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The King's Favourite

Marjorie Bowen

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The Waxen Woman

hand the figure of a small waxen woman.

The oarsmen proceeded slowly against the fast-running tide, while the old man, comfortably dressed in a furred mantle, busied himself with the small waxen image that he was shaping precisely and delicately to the likeness of a naked woman. Out of his pockets fell the ends of pieces of silk, satin, laces and braid that were intended to clothe the little creature: now and then the old man glanced up at

Three men sat in a boat on the Thames, proceeding along the rough river towards Chelsea. Two were rowing; the third, whose white beard was blowing in the October wind, sat at ease holding in his

the quickly-changing sky.

"A bold, inspiring day," he remarked to one of his companions, a dwarf. "Fine, intemperate weather, eh, Franklin?"

The other replied on a note of sad complaint:

"You should hire stout watermen, Doctor Forman. Why must your toing and fro-ing put us to such labour?"

They passed some villas and pleasure-houses, some old-fashioned with crooked chimneys and ornate gables and turretings, some in the new classic Italian style. The willows stretched their long yellow and green tresses on to the drenched lawns; a stray beam of sunshine picked out the gilt of the weather-cock of a distant church or the golden ball on a summer-house standing amid the tattered flower-beds of a river-side garden. Bright flowers trailed broken petals

across the fresh English grass; the muted white of swans showed where they rocked on the reaches of the cloudy river. The wind gathered force and blew away the rain; boughs laden with fluttering leaves bent before its fury and then tossed upwards to the sky.

between the three men and the views on either bank

"Weston can manage alone," replied the old man, nodding towards the sulky manservant. He looked up again at the tumultuous sky; he really felt inspired and stimulated, almost as if with the aid of the bright sunbeams he could peer into those affairs of mankind that amused him, Simon Forman, so much, and from which he drew so comfortable a profit. A fine scattered rain fell, coming like a yeil

"have a name for this wind--the first fierce wind of autumn that strips away all the leaves. But our language is poor in such subtleties."

Franklin, the dwarf, resting on his oars and allowing Weston, the serving-man, to do the work, asked:

"The Easterns," remarked Doctor Forman, gazing at the wax figure,

"What news, good sir, if I may dare to question you? Of late," he added, half on a whine, half on a grumble, "you hold your secrets."

"That, in a few words, is my profession," replied Doctor Forman with a genial smile. "News? I have seen what all the world sees and noted

what all the world notes."

sickly, his full white beard concealed his lips, chin and throat, so that his curved nose, wrinkled eyes and smooth brow seemed to peep over the flow of combed hair like a broken mask over a wall.

"The King held a tourney in Whitehall yesterday. There was an accident in the tilt yard—one of Sir James Hay's gentlemen broke his leg." Simon Forman's words became a little blurred in the rush of the changeful wind. "The King was much concerned over this accident.

The sweet youth is lovely and well-bred. He has been taken to Master Ryder's house in Charing Cross and Doctor Mayerne has

Franklin, bending to the oars again, shouted against the gusts: "How did the accident happen? I heard something of it vesterday, but

"Everyone is waiting," added Doctor Forman. "No one knows what to think--but Philip Herbert sulks in the stables and the King went to

"Mayhap," replied Franklin slyly, "you have drawn different

Simon Forman glanced upward; a watery light showed his peculiar face-pale, placid, touched by ill-health, but by no means weak or

conclusions from those made by the generality."

"Perhaps," said Simon Forman, "it is of no importance. It happened as the young man was endeavouring to present his master's shield to His Majesty, who was seated on the dais. Maybe it was arranged-

The two men exchanged sly smiles.

The two men exchanged sty strilles

been sent to attend him."

thought it of no importance."

-a piece of stagecraft."

see the young Scot to-day. It is said His Majesty intends to teach the boy Latin."

Franklin gave a sour laugh, showing broken teeth.

"Teach him Latin!" he repeated. "Av. but where's our count in this?" Simon Forman remarked indifferently: "The wax is hardening, the weather is too cold " He held out his model of a naked woman at arm's length against the fantasy of the storm; rain and sun beat on the imperfect little image, then he folded it in a length of saffron-coloured silk that he pulled from his pocket, wrapped his hands in his warm sleeves and, lying back against the padded seat, bade Franklin and Weston row him as quickly as might be towards Chelsea. Not far away, in Master Ryder's modest house in the village of

Charing Cross, the young Scot, unknown yesterday, and to-day the focus of so much wondering and scornful attention, lay propped on his pillows behind curtains of white wool embroidered with russet acorns and red foxes. He looked at the light and the raindrops on the newly polished panes, then he glanced at the Latin Grammar that lay on his coverlet. His expression was one of complete amazement. He had come to Court with hopes of making his fortune, but these had been no brighter than those of any other penniless young man who

might contrive to get in the train of a great gentleman. His family was gentle but obscure; he had no influence. He realised, with the complacence of stupidity, that he had no gifts, that he excelled in nothing; yet the King had noticed him, the King had sent his own doctor to him, the King had come to see him and talked of teaching

him Latin; and the King was a man ruled by favourites, everything

was different from what it had been in the stern old Queen's time. Riotous excess and extravagance and the breaking down of laws and rules and traditions everwhere! A chance for youth, glittering.

golden youth! Some minion would rule the King; he would tire of Philip Herbert as he had tired of Esme Stewart and Francis Bothwell; the young man forgot the pain of his leg and the tedium of lying inactive in the thoughts that gradually dawned in his slow mind. "Is it possible? Why, it is as if the crown of England were put into my hands." Then, smitten with an uneasy sense of his own inadequacy, even in that moment, he murmured to himself: "I should never be able to play the courtier!" Doctor Mayerne, returning from his visit to the youth at Master Ryder's house, did not proceed direct to Whitehall to make his report to His Majesty, whose anxiety on behalf of the young Scot had been satisfied earlier in the day. Instead, the good physician, riding carefully over the rough roads in the wind, the rain and the sun. paused before the brick facade of Northampton House, and, dismounting cautiously at the splendid yet unfinished gate, gave his reins to his sober-clad attendant. Doctor Mayerne, a French Huguenot, who had been in attendance on His Maiesty King Henry IV of France and Navarre, but who had

had to leave the country of his birth after the murder of his patron, was a stout, smiling man of massive proportions and handsome features which displayed a cynical patience and a not ignoble resignation to the vicissitudes of fortune. He too noticed, as Simon Forman had noticed, the tumultuous glories of the sky, and he smiled upwards, as if at some invisible Jove who was not his master but his colleague. Doctor Mayerne knew himself to be one of the cleverest men of his

generation: his deep concern and eternal interest were in his profession: he was a great physician. This fact gave him continual if secret satisfaction. He was also a skilful courtier and a man who had

amassed a large fortune. He was perfectly content and always thought of himself as a man who enjoyed the best of two worlds--that

of the mind and that of the body; for the realm of the spirit he cared very little, but he did not deny that it existed. Above all things he was

Doctor Mayerne was admitted at once to the library at the eastern end of the corridor where the Earl of Northampton sat over a well-scrubbed parchment with a scarlet tassel; the two men greeted each other softly with ease and brevity; then the Earl related, without self-pity, his own gnawing symptoms.

"Old age, I know—but I have been a healthy man, and I would mitigate the pains and disabilities of my last few years. Do not gall me,

tolerant.

however, with false intelligence."

Doctor Mayerne listened, smiled, and gave his prescription. The illness was gout, nothing else, and the attacks were not severe...my lord was in a fair state of health and might live another ten years yet. Henry Howard peered down at the poem he was writing. The ink was now dry, so he rolled the parchment up and tied the narrow scarlet ribbons together.

