

And again there was a flash through the air. It was the dagger that Jane Douglas plunged into her heart.

She had struck well. No sound—no groan burst from her lips. With a proud smile she sank by her lover's headless corpse, and with a last dying effort she said to the horrified headsman: "Let me share his grave! Henry Howard, in life and in death I am with thee!"

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### NEW INTRIGUES.

HENRY HOWARD was dead; and now one would have thought the king might be satisfied and quiet, and that sleep would no longer flee from his eyelids, since Henry Howard, his great rival, had closed his eyes forever; since Henry Howard was no longer there, to steal away his crown, to fill the world with the glory of his deeds, to dim the genius of the king by his own fame as a poet.

But the king was still dissatisfied. Sleep still fled from his couch.

The cause of this was that his work was only just half done. Henry Howard's father, the Duke of Norfolk, still lived. The cause of this was, that the king was always obliged to think of this powerful rival; and these thoughts chased sleep from his eyelids. His soul was sick of the Howards; therefore his body suffered such terrible pains.

If the Duke of Norfolk would close his eyes in death, then would the king also be able to close his again in refreshing sleep! But this court of peers—and only by such a court could the duke be judged—this court of peers was so slow and deliberate! It worked far less rapidly, and was not near so serviceable, as the Parliament which had so quickly condemned Henry Howard. Why must the



old Howard bear a ducal title? Why was he not like his son, only an earl, so that the obedient Parliament might condemn him?

That was the king's inextinguishable grief, his gnawing pain, which made him raving with fury and heated his blood, and thereby increased the pains of his body.

He raved and roared with impatience. Through the halls of his palace resounded his savage vituperation. It made every one tremble and quake, for no one was sure that it was not he that was to fall that day a victim to the king's fury. No one could know whether the king's ever-increasing thirst for blood would not that day doom him.

With the most jealous strictness the king, from his sick-couch, watched over his royal dignity; and the least fault against that might arouse his wrath and bloodthirstiness. Woe to those who wanted still to maintain that the pope was the head of the Church! Woe to those who ventured to call God the only Lord of the Church, and honored not the king as the Church's holy protector! The one, like the other, were traitors and sinners, and he had Protestants and Roman Catholics alike executed, however near they stood to his own person, and however closely he was otherwise bound to them.

Whoever, therefore, could avoid it, kept himself far from the dreaded person of the king; and whoever was constrained by duty to be near him, trembled for his life, and commended his soul to God.

There were only four persons who did not fear the king, and who seemed to be safe from his destroying wrath. There was the queen, who nursed him with devoted attention, and John Heywood, who with untiring zeal sustained Catharine in her difficult task, and who still sometimes succeeded in winning a smile from the king. There were, furthermore, Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, and Earl Douglas.

Lady Jane Douglas was dead. The king had therefore forgiven her father, and again shown himself gracious and

friendly to the deeply-bowed earl. Besides, it was such an agreeable and refreshing feeling to the suffering king to have some one about him who suffered yet more than he himself! It comforted him to know that there could be agonies yet more horrible than those pains of the body under which he languished. Earl Douglas suffered these agonies; and the king saw with a kind of delight how his hair turned daily more gray, and his features became more relaxed and feeble. Douglas was younger than the king, and yet how old and gray his face was beside the king's well-fed and blooming countenance!

Could the king have seen the bottom of his soul, he would have had less sympathy with Earl Douglas's sorrow.

He considered him only as a tender father mourning the death of his only child. He did not suspect that it was less the father that Jane's painful death had smitten, than the ambitious man, the fanatical Roman Catholic, the enthusiastic disciple of Loyola, who with dismay saw all his plans frustrated, and the moment drawing nigh when he would be divested of that power and consideration which he enjoyed in the secret league of the disciples of Jesus.

With him, therefore, it was less the *daughter*, for whom he mourned, than *the king's seventh wife*. And that Catharine wore the crown, and not his daughter—not Jane Douglas—this it was that he could never forgive the queen.

He wanted to take vengeance on the queen for Jane's death; he wanted to punish Catharine for his frustrated hopes, for his desires that she had trampled upon.

But Earl Douglas durst not himself venture to make another attempt to prejudice the king's mind against his consort. Henry had interdicted him from it under the penalty of his wrath. With words of threatening, he had warned him from such an attempt; and Earl Douglas very well knew that King Henry was inflexible in his determination, when the matter under consideration was the execution of a threatened punishment.



