

that it is never to be left again; and if a queen is arrested and accused, then is she also already condemned. Oh, my God, princess, do you comprehend that—to have to die while life still throbs so fresh and warm in our veins? To be obliged to go to death, while the future still allures us with a thousand hopes, a thousand wishes? My God, to have to descend into the desolate prison and into the gloomy grave, while the world greets us with alluring voices, and spring-tide has scarcely awoke in our heart!”

Streams of tears burst from her eyes, and she hid her face in her trembling hands.

“Weep not, queen,” whispered Elizabeth, herself trembling and pale as death. “Weep not; but consider what is to be done. Each minute, and the danger increases; each minute brings the evil nearer to us.”

“You are right,” said Catharine, as she again raised her head, and shook the tears from her eyes. “Yes, you are right; it is not time to weep and wail. Death is creeping upon me; but I—I will not die. I live still; and so long as there is a breath in me I will fight against death. God will assist me; God will help me to overcome this danger also, as I have already done so many others.”

“But what will you do? where can you begin? You know not the accusation. You know not who accuses you, nor with what you are charged.”

“Yet I suspect it!” said the queen, musingly. “When I now recall to mind the king’s angry countenance, and the malicious smile of that malignant priest, I believe I know the accusation. Yes—everything is now clear to me. Ah, it is the heretic that they would sentence to death. Well, now, my lord bishop, I still live; and we will see which of us two will gain the victory!”

With proud step and glowing cheeks she hurried to the door. Elizabeth held her back. “Whither are you going?” cried she, in astonishment.

“To the king!” said she, with a proud smile. “He has heard the bishop; now he shall hear me also. The

king’s disposition is fickle and easily changed. We will now see which cunning is the stronger—the cunning of the priest or the cunning of the woman. Elizabeth, pray for me. I go to the king; and you will either see me free and happy, or never again.”

She imprinted a passionate kiss on Elizabeth’s lips, and hurriedly left the chamber.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### CHESS-PLAY.

It was many days since the king had been as well as he was to-day. For a long time he had not enjoyed such refreshing sleep as on the day when he signed the warrant for the queen’s imprisonment. But he thought nothing at all about it. Sleep seemed to have obliterated all recollection of it from his memory. Like an anecdote which you listen to, and smile at for the moment, but soon forget, so had the whole occurrence vanished again from him. It was an anecdote of the moment—a transient interlude—nothing further.

The king had slept well, and he had no care for anything else. He stretched himself, and lay lounging on his couch, thinking with rapture how fine it would be if he could enjoy such sweet and refreshing repose every day, and if no bad dreams and no fear would frighten away sleep from his eyes. He felt very serene and very good-humored; and had any one now come to beg a favor of the king, he would have granted it in the first joy after such invigorating sleep. But he was alone; no one was with him; he must repress his gracious desires. But no. Was it not as though something were stirring and breathing behind the curtains?



The king threw back the curtains, and a soft smile flitted over his features; for before his bed sat the queen. There she sat with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes, and greeted him with a roguish smile.

"Ah, Kate, it is you!" cried the king. "Well, now, I understand how it happened that I have had such a sound and refreshing sleep! You stood by as my good angel, and scared the pains and bad dreams away from my couch."

And as he said this, he reached out his hand and tenderly stroked her velvet cheek. He did not at all recollect that he had already, as it were, devoted that charming head to the scaffold, and that in a few hours more those bright eyes were to behold naught but the night of the dungeon. Sleep, as we have said, had lulled to rest also the recollection of this; and the evil thoughts had not yet awoken again in him. To sign an order of arrest or a death-warrant was with the king such a usual and every-day matter, that it constituted no epoch in his life, and neither burdened him with troubles of conscience nor made his heart shudder and tremble.

But Catharine thought of it, and as the king's hand stroked her cheek, it was as though death were just then touching her, never again to release her. However, she overcame this momentary horror, and had the courage to preserve her serene and innocent air.

"You call me your good angel, my husband," said she, with a smile; "but yet I am nothing more than your little Puck, who bustles about you, and now and then makes you laugh with his drolleries."

"And a dear little Puck you are, Katie," cried the king, who always gazed upon his wife's rosy and fresh countenance with real satisfaction.