"What of the young Scot?" he asked without a change of tone.
"He is mending," replied the Frenchman. "The King is interested."

"It seems then," Henry Howard softly said with a smile, "that my good niece Suffolk has wasted much labour and money. How many charming fellows has she entertained here and set up about the Court in the hopes that one of them might take the eye of His Majesty!"

"The wind bloweth where it listeth. The King is certainly taken by this

young countryman of his, Robert Carr. Caro, smiled His Majesty today-Caro, it may be."

"What do you know of him?" asked Northampton, as if the matter "There is very little to know--he is one of Sir James Hay's gentlemen." He has, I think, very little talent. A good sportsman, pleasant to look at--red golden curls, ruddy lips, a lively blue eve--a Ganymede!" Northampton repeated with an icy sneer: "A Ganymede! And will the royal eagle carry him to Olympus?" The doctor nodded his head, bringing his double-chin gently down into his pleated linen ruff. "I think so " "What is this youth's capacity?" "Very little. Indeed. I take him to be a dull fool--a bubble from Fortune's fickle breath " "A pretty lady noted him--my great-niece. Frances. She was in the ladies' gallery with her mother when the popiniay was tossed." "She could not, seeing the accident, but choose to notice him," remarked the Frenchman suavely. "Yes." replied the old Earl, smiling sweetly, "She could not choose." He glanced out through the wet window-panes at the river, from

were one of only the most casual interest.

which all brightness had now faded, and said:

"What would the old Queen have made of this? King James has surely avenged his mother, the blessed fair Mary."

The two men smiled. They were different in much, but alike in their worldly wisdom and the ironic amusement with which they regarded

Henry Howard had lain in wait for prosperity during many lean years, during which he had been secretly faithful to, and served, the ancient faith. A grandson of the Duke of Norfolk and son of the poet Earl of Surrey, Henry Howard had through obscurity and suffering adroitly served his own ends and those of his party, and now his greatness

had come--all at once. He was a Privy Councillor, the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Lord Privy Seal; he had the Garter and was the

the world.

Steward of the University of Oxford and the Chancellor of Cambridge; he was indulging his fine tastes and his love of magnificence in erecting one of the most opulent buildings in the city. Time had been when he had gone without a meal in order to save money towards buying a book. He was witty and courteous, as well as scholarly and subtle, and though he was secretly a staunch

Roman Catholic, he had contrived to keep the favour of the King of Scots who was now King of England, for he had been faithful and kind to his mother, that Queen Mary whom her son had abandoned

for a price, but whose memory, for the sake of decency, he was now forced to honour. It was Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, that had in his charge the monument to this Queen in Westminster Abbey, where she was to lie near her ancient rival, Elizabeth, of whom he had just spoken.

He was now a wealthy as well as a powerful man and he had considered his money well laid out in the great brick pleasure-house that he had built in the village of Charing, with fine gardens down to the river and his own landing-bridge and jetty. He had his towers, now, and his wide staircases and his noble halls and his tapestried

corridors and his great walled gardens, and men like Bernard Jansen. Gerard Christmas and Moses Glover to work for him with

their nimble brains and quick hands.

He smiled across at the physician, that other cunning man of the

beliefs were no longer tolerated about the Court, where he, in the reign of Henry IV. had been so conspicuous and courted a personage. Doctor Mayerne knew all the secrets of the Court, perhaps even some things that were obscured from the piercing eye of the Earl of Northampton: these two able men were useful to each other, and admired and even respected each other, and so remained good friends. Now they laughed together over what the old Queen would have thought of these changes could she have foreseen them, what she would have had to say of the odd, ungainly Scotsman with his frivolous Danish wife and his minions and his neglect of statecraft,

world who had also been faithful to a creed--Protestantism in his case--and who had also been able to preserve these private loyalties and yet to maintain a sumptuous fortune, deftly transferring his allegiance from France to England when he found that men of his

Northampton spread his thin hands and said with a smile that seemed one of satisfaction: "As Salisbury said, he is a sick man-there will be no sparkle of Elizabethan greatness left." But Doctor Mayerne reminded him gently:

the riot and scandal and extravagance of the Court where everything was done in excess, where the placemen and the panders struggled

together without restraint on their greeds and lusts.

"There are many old-fashioned people still about the Court who vearn and hanker after those days." He mentioned one or two of them--Sir Roger Lake, Sir Ralph Winwood--and perhaps Lord

Canterbury who, though he skilfully steered his sail to catch any wind of Court favour that might be blowing, yet was a rigorous Puritan at heart.

But Northampton brought the conversation round again to the young

his white hand, curdled into the soft wrinkles of old age, on the smooth table in front of him, as if he were preparing to play a game with cards or pieces, as he said: "It might seem that I, having nearly reached my allotted span, would do well to retire from the world and to think on what is beyond the grave. Yet I must confess that I have not lost my zest for amusement

in this worldly play, and while I am on the scene I intend to give the

He nodded at the famous physician as if he were giving him a hint or

players their tune."

Scot. Carr. who seemed likely to be the King's new favourite. He laid

a warning, and the doctor, coming with diplomatic bluntness to the point, shrugged his shoulders and said: "The guestion is, who will get hold of this golden fool, this Robin Carr? It is more difficult, my lord, to rule the King's favourites than for the favourites to rule the King."

"Because it is more difficult the task pleases me." replied the old Earl. "It is my humour to contrive, even with these new-fangled ills." "If the King takes this Scot into his friendship," said the Frenchman

delicately, "he will give him everything--almost the crown. With what, then, shall another man bribe him?" "A lure might be found," smiled the Earl. "The boy has, you say, a

light inconstant mind-base, too, no doubt, Such a one could be managed."

employ in refined and handsome living. The English Court with its

The two men fell to gossiping about the Court; who might rule there and gain from the extravagant follies and fantastic vices both power and money, both of which the Earl and the doctor knew well how to

Scots King was wanton and decadent, but, without too much soiling. the gold might be snatched from the dung-heap. Men and women all over London were discussing the accident in the tilt vard and the pretty youth with the broken leg to whom the King proposed to teach Latin. The newsmongers and the gossipers and the placemen walking up and down St. Paul's, and all the hungry hangers-on who crowded about the palaces and mansions picking up scandal, the servants and jobbers, began to whisper his name--Robert Carr--till it seemed as if the winds that blew round London stirring the red and gold standards on the turrets, lifting the rubbish from the autters, the marshes and the stagnant reaches of the river. were full of these two words Robert Cecil. Marguis of Salisbury, lonely in his sumptuous house, the dwarf whose genius governed England, heard the name and winced. He saw at once what this new favourite might mean; but he faced the prospect of his possible humiliation with that ironic acceptance of the littleness of others which is one of the attributes of greatness. He grieved, thinking of dead Elizabeth and what England might be, and went his way, a sick man. Frances Howard, seated in an upper room in Northampton House. also heard the name. She had been married the year before, when she was thirteen years of age, to Robert Devereux. Earl of Essex. recently restored in blood and honour to his title; he was the son of the man whom the old Queen had loved and whose head she had taken off for a wanton rebellion she dared not pardon. Since then, she had not seen her husband. Robin: he had been sent abroad to finish his education. She had almost forgotten him, though she was proud of being Countess of Essex. She gazed into the fire and mused on Robert Carr, who had been thrown from his restive horse below the gallery where she had sat in the tilt yard. Her thoughts were pleasant and confused: she smiled to herself.

he wanted, making her now stand, now sit, now kneel, now raise her arms in supplication, now drop them in submission at her side. He asked his wife to help him dress the puppet, and she, dark-browed and black-haired, sat sullen the other side of the hearth and gave her assistance unwillingly, snipping and stitching ungraciously.