Yet what Douglas durst not venture, that Gardiner could venture—Gardiner, who, thanks to the capriciousness of the sick king, had for the few days past enjoyed again the royal favor so unreservedly that the noble Archbishop Cranmer had received orders to leave the court and retire to his episcopal residence at Lambeth.

Catharine had seen him depart with anxious forebodings; for Cranmer had ever been her friend and her support. His mild and serene countenance had ever been to her like a star of peace in the midst of this tempest-tossed and passion-lashed court life; and his gentle and noble words had always fallen like a soothing balm on her poor trembling heart.

She felt that with his departure she lost her noblest support, her strengthening aid, and that she was now surrounded only by enemies and opponents. True, she still had John Heywood, the faithful friend, the indefatigable servant; but since Gardiner had exercised his sinister influence over the king's mind, John Heywood durst scarcely risk himself in Henry's presence. True, she had also Thomas Seymour, her lover; but she knew and felt that she was everywhere surrounded by spies and eavesdroppers, and that now it required nothing more than an interview with Thomas Seymour—a few tender words—perchance even only a look full of mutual understanding and love, in order to send him and her to the scaffold.

She trembled not for herself, but for her lover. That made her cautious and thoughtful. That gave her courage never to show Thomas Seymour other than a cold, serious face; never to meet him otherwise than in the circle of her court; never to smile on him; never to give him her hand.

She was, however, certain of her future. She knew that a day would come on which the king's death would deliver her from her burdensome grandeur and her painful royal crown; when she should be free—free to give her

hand to the man whom alone on earth she loved, and to become his wife.

She waited for that day, as the prisoner does for the hour of his release; but like him she knew that a premature attempt to escape from her dungeon would bring her only ruin and death, and not freedom.

She must be patient and wait. She must give up all personal intercourse with her lover; and even his letters John Heywood could bring her but very seldom, and only with the greatest caution. How often already had not John Heywood conjured her to give up this correspondence also! how often had he not with tears in his eyes besought her to renounce this love, which might one day be her ruin and her death! Catharine laughed at his gloomy forebodings, and opposed to his dark prophecies a bravery reliant on the future, the joyous courage of her love.

She would not die, for happiness and love were awaiting her; she would not renounce happiness and love, for the sake of which she could endure this life in other respects—this life of peril, of resignation, of enmity, and of hatred.

But she wanted to live in order to be happy hereafter. This thought made her brave and resolute; it gave her courage to defy her enemies with serene brow and smiling lip; it enabled her to sit with bright eye and rosy cheeks at the side of her dreaded and severe husband, and, with cheerful wit and inexhaustible good-humor, jest away the frown from his brow, and vexation from his soul.

But just because she could do this, she was a dangerous antagonist to Douglas and Gardiner. Just on that account, it was to be their highest effort to destroy this beautiful young woman, who durst defy them and weaken their influence with the king. If they could but succeed in rendering the king's mind more and more gloomy; if they could but completely fill him again with fanatical religious zeal; then, and then only, could they hope to attain their end; which end was this: to bring back the king as a con-



trite, penitent, and humble son of the only saving mother Church, and to make him again, from a proud, vain, and imperious prince, an obedient and submissive son of the pope.

The king was to renounce this vain and blasphemous arrogance of wishing to be himself head of his Church. He was to turn away from the spirit of novelty and heresy, and again become a faithful and devout Catholic.

But in order that they might attain this end, Catharine must be removed from him; he must no longer behold her rosy and beautiful face, and no longer allow himself to be diverted by her sensible discourse and her keen wit.

"We shall not be able to overthrow the queen," said Earl Douglas to Gardiner, as the two stood in the king's anteroom, and as Catharine's cheerful chit-chat and the king's merry laugh came pealing to them from the adjoining room. "No, no, Gardiner, she is too powerful and too crafty. The king loves her very much; and she is such an agreeable and refreshing recreation to him."

"Just on that account we must withdraw her from him," said Gardiner, with a dark frown. "He must turn away his heart from this earthly love; and after we shall have mortified this love in him, this savage and arrogant man will return to us and to God, contrite and humble."

But we shall not be able to mortify it, friend. It is so ardent and selfish a love."

So much the greater will be the triumph, if our holy admonitions are successful in touching his heart, Douglas. It is true he will suffer very much if he is obliged to give up this woman. But he needs precisely this suffering in order to become contrite and penitent. His mind must first be entirely darkened, so that we can illuminate it with the light of faith. He must first be rendered perfectly isolated and comfortless in order to bring him back to the holy communion of the Church, and to find him again accessible to the consolations of that faith which alone can save."