"Then I will prove myself this very day your Puck, and allow you no more repose on your couch," said she, as she made a mock effort to raise him up. "Do you know, my husband, why I came here? A butterfly has tapped at my window. Only think now, a butterfly in winter! That

betokens that this time winter is spring; and the clerk of the weather above there has confounded January with March. The butterfly has invited us, king; and only see! the sun is winking into the window to us, and says we have but to come out, as he has already dried the walks in the garden below, and called forth a little grass on the plat. And your rolling chair stands all ready, my lord and husband, and your Puck, as you see, has already put on her furs, and clad herself in armor against the winter, which, however, is not there!"

"Well, then, help me, my dearest Puck, so that I can arise, and obey the command of the butterfly and the sun and my lovely wife," cried the king, as he put his arm around Catharine's neck, and slowly raised himself from the couch.

She busied herself about him with officious haste; she put her arm tenderly on his shoulder and supported him, and properly arranged for him the gold chain, which had slipped out of place on his doublet, and playfully plaited the lace ruff which was about his neck.

"Is it your order, my husband, that your servants come?—the master of ceremonies, who, without doubt, awaits your beck in the anteroom—the lord bishop—who awhile ago made such a black-looking face at me? But how! my husband, your face, too, is now in an eclipse? How? Has your Puck perchance said something to put you out of tune?"

"No, indeed!" said the king, gloomily; but he avoided meeting her smiling glance and looking in her rosy face.

The evil thoughts had again awoken in him; and he now remembered the warrant of arrest that he had given Gardiner. He remembered it, and he regretted it. For she was so fair and lovely—his young queen; she understood so well by her jests to smooth away care from his brow, and affright vexation from his soul—she was such an agreeable and sprightly pastime, such a refreshing means of driving away *ennui*.



Not for her sake did he regret what he had done, but only on his own account. From selfishness alone, he repented having issued that order for the queen's imprisonment. Catharine observed him. Her glance, sharpened by inward fear, read his thoughts on his brow, and understood the sigh which involuntarily arose from his breast. She again seized courage; she might succeed in turning away by a smile the sword that hung over her head.

"Come, my lord and husband," said she, cheerfully, "the sun beckons to us, and the trees shake their heads indignantly because we are not yet there."

"Yes, come, Kate," said the king, rousing himself with an effort from his brown study; "come, we will go down into God's free air. Perhaps He is nearer to us there, and may illuminate us with good thoughts and wholesome resolutions. Come, Kate."

The queen gave him her arm, and, supported on it, the king advanced a few steps. But suddenly Catharine stood still; and as the king fastened on her his inquiring look, she blushed and cast down her eyes.

"Well!" asked the king, "why do you linger?"

"Sire, I was considering your words; and what you say about the sun and wholesome resolutions has touched my heart and startled my conscience. My husband, you are right; God is there without, and I dare not venture to behold the sun, which is God's eye, before I have made my confession and received absolution. Sire, I am a great sinner, and my conscience gives me no rest. Will you be my confessor, and listen to me?"

The king sighed. "Ah," thought he, "she is hurrying to destruction, and by her own confession of guilt she will make it impossible for me to hold her guiltless!"

"Speak!" said he aloud.

"First," said she, with downcast eyes—"first, I must confess to you that I have to-day deceived you, my lord and king. Vanity and sinful pride enticed me to this; and childish anger made me consummate what vanity

whispered to me. But I repent, my king; I repent from the bottom of my soul, and I swear to you, my husband—yes, I swear to you by all that is sacred to me, that it is the first and only time that I have deceived you. And never will I venture to do it again, for it is a dismal and awful feeling to stand before you with a guilty conscience."

"And in what have you deceived us, Kate?" asked the king; and his voice trembled.

Catharine drew from her dress a small roll of paper, and, humbly bowing, handed it to the king. "Take and see for yourself, my husband," said she.

With hurried hand the king opened the paper, and then looked in utter astonishment, now at its contents, and now at the blushing face of the queen.

"What!" said he, "you give me a pawn from the chess-board! What does that mean?"