At the end of the gallery Weston, the servant, and the shallow-faced dwarf, Franklin, were grinding roots with pestles in mortars and dissolving powders in a limbec; an acrid smell filled the gallery, now

and then vapours and fumes rose, mounted, disappeared.

Simon Forman returned to his house in Chelsea, and went up to a long gallery that looked on the river. He had in his hand the waxen woman, and now she was malleable enough he formed her any way

The light faded, and darkness came up slowly over the city, which was soon no more than a sprawling blackness on the marshes, clusters of irregular buildings either side of the river that surged and tugged at the banks, the bent willows, the broken alders. A lamp was lit in the library of Lord Northampton; candles were lit in the closet of the Countess of Essex. Forman's wife went to fetch a taper that her husband need not cease his work. A lamp was brought to the

bedside of Robert Carr, where he lay dazzled, turning over excited thoughts in his slow mind. The little Princes were lit to their bedchambers and the King to his retiring room, his dwarfs and dogs and fools ambling after him, and in the wardrobe-room Anne Turner, the pretty mistress of the theatrical wardrobe, sat bending over a garment of sea-green on which she was sewing leaves of silver tissue, bending forward to catch the full light of the wax candles in the branched stick.

tissue, bending forward to catch the full light of the wax candles in the branched stick.

She was glad to work even after the hired women had left, for she

enjoyed making a success of any pageant with which she was concerned, for here she met all the noble ladies of the Court, the lint-

and Bedford, of Suffolk, and that lovely girl, Frances Howard, who flattered Anne Turner and gave her costly presents as a reward for designing such becoming attire. Into Anne Turner's empty head flickered the image of Robert Carr--a fine young man with his wide shoulders, slender waist and long hair. No doubt, she would soon be making a dress for him to appear before His Majesty in one of the masques at Whitehall that were planned for, that winter. A young man, plainly dressed but with an air of assurance, entered the medley of buildings that was the Palace of Whitehall; after asking his way several times from the loafers and servants who lounged about the courtyards he reached a door in one of the pavilions that gave directly on to the river above the stairs, and there found a man in the Carr livery who took him at once to the presence of the King's favourite. Before he crossed the threshold into the pleasant gallery looking on the Thames where Robert Carr awaited him, he paused for a second and uttered a guick, appealing prayer to Madame Fortune, Much depended on this interview for Thomas Overbury: he was only the son of a country gentleman, and though his patron was the Marguis of Salisbury, this statesman had done little more for him than to send him to France with good advice and a few not too enthusiastic letters

haired Queen who spent sixty thousand pounds a year on pleasures such as these, and noble Countesses, the ladies of Arundel, Derby

him to France with good advice and a few not too enthusiastic letters of introduction.

Thomas Overbury had come from Paris with one great hope, that the King's favourite, whom he had met some years before when Robert Carr was no more than a lad, at the house of a Mr. Edward Bruce on the banks of Loch Leven, would remember him favourably. Robin Carr had been a wild, rough beautiful boy who had attached himself

fastidious avoidance of all the pleasures that usually distract youth from work and learning). But that was eight years ago, and it might be that Robert Carr, who was now Gentleman of the Bedchamber and also the King's shadow, had forgotten the quiet young man who had condescended to Carr in a casual way as they had wandered together under the cherry-trees by the heathery banks of Loch Leven. But Tom Overbury only hesitated for a second: he made an ironic grimace to himself and went into the room. A young man sprang from the cushioned window-stool, ran to the newcomer and embraced him heartily. Relief flooded through Tom: the favourite, then, did remember him! They exchanged hurried, and, on the part of Overbury, sugared courtesies. Then Carr set his newfound friend opposite him in the window-seat and prattled of his good fortune like the simple, honest, hearty fellow he was.

to the grave young student (Overbury had been noted at the Queen's College, Oxford, and at the Middle Temple where he had continued his studies, for his gravity, his scholarship, his industry and his

Shrewd Tom Overbury was glad of this idle talk; it gave him time in which to make his observations and his deductions. The rude, rough boy of Loch Leven, had changed into a golden cockerel--Robin Carr. tall, strong, graceful, had acquired a courtly polish while in the train of Lord Hay in France, though he had not lost the thick Scotch accent that the fastidious Overbury found very irritating. His face had the beauty of youth, good health and high spirits, and his comeliness

was lent a peculiar distinction by his masses of ruddy gold hair. He was curiously and splendidly attired, and he told Overbury with a mischievous laugh that every suit he had was a matter of consultation between himself, the King, and the royal tailors, while some of the

designs were conceived by the Mistress of the Pageant Robes, Madame Anne Turner, who designed the costumes for the masques.

mind, perhaps a foolish one. Carr was delighted with his extraordinary fortune. He told Overbury that all the courtiers' petitions had to go through his hands and that the King never entered the audience chamber without leaning on his shoulder, that even whilst he was receiving noblemen and ambassadors he would play with his new favourite's ruffles or braidings. He had sent him a table of gold set with diamonds only two days before, and it was worth at least three hundred pounds; Carr had his rents and his manors, too--yes, he had all he wished for: he was "Caro" to the King-the King was "old Dad" to him. "I could dip my arms up to the elbows into the royal treasury," he boasted. Yet with all his arrogance and his laughing acceptance of this somewhat dubious good fortune there was nothing offensive in the rejoicing of Robin Carr at his good luck. "He is only." thought Thomas Overbury shrewdly. "like a child whose hands have been thrust full of toys." And while Robin was walking

Whilst Overbury listened to this nonsense he had made up his mind that underneath this triumphantly glittering exterior was a simple

hands have been thrust full of toys." And while Robin was walking about the gallery and continuing to boast and chatter of his greatness and his prospects and how all the honours of the land might yet be his, Thomas Overbury was turning over in his shrewd, well-trained mind the prospects that Robin Carr's fortune opened to himself.

At first he felt rather bitter about it, for he knew his own abilities and he had worked hard to improve them. He was diligent, able, with a quick, well-stored brain, he had observed his fellows with much shrewdness, and, in his case, logic had supplied the wisdom usually given by experience; he could observe, he could deduce; he knew

his world. Yet of what use to him had been all his gifts, his industry, his perseverance? What reward had those long hours of toil at Oxford and in the Temple brought him? He had surpassed all his fellows in learning, he had forgone all the pleasures in which the

friends, no influence. Of what use were all those sacrifices of vouth and health and leisure, of what use the patience with which he had taught himself the arts of flattery, that he detested, toleration of vices and follies that he despised? This stupid youth, silly Robin, because he had yellow hair and a handsome face, because he was bold and pleasant, had blundered into all that was good fortune which should by rights have been his. Tom Overbury's, who very likely now would live and die unnoticed. the son of a Cotswold gentleman who had three girls to marry and dower and two other boys to place.

others had indulged, he had avoided all the temptations to which so many had succumbed, and because he had a pale face, thin hair and insignificant features, he was nothing-no one had looked at him twice. Lord Salisbury had given him clerk's work to do; he had no

But Overbury, whose reason was always able to control his emotions, eventually dismissed these thoughts and reflected instead how he might enjoy all the fortune that had fallen to Robin Carr: he soon learnt from that youth's excited chatter that a certain uneasiness lay behind the amazement at his own good luck. He did not, in fact, guite know what to do with the golden ball that lay at his feet.

