



Lady Grey.

KING HENRY 6TH ACT 3. SC. 2.

New York: D. Appleton & Co. 246 & 248 Broadway.

Lady Grey, widow of the Duke of Clarence, sister of Edward IV. of England, shares with Queen Margaret the custody of the young King, and by her influence is made the step-mother of the Duke of Gloucester, who is another name for Richard III.

The Duke of Gloucester, in a scene of great pathos, is made to declare his love for Lady Grey, and to make the young King his heir, and to make himself for a king.

L. Grey. What can I do for you?
 And come some other time to see me.
 I. Grey. I'll come when I can break away;
 But I'll be here to-morrow to see you now;
 And what your pleasure is shall satisfy me.
 L. Grey. An easy task; 'tis but to love a king.



LADY GREY.

LADY ELIZABETH GREY, widow of Sir John Grey, and wife of Edward IV. of England, shares with Queen Margaret the sorrows of one tragedy, and, by her sufferings at the hands of the monster Duke of Gloster, constitutes a feature of melancholy interest in another.

She first appears as the widow Grey, pleading to King Edward for the restitution of certain lands which "were seized on by the conqueror," when her husband was slain at the battle of Saint Albans. In this interview the lady conducts herself with so much grace and discretion, that, notwithstanding the Earl of Warwick is negotiating for his sovereign at the French court, for the hand of the Lady Bona, sister of Louis XI., Edward falls in love with her, and makes the granting of her suit dependent on her acceptance of himself for a husband :

K. Edw. Widow, we will consider of your suit ;
And come some other time to know our mind.

L. Grey. Right gracious lord, I cannot brook delay ;
May it please your highness to resolve me now ;
And what your pleasure is shall satisfy me.

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K. Edw. An easy task ; 'tis but to love a king.

L. Grey. That's soon perform'd, because I am a subject.

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K. Edw. Ay, but I fear me, in another sense.

What love, think'st thou, I sue so much to get?

L. Grey. My love till death, my humble thanks, my prayers:

That love which virtue begs and virtue grants.

K. Edw. No, by my troth, I did not mean such love.

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L. Grey. My mind will never grant what I perceive

Your highness aims at, if I aim aright.

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K. Edw. Why, then thou shalt not have thy husband's lands.

L. Grey. Why, then mine honesty shall be my dower;

For by that loss I will not purchase them.

K. Edw. Therein thou wrong'st thy children mightily.

L. Grey. Herein your highness wrongs both them and me.

But, mighty lord, this merry inclination

Accords not with the sadness of my suit;

Please you dismiss me either with ay or no.

K. Edw. Ay; if thou wilt say ay to my request:

No; if thou dost say no to my demand.

L. Grey. Then no, my lord. My suit is at an end.

K. Edw. [*Aside.*] Her looks do argue her replete with
modesty;

Her words do show her wit incomparable.

All her perfections challenge sovereignty:

One way or other she is for a king;

And she shall be my love, or else my queen.—

Say that King Edward take thee for his queen?

L. Grey. 'Tis better said than done, my gracious lord:

I am a subject fit to jest withal,

But far unfit to be a sovereign.

K. Edw. Sweet widow, by my state I swear to thee,

I speak no more than what my soul intends;

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Answer no more, for thou shalt be my queen.

And so the poor lady—a retiring, tender-hearted gentlewoman,
fitted only for the secluded yet not undignified estate to which for-
tune had called her—becomes Edward's crowned queen, a very

lamb tossed to the ravening wolves of that reign of terror. Where
Margaret, of iron nerves, dauntless will, and almost equal ferocity,
has been trodden under foot, what better fate can be hoped for
this gentle mother and modest housewife, who has ignorantly dared
to assume a position so perilous?

"Small joy," indeed, has she "in being England's queen"—
"baited, scorn'd, and storm'd at," by her fierce brothers-in-law dur-
ing her husband's life, and after his death their unspared victim.
Not only does Richard usurp the throne, of which he is lord-pro-
tector during the minority of his nephew, but the royal youngling
and his brother are, by his order, murdered in the Tower.

The wretched mother's farewell exhortation to the prison
which contains her infant sons, from whom she is debarred, has
been justly pronounced one of the most beautiful passages in the
play:

Q. Eliz. Stay yet; look back, with me, unto the Tower.—

Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes,

Whom envy hath immured within your walls!

Rough cradle for such little pretty ones!

Rude ragged nurse! old sullen play-fellow

For tender princes, use my babies well!

So foolish sorrow bids your stones farewell.

Were the wooer any other than the arch-fiend Richard himself,
we should protest against the possibility that even so weak a wo-
man, as this queen in spite of herself, could consent to wed her
daughter to the crook-backed villain; but there is no resisting his
wily tongue—she falls into the snare with dreadful compliance;
Heaven alone saved the helpless young girl from so fatal a con-
summation:

K. Rich. Be not so hasty to confound my meaning;

I mean that with my soul I love thy daughter,

And do intend to make her queen of England.

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The king that calls your beauteous daughter wife,
Familiarly shall call thy Dorset brother;
Again shall you be mother to a king,
And all the ruins of distressful times
Repair'd with double riches of content.
What! we have many goodly days to see;
The liquid drops of tears that you have shed
Shall come again, transform'd to orient pearl,
Advantaging their loan with interest
Of ten times double gain of happiness.
Go, then, my mother—to thy daughter go;
Make bold her bashful years with your experience;
Prepare her ears to hear a wooer's tale;
Put in her tender heart the aspiring flame
Of golden sovereignty. * * * *

Q. Eliz. What were I best to say? her father's brother
Would be her lord? Or shall I say her uncle?
Or he that slew her brothers, and her uncles?
Under what title shall I woo for thee,
That God, the law, my honor, and her love
Can make seem pleasing to her tender years?

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K. Rich. As I intend to prosper, and repent!
So thrive I in my dangerous attempt
Of hostile arms! myself myself confound!
Heaven, and fortune, bar me happy hours!
Day, yield me not thy light; nor, night, thy rest!
Be opposite all planets of good luck
To my proceeding! if, with pure heart's love,
Immaculate devotion, holy thoughts,
I tender not thy beauteous princely daughter!

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Therefore, dear mother, (I must call you so,)
Be the attorney of my love to her.
Plead what I will be, not what I have been;
Not my deserts, but what I will deserve;

Urge the necessity and state of times,
And be not peevish found in great designs.

Q. Eliz. Shall I be tempted of the devil thus?

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Shall I go with my daughter to thy will?

K. Rich. And be a happy mother by the deed.

Q. Eliz. I go.—Write to me very shortly,
And you shall understand from me her mind.

K. Rich. Bear her my true love's kiss, and so farewell.

[*Kissing her.* Exit *Q. ELIZABETH.*

Relenting fool, and shallow, changing—woman!