"That means," said she, in a tone of utter contrition—"that means, that I stole it from you, and thereby cheated you out of your victory. Oh, pardon me, my husband! but I could no longer endure to lose always, and I was afraid you would no more allow me the pleasure of playing with you, when you perceived what a weak and contemptible antagonist I am. And behold, this little pawn was my enemy! It stood near my queen and threatened her with check, while it discovered check to my king from your bishop. You were just going to make this move, which was to ruin me, when Bishop Gardiner entered. You turned away your eyes and saluted him. You were not looking on the game. Oh, my lord and husband, the temptation was too alluring and seductive; and I yielded to it. Softly I took the pawn from the board, and slipped it into my pocket. When you looked again at the game, you seemed surprised at first; but your magnanimous and lofty spirit had no suspicion of my base act; so you innocently played on; and so I won the game of chess. Oh, my king, will you pardon me, and not be angry with me?"



The king broke out into a loud laugh, and looked with an expression of tenderness at Catharine, who stood before him with downcast eyes, abashed and blushing. This sight only redoubled his merriment, and made him again and again roar out with laughter.

"And is that all your crime, Kate?" asked he, at length, drying his eyes. "You have stolen a pawn from me—this is your first and only deception?"

"Is it not indeed great enough, sire? Did I not purloin it because I was so high-minded as to want to win a game of chess from you? Is not the whole court even now acquainted with my splendid luck? And does it not know that I have been the victor to-day, whilst yet I was not entitled to be so—whilst I deceived you so shamefully?"

"Now, verily," said the king, solemnly, "happy are the men who are not worse deceived by their wives than you have deceived me to-day; and happy are the women whose confessions are so pure and innocent as yours have been to-day! Do but lift up your eyes again, my Katie; that sin is forgiven you; and by God and by your king it shall be accounted to you as a virtue."

He laid his hand on her head, as if in blessing, and gazed at her long and silently. Then, said he, laughingly: "According to this, then, my Kate, I should have been the victor of to-day, and not have lost that game of chess."

"No," said she, dolefully, "I must have lost it, if I had not stolen the pawn."

Again the king laughed. Catharine said, earnestly: "Do but believe me, my husband, Bishop Gardiner alone is the cause of my fall. Because he was by, I did not want to lose. My pride revolted to think that this haughty and arrogant priest was to be witness of my defeat. In mind, I already saw the cold and contemptuous smile with which he would look down on me, the vanquished; and my heart rose in rebellion at the thought of being humbled before him. And now I have arrived at the second part of my

fault which I want to confess to you to-day. Sire, I must acknowledge another great fault to you. I have grievously offended against you to-day, in that I contradicted you, and withstood your wise and pious words. Ah, my husband, it was not done to spite you, but only to vex and annoy the haughty priest. For I must confess to you, my king, I hate this Bishop of Winchester—ay, yet more—I have a dread of him; for my foreboding heart tells me that he is my enemy, that he is watching each of my looks, each of my words, so that he can make from them a noose to strangle me. He is the evil destiny that creeps up behind me and would one day certainly destroy me, if your beneficent hand and your almighty arm did not protect me. Oh, when I behold him, my husband, I would always gladly fly to your heart, and say to you: 'Protect me, my king, and have compassion on me! Have faith in me and love me; for if you do not, I am lost! The evil fiend is there to destroy me.'"

And, as she thus spoke, she clung affectionately to the king's side, and, leaning her head on his breast, looked up to him with a glance of tender entreaty and touching devotion.

The king bent down and kissed her brow. "Oh, *sancta simplicitas*," softly murmured he—"she knows not how nigh she is to the truth, and how much reason she has for her evil forebodings!" Then he asked aloud: "So, Kate, you believe that Gardiner hates you?"

"I do not believe it, I know it!" said she. "He wounds me whenever he can; and though his wounds are made only with pins, that comes only from this, that he is afraid that you might discover it if he drew a dagger on me, whilst you might not notice the pin with which he secretly wounds me. And what was his coming here to-day other than a new assault on me? He knows very well—and I have never made a secret of it—that I am an enemy to this Roman Catholic religion the pope of which has dared to hurl his ban against my lord and husband;



and that I seek with lively interest to be instructed as to the doctrine and religion of the so-called reformers."

"They say that you are a heretic," said the king, gravely.

"Gardiner says that! But if I am so, you are so too, my king; for your belief is mine. If I am so, so too is Cranmer, the noble Archbishop of Canterbury; for he is my spiritual adviser and helper. But Gardiner wishes that I were a heretic, and he wants me likewise to appear so to you. See, my husband, why it was that he laid those eight death-warrants before you awhile ago. There were eight, all heretics, whom you were to condemn—not a single papist among them; and yet I know that the prisons are full of papists, who, in the fanaticism of their persecuted faith, have spoken words just as worthy of punishment as those unfortunate ones whom you were to-day to send from life to death by a stroke of your pen. Sire, I should have prayed you just as fervently, just as suppliantly, had they been papists whom you were to sentence to death! But Gardiner wanted a proof of my heresy; and therefore he selected eight heretics, for whom I was to oppose your hard decree."