"You know. Thomas." he said, pausing by the window-seat and looking down at the elder man with much admiration, "how I always envied your learning and how I never could get the Latin or the Greek myself--nay, nor much of the English either. Even now that I have learnt the outward ways of Court I feel at a loss--and I wish. Tom." he added impulsively. "you would stay with me and put me in the way of what I should do in my newly taken up braveries. I cannot write a

sonnet, nor even a letter with any grace--nor can I follow the ways of Whitehall with much skill." Thomas Overbury gave his thin smile. "I have come to you for your days at Loch Leven when we seemed to take a friendship to one another--for I have found no sudden fortune and my purse is lean." "I always admired you. Tom." said Robin warmly. "Would you help me in my sport and my business? I can do a lot for you in return." Tom Overbury turned aside his pale face and stared up the river beyond the palace steps to York House and Durham House set against the rising fields beyond the Strand. Would he help Robert Carr? Could any offer have pleased him more? The two of them together would be like two halves that make a perfect whole--Robin had the looks, the graces, the favour, perhaps the love of the King, while he had the wit, the learning and the subtlety, a knowledge of human nature and enough cunning to match the great Salisbury himself. As he sat there gazing out at the

help and protection. Robin, hoping you would remember those old

grev Thames and the grev palaces, he felt guite prepared to match his wits against those of a Cecil or a Howard. "You see, Tom," continued Robin with his engaging air of candour, "there are many about me to give me good advice, but I mistrust them. I do not want to be any man's puppet. The Howards hate me-you know they want to rule the country. Old Northampton sits in his

great mansion like a spider in a web. I've been warned against him-he's a secret Papist, they say, and works subtly for his own ends. favour, and they fawn on me now--but I will have nothing to do with

Then there is his nephew, Suffolk, and my Lady Suffolk, Kate Knyvet--they have been, especially the woman, intriguing for the King's them."

"You choose me, then," said Overbury as he turned, clenching his lean hands on his thin knees. "You choose me, Robin, to be your friend and quide?"

written to you in Paris. You were kind to me when almost no one else was. You knew I had been dismissed from the service at Holyrood because I was clumsy and forgot the prayers. I was in disgrace for that with my Uncle Bruce, and my cousins laughed at me--but you did not. I remember the tales you told me of London, of the taverns and playhouses. You know my Uncle Bruce used to call us then," added Robin with a certain wistfulness, "David and Jonathan, or Damon and Pythias." "And you've remembered. Robin, you've remembered that," Tom Overbury, nimble as his wits were, could scarcely control his amazement. Until he had heard of the good fortune of Robin Carr he had forgotten all about the merry, affectionate boy whom he had met in Scotland and who had been such a gratifying audience for his tales of students' secret revels and adventures. There was no affection or sentiment in the nature of Tom Overbury; he thought of nothing and no one but himself and his own advancement. He had analysed, summed up and labelled as a fool the King's new favourite, and yet he, Robin Carr, with England and Scotland at his feet, had remembered him, with a schoolboy affection of seven years

"I choose you," replied the other young man quickly. "I have always remembered you--if I had been quicker with the pen I should have

which the greatest of the great would eagerly snatch at. Even Tom Overbury was a little moved, a sensation to which he had hitherto been a stranger. He looked sharply at the brilliant youth who was regarding him with such honest affection, and, placing his thin hand on the warm, strong fingers of Robin, he said:

"If you give me this post I will serve you well. I will be loyal to you, and do you, Robin, be true to me, and between us we may rule the Kingdom and defy the Howards and the Cecils--ay, all of them. Do

ago, and was willing to give him that position as his friend and guide

So a pact was made, and it seemed to both of them like a golden gift from fortune, for the favourite knew that left to himself he would be no better than a simpleton, like Philip Herbert whom he had despised. Yet he had been, as he told his newfound mentor, chary of confiding in people like the Howards or the Cecils who might secretly be working for his undoing; but in Tom Overbury he believed he had found a friend whom he could wholly trust, who would be dependent upon him and who would work for him. while for his part the

Gloucestershire gentleman believed that he had found in this simple lad a key to all his desires. He meant to keep his pact, too; it would please him to exert his talents secretly and to show his great cleverness by pulling deftly in the dark the strings of this gorgeous

puppet of the King's.

not be lured away from me and my advice, for I truly know the world.

Everything you want you must have, and I will help obtain it for you."

Tom Overbury had not left Whitehall an hour when the gossips were busy with his name and when later in the day he was seen to return with a servant and to take up his lodging in the room next to that of Robert Carr, everyone discussed the new friendship, and even speculated on a pact, for those who were versed in Court intrigue had long since guessed that if comely Robin Carr did not find some

had long since guessed that if comely Robin Carr did not find some such shadow he would not long be able to keep his place. Will he now? the courtiers argued with one another. Who is Overbury, this young nobody? He would be unwise to set his wits against the Howards and the Cecils.

Among those who had noted the newcomer was Doctor Mayerne. For several days the fat, genial physician, going about his business

For several days the fat, genial physician, going about his business with easy cheerfulness, made his observations, and then took himself on a professional visit, as it were, to Northampton House,

where he remained closeted with my lord in the library.

by a man of such sound common sense. The upshot of their conversation was that Mayerne said to my lord:

"It is not the fool Robin Carr you have to deal with, but a nimble-witted rogue behind him--Tom Overbury--who sticks to him like a burr. Carr governs the King, but Overbury governs Carr."

And the Earl had said in his pleasant, quiet voice: "And I'll have both

Then Mayerne asked, as he had asked before when they had talked

of them."

already married."

Henry Howard already knew much of what Doctor Mayerne had come to tell him, but he was glad to have all the rumours confirmed

on the subject of the new favourite: "But how? By what bait? This Scots lad has everything, and is, beside, haughty and stiff."

"Has he a mistress?" asked the Earl lightly.

"If he had, you would know of it," smiled the doctor.

"Maybe, but sometimes even these frank fools have their secrets and I thought you might have heard if any subtle woman had caught

him-even by as much as the hem of the coat."

"No, he is free from that as yet." Then the doctor mentioned the names of several bright girls with whom Robin Carr had been seen at masques or on the river in pleasure barges—but there was no one in particular, though they all tried for him. Doctor Mayerne ended

at masques or on the river in pleasure barges—but there was no one in particular, though they all tried for him. Doctor Mayerne ended with: "I warn you, this fool is very firmly set in the saddle. He will have an Earldom, the Garter, manors, money. He may have any wife he chooses."