"Ah," sighed Douglas, "I fear that this will be a useless struggle. The king is so vain of his self-constituted high-priesthood!"

"But he is such a weak man, and such a great sinner!" said Gardiner, with a cold smile. "He trembles so much at death and God's judgment, and our holy mother the Church can give him absolution, and by her holy sacraments render death easy to him. He is a wicked sinner and has stings of conscience. This it is that will bring him back again to the bosom of the Catholic Church."

"But when will that come to pass? The king is sick, and any day may put an end to his life. Woe to us, if he die before he has given the power into our hands, and nominated us his executors! Woe to us, if the queen is appointed regent, and the king selects the Seymours as her ministers! Oh, my wise and pious father, the work that you wish to do must be done soon, or it must remain forever unaccomplished."

"It shall be done this very day," said Gardiner, solemnly; and bending down closer to the earl's ear, he continued: "we have lulled the queen into assurance and self-confidence, and by this means she shall be ruined this very day. She relies so strongly on her power over the king's disposition, that she often summons up courage even to contradict him, and to set her own will in opposition to his. That shall be her ruin this very day! For mark well, earl; the king is now again like a tiger that has been long fasting. He thirsts for blood! The queen has an aversion to human blood, and she is horrified when she hears of executions. So we must manage that these opposing inclinations may come into contact, and contend with each other."

"Oh, I understand now," whispered Douglas; "and I bow in reverence before the wisdom of your highness. You will let them both contend with their own weapons."

"I will point out a welcome prey to his appetite for blood, and give her silly compassion an opportunity to con-



tend with the king for his prey. Do you not think, earl, that this will be an amusing spectacle, and one refreshing to the heart, to see how the tiger and dove struggle with each other? And I tell you the tiger thirsts so much for blood! Blood is the only balm that he applies to his aching limbs, and by which alone he imagines that he can restore peace and courage to his tortured conscience and his dread of death. Ah, ha! we have told him that, with each new execution of a heretic, one of his great sins would be blotted out, and that the blood of the Calvinists serves to wash out of his account-book some of his evil deeds. He would be so glad to be able to appear pure and guiltless before the tribunal of his God! Therefore he needs very much heretical blood. But hark—the hour strikes which summons me to the royal chamber! There has been enough of the queen's laughing and chit-chat. We will now endeavor to banish the smile forever from her face. She is a heretic; and it is a pious work, well pleasing to God, if we plunge her headlong into ruin!"

"May God be with your highness, and assist you by His grace, that you may accomplish this sublime work!"

"God will be with us, my son, since for Him it is that we labor and harass ourselves. To His honor and praise we bring these misbelieving heretics to the stake, and make the air re-echo with the agonizing shrieks of those who are racked and tortured. That is music well pleasing to God; and the angels in heaven will triumph and be glad when the heretical and infidel Queen Catharine also has to strike up this music of the damned. Now I go to the holy labor of love and godly wrath. Pray for me, my son, that I may succeed. Remain here in the anteroom, and await my call; perhaps we shall need you. Pray for us, and with us. Ah, we still owe this heretical queen a grudge for Anne Askew. To-day we will pay her. Then she accused us, to-day we will accuse her, and God and His host of saints and angels are with us."

And the pious and godly priest crossed himself, and

with head humbly bowed and a soft smile about his thin, bloodless lips, strode through the hall in order to betake himself to the king's chamber.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE KING AND THE PRIEST.

"God bless and preserve your majesty!" said Gardiner as he entered, to the king, who just then was sitting with the queen at the chess-board. With frowning brow and compressed lips he looked over the game, which stood unfavorable for him, and threatened him with a speedy checkmate.

It was not wise in the queen not to let the king win; for his superstitious and jealous temper looked upon such a won game of chess as withal an assault on his own person. And he who ventured to conquer him at chess was always to Henry a sort of traitor that threatened his kingdom, and was rash enough to attempt to seize the crown.

The queen very well knew that, but—Gardiner was right—she was too self-confident. She trusted a little to her power over the king; she imagined he would make an exception in her favor. And it was so dull to be obliged ever to be the losing and conquered party at this game; to permit the king always to appear as the triumphant victor, and to bestow on his game praise which he did not deserve. Catharine wanted to allow herself for once the triumph of having beaten her husband. She fought him man to man; she irritated him by the ever-approaching danger.

The king, who at the beginning had been cheerful, and laughed when Catharine took up one of his pieces—the king now no longer laughed. It was no more a game. It was a serious struggle; and he contended with his consort for the victory with impassioned eagerness.