"It is true," said the king, thoughtfully; "there was not a single papist among them! But tell me, Kate—are you really a heretic, and an adversary of your king?"

With a sweet smile she looked deep into his eyes, and humbly crossed her arms over her beautiful breast. "Your adversary!" whispered she. "Are you not my husband and my lord? Was not the woman made to be subject to the man? The man was created after the likeness of God, and the woman after the likeness of man. So the woman is only the man's second self; and he must have compassion on her in love; and he must give her of his spirit, and influence her understanding from his understanding. Therefore your duty is to instruct me, my husband; and mine is, to learn of you. And of all the women in the world, to no one is this duty made so easy

as to me; for God has been gracious to me and given me as my husband a king whose prudence, wisdom, and learning are the wonder of all the world." \*

"What a sweet little flatterer you are, Kate!" said the king, with a smile; "and with what a charming voice you want to conceal the truth from us! The truth is, that you yourself are a very learned little body, who has no need at all to learn anything from others, but who would be well able to instruct others." †

"Oh, if it is so, as you say," cried Catharine, "well, then would I teach the whole world to love my king as I do, and to be subject to him in humility, faithfulness, and obedience, as I am."

And as she thus spoke, she threw both her arms about the king's neck, and leaned her head with a languishing expression upon his breast.

The king kissed her, and pressed her fast to his heart. He thought no longer of the danger that was hovering over Catharine's head; he thought only that he loved her, and that life would be very desolate, very tedious and sad without her.

"And now, my husband," said Catharine, gently disengaging herself from him—"now, since I have confessed to you and received absolution from you—now let us go down into the garden, so that God's bright sun may shine into our hearts fresh and glad. Come, my husband, your chair is ready; and the bees and the butterflies, the gnats and the flies, have already practised a hymn, with which they are going to greet you, my husband."

Laughing and jesting, she drew him along to the adjoining room, where the courtiers and the rolling-chair were standing ready; and the king mounted his triumphal car, and allowed himself to be rolled through the carpeted

\* The queen's own words, as they have been given by all historical writers. See on this point Burnet, vol. i. p. 84; Tytler, p. 413; Larrey's "Histoire d'Angleterre," vol. ii. p. 201; Leti, vol. i. p. 154.

† Historical. The king's own words.



corridors, and down the staircases, transformed into broad inclined planes of marble, into the garden.

The air had the freshness of winter and the warmth of spring. The grass like a diligent weaver was already beginning to weave a carpet over the black level of the square; and already here and there a tiny blossom, curious and bashful, was peeping out and appeared to be smiling in astonishment at its own premature existence. The sun seemed so warm and bright; the heavens were so blue! At the king's side went Catharine, with such rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes. Those eyes were always directed to her husband; and her charming prattle was to the king like the melodious song of birds, and made his heart leap for pleasure and delight. But how? What noise all at once drowned Catharine's sweet prattle? And what was it that flashed up there at the end of that large alley which the royal pair with their suite had just entered?

It was the noise of soldiers advancing; and shining helmets and coats-of-mail flashed in the sunlight.

One band of soldiers held the outlet from the alley; another advanced up it in close order. At their head were seen striding along Gardiner and Earl Douglas, and at their side the lieutenant of the Tower.

The king's countenance assumed a lowering and angry expression and his cheeks were suffused with crimson. With the quickness of youth he rose from his chair, and, raised to his full height, he looked with flaming eyes at the procession.

The queen seized his hand and pressed it to her breast. "Ah," said she, with a low whisper, "protect me, my husband, for fear already overpowers me again! It is my enemy—it is Gardiner—that comes, and I tremble."

"You shall no longer tremble before him, Kate!" said the king. "Woe to them, that dare make King Henry's consort tremble! I will speak with Gardiner."

And almost roughly pushing aside the queen, the king,

utterly heedless in his violent excitement of the pain of his foot, went in a quick pace to meet the advancing troop.