"Unless." remarked Northampton dryly. "his fancy falls on one who is

the door leaning on his great staff ready to take his departure; he peered at the ascetic face of Henry Howard, then suddenly laughed. "One who is already married!" he repeated with a shrug of his massive shoulders. "Well, there is such a thing as divorce--and I believe the King would deny him nothing." He went his way smiling into the dusty streets, and Northampton remained alone in his library which was now full of the glow of the summer sun: the old man smiled too--at himself. He often thought that it was strange that he, who must in the nature of things have so little while to live, should be so active in these worldly affairs that he really despised. Yet these intrigues were like a dish of cream set before a hungry cat; he could not resist lapping them up. Cunning was stimulated by this new danger, Robin Carr had been

Even Doctor Mayerne did not understand this hint at once. He was at

one enemy--now there was this Tom Overbury, unscrupulous and clever. He had heard that even Salisbury had taken notice of this newcomer who now lived in the lap of the favourite as the favourite lived in the lap of the King; Tom called himself Robin's secretary and was always about his person or closeted in his rooms--writing his letters, no doubt, and his poems, teaching him how to behave, what to say and do. The situation was the more difficult as Robin Carr had

not made many enemies. It had been recognised since the King came to Whitehall that a favourite he must have--a comely lad on whom to lean as he shambled round the rooms, some minion to dress up, to share with him the pleasures of the chase, to hold his cup and sit at his feet and be slobbered over and caressed. And this

fact having been accepted, it was felt by all who hoped to get some scraps from the royal table that Robin Carr filled his position

gracefully and with good humour. He was civil to all, he had given no

offence; he had not shown any notable greed, he was merry and cheerful, and, within simple limits, honest, and a good sportsman. He

shared his pickings, he stood in no one's way. Northampton rose and rubbed his thin hands together. How many other pieces were there in this game that he must consider? Robin, now, and Tom Overbury who was working for Robin--and Cecil in the background who stood for England, and the King who stood for nothing, yet who was all-important because he was the King. Then men like Lake and Winwood--and perhaps Sir Francis Bacon, the Attorney-General, and the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Edward Coke--all working against the House of Howard. There was the coarse, silly Queen, with fine eves and jovial laugh, who kept a separate establishment from the King's: and Prince Henry, soon to be made Prince of Wales, whom his mother loved passionately but whom his father feared and disliked. Northampton rubbed his hands together again. Surely if only he had but a few more years to live he would be able to combine all these pieces into some game to his own advantage--to that of the House of Howard and the true Faith. He left his library and padded softly on his felt, satin-lined slippers along the corridor, full of light from the June afternoon, and went up the great staircase to the apartments that were allotted to his great-niece, the Countess of Essex, when she chose to stay with him. He loved this child for her clear beauty, her coaxing ways, her sweet gaiety, and he was sorry now that he had listened to her pushing, ambitious mother who had been so eager for the Essex match; it certainly had seemed a splendid marriage at the time--Essex was wealthy, it was a fine title, a good family, a splendid estate. But might not even better have been achieved? He had not realised that the child of thirteen would become such a beautiful woman; she was the brightest star in a Court that did not lack lovely creatures; Howard had noted with pride the tributes paid to his great-niece. Her gifts were not mere beauty of feature and figure, though she had those in abundance. There was something about her that made everything she said and did

was even, her cheerfulness unshakeable and she was married, a virgin whose husband was still abroad finishing his education.

Northampton opened the door of his great-niece's apartment and wondered if he had done well to give this pearl to Robin Essex. There was Prince Henry, a well-thought-of youth who had as many virtues as his father had vices, and he had been fascinated by Frances Howard. The old man's ambitious thoughts leapt like a rocket...she might have been Queen of England, she might be yet. What had Mayerne said? "There is such a thing as divorce." But no, maybe that was flying too high. Yet surely something better could be done with Frances Howard than send her to Chartley as the bride of young Essex.

memorable; she seemed to have all the graces and all the accomplishments. Her voice was lovely, her touch on the virginals or the lute delicate, her taste in clothes was exquisite, and her temper

Northampton questioned the women who were working at a great train of peacock-coloured velvet which they had spread over two chairs. The Countess was asleep in the inner chamber; she had been dancing late at the palace; her mother had said she was not to be disturbed.

The old man with his light step and keen glance and his eyes still as

There was not too much time, either; any moment the young man

would come home and claim his wife.

The old man with his light step and keen glance and his eyes still as bright as jewels in his wrinkled face, entered the shaded room where the girl slept. She was curled, fresh and delicate as a flower, on the coverlet of quilted crimson.

The old man looked down at her long and critically. He thought he

knew her through and through; he had her training since she was an infant playing with dolls on the rug at his feet; he had taught her pride

mother at least, had made her proud, passionate, pleasure-loving, and, as he believed, wanton and unscrupulous. He recalled young Essex, an austere lad with dry manners, not likely to win the heart of such a bride as this.

The girl stirred, disturbed in her sleep by the old man's keen scrutiny.

of birth, courage, good breeding, self-control, how to behave; and

In so far as she was his work he was proud of her; she was all that he imagined a woman and a Howard should be. Her parents, her

how to lie

and threw her arms round his neck and kissed him. She chattered in her pretty voice, still that of a child, of her triumph at the masque the night before—she had been the most envied of all the ladies and had the most courtiers in her train; all the little poets were writing verses about her and shows were being written in which she might be the chief figure—as a goddess, as a gueen. She whispered to her friend.

giving him a sidelong look from glittering grey eyes, how Prince Henry had begged for a ribbon from her hair--the ribbon was pearl-

She sighed and sat up, then, seeing her great-uncle there, laughed

coloured, pinked and cut by Anne Turner.

"Leave that, my wanton sprite," smiled the old man, twisting his dry fingers affectionately in the mesh of golden ringlets. "He will marry an ugly Spanish Princess. He is a pious, virtuous youth who does not care for crooked ways."

"Crooked ways!" laughed Frances Howard. "There was one of my

name who was Queen of England."

"And lost her head, too. No, no, my poppet, do not let Prince Henry be more to you than an amusement. There are other more splendid

be more to you than an amusement. There are other more splendid gentlemen about the Court," he added shrewdly.

"And you want to know, sir, which I fancy?" said the girl. She rose from the bed, vawned and stretched. "This Robin Carr, now. Is he not a proper man?" Frances Howard smiled, lifted her delicate shoulders and replied: "I have not marked him much. He is like Philip Herbert, all for sport. tennis, cock-fighting and the chase. He does not care greatly for the dance and the masque. He has that little fellow Tom Overbury always with him now. He is not." she added wilfully. "as fine a cavalier as Henry-his Scots speech is rough. Oh. Henry is my fancy now!" "Take your mind from royal princes," said Northampton. "Have you danced with this Robin Carr? Or played with him in a masque? You know how retired I live, my child--all this extravagance of the Court is foreign to me." "I have never danced with him or played with him, or even seen him

face to face—or thought very much of him. Why should I," she added gaily, "think of one who does not think of me when there are so many who admire me?"

The old man's mind went to the Prince, to Robert Carr. Henry Stewart was a great figure in the land, although he was still only a boy, and had his own Court at St. James's Palace thereby rousing the jealousy of the King. He had gathered about him people who

despised the follies and luxuries of King James and the stupid, spendthrift whims of the Queen. Northampton had flattered the Prince and often had him to his mansion and discussed with him his schemes for building new ships, and supported him in his patronage of the shipwright. Phineas Pet. He had watched the young Prince on

of the shipwright, Phineas Pet. He had watched the young Prince on horseback, tossing the pike, shooting straight with the bow, playing tennis, sailing a boat, in attendance on the beautiful Frances. He had

there had been a Queen of England who was a Howard—and this Prince was naturally the enemy of Robert Carr and all the other King's favourites; he despised them even as Northampton despised them, but would not stoop to use them as Northampton did.

The old man turned again to look at the girl, and he thought: "She is her mother's child, a little worldly, wanton poppet; her heart is hard and her mind is good—she will suit my purpose very well and get her own pleasure from it maybe."

He jested with her about her young lord who was coming home soon, and the fine life she would have in the Manor House at Chartley, and Frances laughed merrily.

heard him say of the Spanish marriage that "two religions could not meet in one bed," and his mind darted with longing to the thought that Frances herself had touched on when she had reminded him

Then he went to his library at the eastern end of the house, and in his own hand wrote a letter to Thomas Overbury, begging him to come and wait on him at Northampton House.

As far as it was possible Tom Overbury was open with Robin Carr.

