctity; for now it is no longer the martyrdom of my love, but only the savage mockery of my credulous heart. Oh, Geraldine, how beautiful it would have been to die for you!—to go to death with your name upon my lips!—to bless you!—to thank you for my happy lot, as the axe was already uplifted to smite off my head! How beautiful to think that death does not separate us, but is only the way to an eternal union; that we should lose each other but a brief moment here, to find each other again forevermore!"

Geraldine writhed at his feet like a worm trodden upon; and her groans of distress and her smothered moans were the heartrending accompaniment of his melancholy words.

"But that is now all over!" cried Henry Howard; and his face, which was before convulsed with grief and agony, now glowed again with wrath. "You have poisoned my life and my death; and I shall curse you for it, and my last word will be a malediction on the harlequin Geraldine!"

"Have pity!" groaned Jane. "Kill me, Henry; stamp my head beneath your feet; only let this torture end!"

"Nay, no pity!" yelled he, wildly; "no pity for this impostor, who has stolen my heart and crept like a thief into my love! Arise, and leave this room; for you fill me with horror; and when I behold you, I feel only that I must curse you! Ay, a curse on you and shame, Geraldine! Curse on the kisses that I have impressed on your lips—on the tears of rapture that I have wept on your bosom. When I ascend the scaffold, I will curse you, and my last words shall be: 'Woe to Geraldine!—for she is my murderer!'"

He stood there before her with arm raised on high, proud and great in his wrath. She felt the destroying