He ordered them by his gesture to halt, and called Gardiner and Douglas to him. "What want you here? And what means this strange array?" asked he, in a rough tone.

The two courtiers stared at him with looks of amazement, and durst not answer him.

"Well!" asked the king, with ever-rising wrath, "will you at length tell me by what right you intrude into my garden with an armed host—specially at the same hour that I am here with my consort? Verily, there is no sufficient excuse for such a gross violation of the reverence which you owe your king and master; and I marvel, my lord master of ceremonies, that you did not seek to prevent this indecorum!"

Earl Douglas muttered a few words of apology, which the king did not understand, or did not want to understand.

"The duty of a master of ceremonies is to protect his king from every annoyance, and you, Earl Douglas, offer it to me yourself. Perchance you want thereby to show that you are weary of your office. Well, then, my lord, I dismiss you from it, and that your presence may not remind me of this morning's transaction, you will leave the court and London! Farewell, my lord!"

Earl Douglas, turning pale and trembling, staggered a few steps backward, and gazed at the king with astonishment. He wanted to speak, but Henry, with a commanding wave of the hand, bade him be silent.

"And now for you, my lord bishop!" said the king, and his eyes were turned on Gardiner with an expression so wrathful and contemptuous, that he turned pale and looked down to the ground. "What means this strange train with which the priest of God approaches his royal master to-day? And under what impulse of Christian love are you going to hold to-day a heretic hunt in the garden of your king?"



"Sire," said Gardiner, completely beside himself, "your majesty well knows why I come; it was at your majesty's command that I with Earl Douglas and the lieutenant of the Tower came, in order to——"

"Dare not to speak further!" yelled the king, who became still more angry because Gardiner would not understand him and comprehend the altered state of his mind. "How dare you make a pretence of my commands, whilst I, full of just amazement, question you as to the cause of your appearance? That is to say, you want to charge your king with falsehood. You want to excuse yourself by accusing me. Ah, my worthy lord bishop, this time you are thwarted in your plan, and I disavow you and your foolish attempt. No! there is nobody here whom you shall arrest; and, by the holy mother of God, were your eyes not blind, you would have seen that here, where the king is taking an airing with his consort, there could be no one whom these catchpolls had to look for! The presence of the royal majesty is like the presence of God; it dispenses happiness and peace about it; and whoever is touched by his glory, is graced and sanctified thereby."

"But, your majesty," screamed Gardiner, whom anger and disappointed hope had made forgetful of all considerations, "you wanted me to arrest the queen; you yourself gave me the order for it; and now when I come to execute your will—now you repudiate me."

The king uttered a yell of rage, and with lifted arm moved some steps toward Gardiner.

But suddenly he felt his arm held back. It was Catharine, who had hurried up to the king. "Oh, my husband," said she, in a low whisper, "whatever he may have done, spare him! Still he is a priest of the Lord; and so let his sacred robe protect him, though perchance his deeds condemn him!"

"Ah, do you plead for him?" cried the king. "Really, my poor wife, you suspect not how little ground you have

to pity him, and to beg my mercy for him.\* But you are right. We will respect his cassock, and think no more of what a haughty and intriguing man is wrapped in it.—But beware, priest, that you do not again remind me of that. My wrath would then inevitably strike you; and I should have as little mercy for you as you say I ought to show to other evil-doers. And inasmuch as you are a priest, be penetrated with a sense of the gravity of your office and the sacredness of your calling. Your episcopal see is at Winchester, and I think your duties call you thither. We no longer need you, for the noble Archbishop of Canterbury is coming back to us, and will have to fulfil the duties of his office near us and the queen. Farewell!"

He turned his back on Gardiner, and, supported on Catharine's arm, returned to his rolling-chair.

"Kate," said he, "just now a lowering cloud stood in your sky, but, thanks to your smile and your innocent face, it has passed harmlessly over. Methinks we still owe you special thanks for this; and we would like to show you that by some office of love. Is there nothing that would give you special delight, Kate?"

"Oh, yes," said she, with fervor. "Two great desires burn in my heart."

"Then name them, Kate; and, by the mother of God, if it is in the power of a king to fulfil them, I will do it."

Catharine seized his hand and pressed it to her heart. "Sire," said she, "they wanted to have you sign eight death-warrants to-day. Oh, my husband, make of these eight criminals eight happy, thankful subjects; teach them to love that king whom they have reviled—teach their children, their wives and mothers to pray for you, whilst you restore life and freedom to these fathers, these sons and husbands, and while you, great and merciful, like Deity, pardon them."