He had, indeed, so identified his own interests with those of the favourite that they had become from the first, as he had hoped they would, almost like one person. Almost, but not quite, for Overbury had his reserves, and sometimes laughed up his sleeve at Robin for a fool, albeit a pleasant, charming fellow. Yet still, whenever he could, he told him everything, only keeping silent on those matters that he

a fool, albeit a pleasant, charming fellow. Yet still, whenever he could, he told him everything, only keeping silent on those matters that he thought would confuse Robin or those intrigues which would be rejected by Robin's sense of honour. So in the matter of the interview with bleast leavest Ford of Northeasants. Togeted Baking the truth

with Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, Tom told Robin the truth, relating what had passed between him and the crafty old lord word for word. In doing this Tom gave himself great credit for the way in

which he had been able to outwit this slv. subtle. worldly man.

schemes and plots. He flattered me. Robin. Imagine that! The man who had been an obscure, mean scholar but a year ago--" He laughed with a relish that slightly displeased his friend, who muttered sullenly: "There is too much flattery in this business; there is too much talking of baits and lures, of this and that intrique."

Tom saw that he had offended; he sat silent like a man rebuked. In reality he was merely waiting till the youth had said his say and returned to his usual casual gaiety. But Robin, who was a man of few words, this time tried to force some of his feelings into speech.

"He wants vou. Robin, he wants to buy you. He'll offer almost any price. Old and frail he is, and half in the grave, but he is still full of

"Look you, Tom, I do not want this to be a foul business. They seem to think the King's a fool and I am something worse. And you--there's a vile name for you too. Tom, going about Whitehall." "We must rise above the gossip and the scandal," replied Tom

Overbury, putting the tips of his fingers together. "We arouse much jealousy, envy and wickedness, Robin."

"There is no need for us to be slandered. I enjoy my good fortune, it's true--what if the King likes my company, and I like his? He is, you know, a wise man. His heart may be empty--I know not yet. But he is

a fine scholar and a good companion, for all his ugly ways--and clever. You'd hardly believe his cleverness, Tom--poor old Dad, I am truly fond of him. It is because he does not care that he leaves the Government to men like Salisbury."

"Like Salisbury," smiled Overbury, trying delicately to turn the conversation. "He, too, has cast his eye on me; he, too, is taking notice. He thinks that we want to govern England, Robin."

new to the game and must try not to elbow experienced players from their seats " "Young Henry hates me." cried Robin abruptly. "He almost insults me when we meet--he cut me openly yesterday in the tennis courts--he is a forward boy! He sets his own Court up in St. James's, has his own

creatures about him. The King dislikes him and is jealous of him." "Take care how you meddle there. Henry will be the Prince of Wales-

Overbury, smiling, interrupted softly: "Quietly, Robin, guietly, We are

"Well, why not?" repeated the Scots youth, with the confidence of stupidity. "You and I. Tom, as well as the Cecils and the Howards-why not? And I intend it to be all for the good of the people, too-there are many abuses I'll check, many wrongs I'll put right. You shall show me how to do it, Tom. You have the learning, the wit and the

experience--"

-he is well supported and well admired. Be very wary how you make mischief between the King and Prince Henry." "Make mischief! I'm not a woman to go carrying gossip! When the King asks me what the Prince does and says, in his sports, I tell him-

-and so does everyone else. But as for him. I'll not be hectored even by a prince. The Carrs are not so much lesser than the Stewarts that I should take that boy's disdain. But come, tell me what Northampton

said." "Flatteries, flatteries," smiled Tom Overbury, "He wants to give you a

banquet. He says he will offer you an entertainment equal to those he

gives the Prince. Lady Suffolk came in-she, too, was full of your praises."

"It is well known about the Court," replied Robin petulantly, "that Kate

"Let that go, let that go, take what they offer you without enquiring into their motives. Will you not go to Northampton House, to a masque and a banquet, and escort, as the Prince does, the Lady Frances?" "He is her servant, is he not?" asked Carr indifferently.

Suffolk has been trying to find some man who will be at once the

King's favourite and her puppet."

coolly. "Northampton already repents the Essex marriage." "What better could he find for her?" Carr said quickly. "Did you see her? She is beautiful, I suppose, but I have never looked at her closely." "She is fair enough." said Overbury. "Not so much fairer than many

"She is the most beautiful woman about the Court," said Overbury

another--but decked out and made to glisten. Why, every time a sonnet is written to her charms, or a fresh cavalier bows before her, her beauty seems increased. But if her name were not Frances Howard, if she did not live in Northampton House, I doubt if she would be thought more than a comely young woman." "She is a great prize then--do you think the Prince is truly her

servant?" "If so." Overbury said spitefully. "he must be careful--her husband

comes home soon." Then he added, as if he spoke casually of an indifferent matter: "Old Pandarus is ready to make a bargain with his sweet Cressida--she's a summer flower, for the summer's wearing--

who shall enjoy her company before Essex returns?" As he spoke Tom Overbury smiled with such meaning at the fellow

who was at once his patron and his catspaw, that even slow Robin understood him. Scorn clouded the favourite's sullen face; for,

second—that he should become the cavalier, the servant of the Lady Frances Howard, Countess of Essex, thus making himself the rival of Prince Henry, next highest in rank to the King—that he should seek the favours of the most talked-of, most admired, highest born lady of the Court. Overbury saw that he was understood and quickly pushed the points home.

"Do you want to vex Prince Henry and therefore please the King? Why, the King will laugh at this jest, if his son is cheated of this bright goddess. Do you want to have behind you the whole power of the Howard faction: and they are more powerful than you, dear Robin.

realise."

despite his sudden elevation, the young man's native modesty and honest disposition were not altogether spoiled, and he looked at many matters as he had looked at them since boyhood. He knew now what Overbury would propose and what Northampton would

"The lady is married and her husband must soon claim her--you say he will return for the investiture of the Prince Henry as Prince of Wales? Why should I dangle in her train for a few months, even if I am to be more favoured than the others?"

"Leave the future to the future." replied Overbury lightly. "Will you go

to Northampton House and meet the Lady Frances Howard?"

Robin Carr's serious mood did not remain long. He laughed, stretched and said, with the air of a spoilt child accepting yet another toy: "Why should I not go to Northampton House and see their entertainment, even if it makes young Henry sulk?"

Tom Overbury did not answer, he had known from the first that he would be able to persuade Robin to accept the proffered flattery of the Howards—as he could persuade him to anything, eventually.

While Robin began talking of his dogs and horses. Tom, observing

him with secret amusement, thought how like a sleek animal Robin was himself, glossy. Well fed, perfectly groomed, wrapped with useless splendour, wasting his strength in sport and show-like a pampered hound or haughty charger, kept for ornament and display. That old roque. Northampton, angling for Robin had baited his hook with the exquisite Frances: he had whispered "Bring your friend, your Patron, your master to Northampton House, and he shall sit beside my great-niece, the little Countess of Essex, who is adjudged no mean beauty, while we try to entertain him." Well could Overbury understand the intention behind this silken invitation. Howard intended to cast Discord's apple between the young favourite, Robin Carr, and Henry Stewart, who was so popular and would soon be Prince of Wales, who was perhaps in many ways more influential in the country than the King himself. Already there was intense dislike between the two voung men: Henry Howard intended that this should be a lively hatred...how did he want it all to end? Tom thought that he could guess that. The conclusion would be the return of my Lord of Essex, who would snatch away the tempting little enchantress from both the angry youths and take her to his great house at Chartley and shut her up from the light of the Court, where now she flitted like a silver butterfly. The lovely Frances was to put not only bitterness and fury between the King's favourite and the King's son, but she was to entangle Robin and break him--if possible, mind and body--so that he began to neglect the King and all those pleasures in which he was the King's companion. Thus Robin would lose the royal favour in passion for a woman. And the spell might work, for Robin was fancy-free; he was young and handsome, and leading an idle life and Frances Howard might ruin him without much trouble and no disgrace, for it was not Northampton's intention that

she should take the young upstart for a lover.