"So shall it be!" cried the king, cheerfully. "Our hand shall have to-day no other work than to rest in yours;

\* The king's own words.—See Leti, vol. i, p. 132.



and we will spare it from making these eight strokes of the pen. The eight evil-doers are pardoned; and they shall be free this very day."

With an exclamation of rapturous delight Catharine pressed Henry's hand to her lips, and her face shone with pure happiness.

"And your second wish?" asked the king.

"My second wish," said she, with a smile, "pleads for the freedom of a poor prisoner—for the freedom of a human heart, sire."

The king laughed. "A human heart? Does that then run about on the street, so that it can be caught and made a prisoner of?"

"Sire, you have found it, and incarcerated it in your daughter's bosom. You want to put Elizabeth's heart in fetters, and by an unnatural law compel her to renounce her freedom of choice. Only think—to want to bid a woman's heart, before she can love, to inquire first about the genealogical tree, and to look at the coat-of-arms before she notices the man!"

"Oh, women, women, what foolish children you are, though!" cried the king, laughingly. "The question is about thrones, and you think about your hearts! But come, Kate, you shall still further explain that to me; and we will not take back our word, for we have given it you from a free and glad heart."

He took the queen's arm, and, supported on it, walked slowly up the alley with her. The lords and ladies of the court followed them in silence and at a respectful distance; and no one suspected that this woman, who was stepping along so proud and magnificent, had but just now escaped an imminent peril of her life; that this man, who was leaning on her arm with such devoted tenderness, had but a few hours before resolved on her destruction.\*

\* All this plot instigated by Gardiner against the queen is, in minutest details, historically true, and is found substantially the same in all historical works.

And whilst chatting confidentially together they both wandered through the avenues, two others with drooping head and pale face left the royal castle, which was to be to them henceforth a lost paradise. Sullen spite and raging hate were in their hearts, but yet they were obliged to endure in silence; they were obliged to smile and to seem harmless, in order not to prepare a welcome feast for the malice of the court. They felt the spiteful looks of all these courtiers, although they passed by them with downcast eyes. They imagined they heard their malicious whispers, their derisive laughter; and it pierced their hearts like the stab of a dagger.

At length they had surmounted it—at length the palace lay behind them, and they were at least free to pour out in words the agony that consumed them—free to be able to break out into bitter execrations, into curses and lamentations.

"Lost! all is lost!" said Earl Douglas to himself in a hollow voice. "I am thwarted in all my plans. I have sacrificed to the Church my life, my means, ay, even my daughter, and it has all been in vain. And, like a beggar, I now stand on the street forsaken and without comfort; and our holy mother the Church will no longer heed the son who loved her and sacrificed himself for her, since he was so unfortunate, and his sacrifice unavailing."

"Despair not!" said Gardiner, solemnly. "Clouds gather above us; but they are dispersed again. And after the day of storm, comes again the day of light. Our day also will come, my friend. Now, we go hence, our heads strewn with ashes, and bowed at heart; but, believe me, we shall one day come again with shining face and exultant heart; and the flaming sword of godly wrath will glitter in our hands, and a purple robe will enfold us, dyed in the blood of heretics whom we offer up to the Lord our God as a well-pleasing sacrifice. God spares us for a better time; and our banishment, believe me, friend, is



but a refuge that God has prepared for us this evil time which we are approaching."

"You speak of an evil time, and nevertheless you hope, your highness?" asked Douglas, gloomily.

"And nevertheless I hope!" said Gardiner, with a strange and horrible smile, and, bending down closer to Douglas, he whispered: "the king has only a few days more to live. He does not suspect how near he is to his death, and nobody has the courage to tell him. But his physician has confided it to me. His vital forces are consumed, and death stands already before his door to throttle him."

"And when he is dead," said Earl Douglas, shrugging his shoulders, "his son Edward will be king, and those heretical Seymours will control the helm of state! Call you that hope, your highness?"

"I call it so."

"Do you not know that Edward, young as he is, is nevertheless a fanatical adherent of the heretical doctrine, and at the same time a furious opponent of the Church in which alone is salvation?"