shining girl whom old Northampton was casting in his way, and thereby hurt and anger Prince Henry, who was Robin's and his. Tom Overbury's enemy. This too would please the King, who came daily to dislike his son more and more, and might so wound and distract Henry Stewart, who was still only a boy, and, as Tom Overbury shrewdly judged, lost in his first love, as to make him retire from Court and give up all his schemes. As Overbury saw Northampton's subtle scheme, there was more in it than the humiliation of an enemy. Henry Howard intended to bind Robin Carr's fortunes to the great House of Howard only as long as it suited him. The girl should flirt with him, laugh with him, dance with him, enchant him and then disappear, under the protection of her newly returned husband, into the distant domain of Chartley. But Tom Overbury saw it otherwise; he needed the alliance of the House of Howard: he thought his family was too great to offend or flout, and he intended to ally Robin Carr to them forever. The boy and the girl, as Tom planned it, should be lovers indeed, closeted, chambered, bedded together, not once but often. It should not be difficult; they were young and beautiful, there was ardour, fire in the smoothness of their pampered bodies. Tom would see that there was opportunity too. He would outwit Northampton and Madame Suffolk--they were trafficking in the girl's pride and delicacy. Tom was trafficking in other things; when he and Robin Carr had done with Frances Howard as Overbury planned, her name, her reputation, her future would be in the hands of Robert Carr; that is to say in the hands of his faithful secretary, Tom Overbury. He put a question deliberately to himself: "What price shall I exact

from the Howards on the day when it is in my power to send Frances

But Tom Overbury's plan, whereby he hoped to defeat all the intrigues of the Howards, was that Robin Carr should take the

to the Tower for adultery?" Mrs. Anne Turner was designing the dresses for the masque to be given by the Howards for Robert Carr at Northampton House. She worked quickly, with pleasure in her own skill; she held the drawings at arm's length, surveyed them critically, then marked on the margins the materials of which they were to be made. It was to be a river pageant, with the women dressed as river nymphs, the men as sea gods. Then there was to be an interlude of Muscovites. Part of the entertainment was to be in the garden and part to take place on a raised stage in the great hall. Fatigue came over her, and she let her thoughts drift away from her occupation while she absently gazed at the girls seated on the floor who were sewing lengths of sea-green taffeta with knots of coral silk. Though Anne Turner was a happy woman she did not know who she was; she had been brought up by people who had declared that they were relations of hers, that they had been merely paid, through an attorney, to keep and educate her till she was of marriageable age. Her delicate prettiness, her cleverness, and above all her charming gaiety, had soon procured her a husband. She had married a physician. George Turner, an able man who had graduated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and who, though he had taken his medical degree abroad, was a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and well thought of among his colleagues. Anne Turner had nothing against her husband, but she had found it impossible to live with him. It was some years now since she had left him, and the worthy physician had made no effort to regain her affection or her company. She had had her adventures, her misfortune, her disillusionment; but an introduction to Mr. Inigo Jones, the designer of the royal masques, had brought her a livelihood at which she very happily employed her talents. She had also found a

lover. Sir Arthur Mainwaring, with whom she had lived contentedly for several years and by whom she had three children, whom she kept in a little house in Lambeth. Her husband did not trouble her, her lover was passably faithful, she had many amusing acquaintances and her life was passed in precisely those surroundings of gaiety. carelessness, extravagance and luxury that suited her shallow nature. So pretty Anne had only one trouble, and that was lack of sufficient money. Sir Arthur was not a wealthy man, and her dress-designing was, she always declared, poorly paid; however hard she worked she never earned enough for her needs, so that a life that would otherwise have been perfectly free from care was always ruffled by this anxiety about money. She dressed extravagantly, lived luxuriously, there were the children, there was the nurse, the servants, her horse, her coach, her entertainments; with all her influence and her wit and her coaxing ways she could not push her idle, thriftless lover into any place at Court. He, too, was expensive; his estate was mortgaged, he did not contribute as much as she did to their little establishment: vet she liked the man and was used to him, and though now and then she was unfaithful to him with some passing cavalier, she would have regretted it if he had left her. She was an affectionate mother and spared no thought or expense for her children At this particular moment Mrs. Anne was unpleasantly pressed for money; she had spent too much in every direction; she had been forced to part with what she considered her greatest treasure--a necklet of pearls and emeralds that had been given her by her first lover. Now there were bills to pay, and the household accounts...she was so stupid at finance that she had become hopelessly involved. There was one person to whom she always turned when she was in a difficulty, and that was Dr. Simon Forman. Since she was ready to earn small sums of money by any means whatsoever, she had been

lucrative enterprise. His large and extremely profitable practice was a secret one, almost entirely among idle, lovesick and neurotic women, and in dealing with these delicate cases Simon Forman had found Mrs. Turner very helpful. In her capacity of dressmaker and milliner she was able to go anywhere without comment, almost without being noticed, and she could take and receive messages, and in the quiet rooms in her obscure house at Lambeth, which stood secluded in a grove of poplar-trees, arrange meetings between lovers brought together by the philtres and charms of Simon Forman. These services were fairly well paid, but Anne Turner always thought, with that petulance which took the place in her of resentment, that she did not get her fair share of all the money that flowed into the coffers of Simon Forman, so much of which he owed

very useful to the good physician, who had bought from her items of information about the Court that had been invaluable to him in his practice. The learned doctor in his turn had set her on to many a

lived. She walked across the summer fields to his mansion which was well set back from the high road, surrounded by herb gardens and lawns, that sloped down to a little pleasure-house, a jetty and the river.

It was Mrs. Forman who admitted her, and Anne smiled at the woman's look of sullen jealousy. As if she, fastidious Anne Turner,

Now, with no particular purpose in her mind save that of obtaining help from the one person who had helped her before, Anne Turner left Whitehall, and went down to the river to Chelsea where the doctor

to her discretion.

took the least interest in Simon Forman, with his long white beard, bald head and austere manners!

As soon as he knew who his visitor was the sage appeared and conducted the lady into the laboratory, which was behind the

consulting-room. Here he did his work and made his experiments.

deceive the timid. Simon Forman could, on occasion, when it was necessary, stage an effective display sufficient to daunt the nerves even of the strong-minded; but in the laboratory he received only those who were his accomplices. It was a chamber of which his dupes were never allowed to catch a glimpse; the room looked on to a walled garden, and two large windows admitted the daylight. At one end of the apartment was a furnace with a brick oven and several retorts, limbecs and chemical apparatus. On a shelf above were jars and bottles of various liquids and powders. Beyond was a little closet, the door of which now stood open, in which Weston, the servant, and sometimes Franklin, Simon Forman's partners, slept. Hanging against the wall were several

and there was nothing in this room to impress the ignorant or

garments in which the doctor and his assistants often made very dramatic appearances, but which now, draped over their pegs in broad daylight, looked drab and unimpressive. On the long table lay the carcase of a crocodile, half stuffed; through a gash in the stomach sawdust was falling on to the thread and pack needle. Anne Turner took no notice of these implements of Dr. Forman's trade. Several of them she had helped to make and they were no more to her than the garments that she, almost daily, designed and sold for the masques about the Court. But it did not surprise her that many women, far more intelligent and more learned than she was herself, were frightened by the theatrical displays that Simon Forman could stage--pretending to evoke spirits, and even devils on firmly in a heart essentially simple, were by no means shaken by the knowledge of the trickery of Simon Forman.

occasions--for Anne also believed in witchcraft, in black magic and in the power of the Prince of Darkness; and these convictions, held

Shaking back her hood she began to complain of her ill-fortune.