"I know it, but I know also that Edward is a feeble boy; and there is current in our Church a holy prophecy which predicts that his reign is only of short duration. God only knows what his death will be, but the Church has often before seen her enemies die a sudden death. Death has been often before this the most effective ally of our holy mother the Church. Believe me, then, my son, and hope, for I tell you Edward's rule will be of short duration. And after him *she* will ascend the throne, the noble and devout Mary, the rigid Catholic, who hates heretics as much as Edward loves them. Oh, friend, when Mary ascends the throne, we shall rise from our humiliation, and the dominion will be ours. Then will all England become, as it were, a single great temple, and the fagot-piles about the stake are the altars on which we will consume the heretics, and their shrieks of agony are the holy psalms which we will make them strike up to the

honor of God and His holy Church. Hope for this time, for I tell you it will soon come."

"If *you* say so, your highness, then it will come to pass," said Douglas, significantly. "I will then hope and wait. I will save myself from evil days in Scotland, and wait for the good."

"And I go, as this king by the wrath of God has commanded, to my episcopal seat. The wrath of God will soon call Henry hence. May his dying hour be full of torment, and may the Holy Father's curse be realized and fulfilled in him! Farewell! We go with palms of peace forced on us; but we will return with the flaming sword, and our hands will be dripping with heretic blood."

They once more shook hands and silently departed, and before evening came on they had both left London.\*

\* Gardiner's prophecy was soon fulfilled. A few days after Gardiner had fallen into disgrace Henry, the Eighth died, and his son Edward, yet a minor, ascended the throne. But his rule was of brief duration. After a reign of scarcely six years, he died a youth of the age of sixteen years, and his sister Mary, called the *Catholic*, ascended the throne. Her first act was to release Gardiner, who under Edward's reign had been confined as a prisoner in the Tower, and to appoint him her minister, and later, to the place of lord chancellor. He was one of the most furious persecutors of the Reformers. Once he said at a council in the presence of the bigoted queen: "These heretics have a soul so black that it can be washed clean only in their own blood." He it was, too, who urged the queen to such severe and odious measures against the Princess Elizabeth, and caused her to be a second time declared a bastard and unworthy of succeeding to the throne. When Mary died, Gardiner performed, in Westminster Abbey, where she was entombed, the service for the dead in the presence of her successor, Queen Elizabeth. Gardiner's discourse was an enthusiastic eulogium of the deceased queen, and he set forth, as her special merit, that she hated the heretics so ardently and had so many of them executed. He closed with an invective against the Protestants, in which he so little spared the young queen, and spoke of her in such injurious terms, that he was that very day committed to prison.—Leti, vol. i, p. 314.



A short time after this eventful walk in the garden of Whitehall, the queen entered the apartments of the Princess Elizabeth, who hastened to meet her with a burst of joy, and clasped her wildly in her arms.

"Saved!" whispered she. "The danger is overcome, and again you are the mighty queen, the adored wife!"

"And I have you to thank that I am so, princess! Without that warrant of arrest which you brought me, I was lost. Oh, Elizabeth, but what a martyrdom it was! To smile and jest, whilst my heart trembled with dread and horror; to appear innocent and unembarrassed, whilst it seemed to me as if I heard already the whiz of the axe that was about to strike my neck! Oh, my God, I passed through the agonies and the dread of a whole lifetime in that one hour! My soul has been harassed till it is wearied to death, and my strength is exhausted. I could weep, weep continually over this wretched, deceitful world, in which to wish right and to do good avail nothing; but in which you must dissemble and lie, deceive and disguise yourself, if you do not want to fall a victim to wickedness and mischief. But ah, Elizabeth, even my tears I dare shed only in secret, for a queen has no right to be melancholy. She must seem ever cheerful, ever happy and contented; and only God and the still, silent night know her sighs and her tears."

"And you may let me also see them, queen," said Elizabeth, heartily; "for you well know you may trust and rely on me."

Catharine kissed her fervently. "You have done me a great service to-day, and I have come," said she, "to thank you, not with sounding words only, but by deeds. Elizabeth, your wish will be fulfilled. The king will repeal the law which was to compel you to give your hand only to a husband of equal birth."

"Oh," cried Elizabeth, with flashing eyes, "then I shall, perhaps, some day be able to make him whom I love a king."

Catharine smiled. "You have a proud and ambitious heart," said she. "God has endowed you with extraordinary ability. Cultivate it and seek to increase it; for my prophetic heart tells me that you are destined to become, one day, Queen of England.\* But who knows whether then you will still wish to elevate him whom you now love, to be your husband? A queen, as you will be, sees with other eyes than those of a young, inexperienced maiden. Perchance I may not have done right in moving the king to alter this law; for I am not acquainted with the man that you love; and who knows whether he is worthy that you should bestow on him your heart, so innocent and pure?"

Elizabeth threw both her arms about Catharine's neck, and clung tenderly to her. "Oh," said she, "he would be worthy to be loved even by you, Catharine; for he is the noblest and handsomest cavalier in the whole world; and though he is no king, yet he is a king's brother-in-law, and will some day be a king's uncle."

Catharine felt her heart, as it were, convulsed, and a slight tremor ran through her frame. "And am I not to learn his name?" asked she.

"Yes, I will tell you it now; for now there is no longer danger in knowing it. The name of him whom I love, queen, is Thomas Seymour."

Catharine uttered a scream, and pushed Elizabeth passionately away from her heart. "Thomas Seymour?" cried she, in a menacing tone. "What! do you dare love Thomas Seymour?"

"And why should I not dare?" asked the young girl in astonishment. "Why should I not give him my heart, since, thanks to your intercession, I am no longer bound to choose a husband of equal birth? Is not Thomas Seymour one of the first of this land? Does not all England look on him with pride and tenderness? Does not every woman to whom he deigns a look, feel herself honored? Does

\* Catharine's own words.—See Leti, vol. i, p. 172.



not the king himself smile and feel more pleased at heart, when Thomas Seymour, that young, bold, and spirited hero, stands by his side?"

"You are right!" said Catharine, whose heart every one of these enthusiastic words lacerated like the stab of a dagger—"yes, you are right. He is worthy of being loved by you—and you could hit upon no better choice. It was only the first surprise that made me see things otherwise than they are. Thomas Seymour is the brother of a queen: why then should he not also be the husband of a royal princess?"

With a bashful blush, Elizabeth hid her smiling face in Catharine's bosom. She did not see with what an expression of alarm and agony the queen observed her; how her lips were convulsively compressed, and her cheeks covered with a death-like pallor.

"And he?" asked she, in a low tone. "Does Thomas Seymour love you?"

Elizabeth raised her head and looked at the questioner in amazement. "How!" said she. "Is it possible, then, to love, if you are not loved?"

"You are right," sighed Catharine. "One must be very humble and silly to be able to do that."

"My God! how pale you are, queen!" cried Elizabeth, who just now noticed Catharine's pale face. "Your features are distorted; your lips tremble. My God! what does this mean?"

"It is nothing!" said Catharine, with a smile full of agony. "The excitement and alarm of to-day have exhausted my strength. That is all. Besides, a new grief threatens us, of which you as yet know nothing. The king is ill. A sudden dizziness seized him, and made him fall almost lifeless at my side. I came to bring you the king's message; now duty calls me to my husband's sick-bed. Farewell, Elizabeth."

She waved a good-by to her with her hand, and with hurried step left the room. She summoned up courage to

conceal the agonies of her soul, and to pass proud and stately through the halls. To the courtiers bowing before her, she would still be the queen, and no one should suspect what agony was torturing her within like flames of fire. But at last arrived at her boudoir—at last sure of being overheard and observed by no one—she was no longer the queen, but only the agonized, passionate woman.

She sank on her knees, and cried, with a heart-rending wail of anguish: "My God, my God, grant that I may become mad, so that I may no longer know that he has forsaken me!"

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE CATASTROPHE.

AFTER days of secret torture and hidden tears, after nights of sobbing anguish and wailing sorrow, Catharine had at last attained to inward peace; she had at last taken a firm and decisive resolution.

The king was sick unto death; and however much she had suffered and endured from him, still he was her husband; and she would not stand by his deathbed as a perjured and deceitful woman; she would not be constrained to cast down her eyes before the failing gaze of the dying king. She would renounce her love—that love, which, however, had been as pure and chaste as a maiden's prayer—that love, which was as unapproachably distant as the blush of morn, and yet had stood above her so vast and brilliant, and had irradiated the gloomy pathway of her life with celestial light.

She would make the greatest of sacrifices; she would give her lover to another. Elizabeth loved him. Catharine would not investigate and thoroughly examine the