The sage stopped this chatter by majestically raising his hand. "Have you anything to sell me. Anne?" he asked pleasantly. "You know that I do not pay unless something good is offered." Anne sighed, shrugged her shoulders, pouted and then began to gossip about the affairs at Whitehall-the jealousy between the King and Prince Henry, the estrangement between the King and the Queen, the rise of Robin Carr who would soon, people said, be made Viscount Rochester, and the influence that Thomas Overbury had over the favourite. "All this," said Forman, "is common gossip. Of what use is it to me?" The dress-designer shot the doctor petulant glances for this curtness and sighed. "Lord Northampton is putting the Lady Prances Essex in the way of Robin Carr." "All the world knows that," replied Forman dryly. "You are making the dresses for the masque at Northampton House. I can tell you something also, my dear. A double game is being played there--it will be amusing to see who will win. Northampton intends to dangle the bait, and Overbury intends that it shall be swallowed."

Anne Turner could not quite understand this, nor was she really

"I want money," she exclaimed peevishly. "Surely you have some use

interested.

"Money--Simon, I must have money! It seems to slip through my fingers! Was there ever a creature in the world as unfortunate as I am? You know there is a mortgage on the house and how badly I am paid and Arthur every month gives me less and less. Then there are

the children, soon there will be their education..."

for me? I am a friend of Frances Essex."

"A friend!" laughed Forman, suddenly showing his teeth.

"I am her intimate friend," cried the dress-designer. "She will have no one else but myself to fit her gowns. I spend hours in her company.

She likes to hear all the scandal I can tell her, she likes to hear of the Court's goings on. I carry tit-bits to her from the dressing-rooms of other women—and she in return tells me much."

"She can have no secrets that would be worth my purchase," mused Simon Forman, but he seemed to ponder over what the young woman had said.

Anne Turner watched him eagerly. "Surely that will be useful to you?" she asked stepping closer to the old man. "I am in the confidence of

Frances Essex, and Frances Essex is being used to lure Robin Carr into the Howard faction. From her, if I am careful and do not let her have any suspicion that I am other than a silly chatterbox, I can find out everything."

"Robin Carr does not concern me," replied Simon Forman, "but Tom Overbury interests me."

"Well, cannot we get at Overbury through Carr and the Lady Frances? You tell me what to do and pay me-that is all I ask. I will do anything, anything. I must have money, and within the month."

"You overrate your own importance," replied the doctor sternly. "Neither Robin Carr nor Tom Overbury nor any of the Howards are among my clients or patients. They have never been to me, nor are they likely to come."

"Perhaps," suggested Anne Turner quickly, "I can bring them."

Simon Forman, stroking his beard, looked at her keenly. "If you can ever bring any of them to me for advice or help, you shall certainly be paid highly." "The girl." urged Mrs. Anne. "I might bring the girl. At present she wants nothing that money can buy, but the day might come." "She loves no one?" asked Simon Forman. "No. She is only fourteen years of age-she thinks of nothing but pleasure. The day must come soon when she will want a lover. They all do. She is only flesh and blood." "Perhaps that lover," sneered Simon Forman, "will be her returning husband, my Lord Essex, who is a respectable young man. Who knows?" "Have I ever been indiscreet?" replied the dress-designer, peevishly. "Do I not make my living by being discreet? I tell you that if ever the girl is in distress I will bring her to you. She is, for all her pride and her breeding, ignorant," "Even more ignorant than yourself, my pretty Anne?" The doctor

"Yes, even more so," said Anne coolly. "For, whereas I know that all these masks and robes are only silly shams, she does not--and any painted devil that you can stage would frighten her."

Simon Forman went to the end of the room and, unlocking a

laughed out aloud.

cupboard that hung below a shelf of bottles and jars of powders, took out a leather bag. From this he extracted three gold pieces, which he put into the eager fingers of Mrs. Anne.

"You will keep me closely informed of this intrigue, I can give you no

us--only I beg of you to be prudent. We have our fingers now in great affairs."

Anne Turner pocketed the gold. It was not as much as she wanted, but it was more than she had expected, and she saw that she had roused the interest of the doctor in her intimacy with Frances Essex.

more money now, but the matter may be worth a great deal to both of

and potent--there is always a ready sale for those but you charge so highly, there is little profit left for me."

"Perfumes cost a great deal to make." replied the doctor "your

wantons tire of orris, violet and bergamot, I must search for

novelties."

"I want a further supply of perfumes." she said. "Something subtle

The dress-designer glanced in idle curiosity at the row of jars on the shelf above the cupboard from which the money had been taken.

"Are those some of the ingredients for your perfumes?"

Simon Forman showed his crooked teeth through his white beard.

"Oh. my duck, my darling, those are the ingredients of which I try to

make poisons."

The words fell unexpectedly upon the ears of the woman. She was surprised, slightly startled.

"Poisons! I never thought of that, though I've heard they make good use of them in Italy, and even in France."

"I wish I had their secrets," said the doctor, walking up and down with his hands clasped behind his robe; "they are very difficult to discover. A crude poison, yes--but that, would instantly be detected very difficult to track down." "Why," asked Mrs. Turner with a shade of uneasiness in her light voice. "should you wish to make poisons?--You do well enough." "Av. I do well enough. But I am an old man, and of not much more use for this world. I suppose it is the sense of power I envy. One takes so much trouble to intrigue, to bribe, to cringe, to flatter--when, if one had a pinch of one of these Italian poisons, the business would be done quickly. Think what a price one could ask, think what a trade one could do..." "Think what a death one would die," shivered Mrs. Turner, moving towards the door with a gesture of aversion. "I do not like this talk. Besides. I did not know there was any mystery about the matter. I thought that those who wished it could easily come by poison." "That is not so." replied Simon Forman softly. "A subtle poison is very difficult to discover. I have been in France, I have been in Italy, I have tried to find out--there are some secrets that are very jealously quarded."

by a physician. Doctor Mayerne, they say, is very hard to deceive...but there are subtle poisons, something that might be taken in, say, a bunch of grapes or in a goblet of wine or even snuffed up in a bouquet or from the hot wax of a candle--but they are

"It is what I most want to do. I have my helpers, too--Franklin and Weston. You may chatter about this as you will, and no one will believe you. But for your own sake I should not let the word 'poison'

"Well, for my part," said the little woman with an uneasy laugh, "I

hope you will not discover any such horrible mixture!"

pass your lips in Whitehall-are too many who would be interested"-and he turned on the shrinking Anne Turner the full light of his pale.

Frivolous Anne, who had been brought up in the ancient Faith, tremblingly traced the sign of the Cross on her brow.

"Master," she begged, "because I jest with you do not think that I do not reverence you!" Then her habitual lightness effaced her moment of awe and she added flippantly:

"If you are really in the service of the Devil how is it that he will not tell you how to discover this secret poison?"

Simon Forman replied gloomily: "The Devil is a hard taskmaster, he puts his servants to a grim apprenticeship. We must labour long and patiently before we have our reward."

clear grey eyes, that were strangely undimmed by age or study, and that he knew how to employ with great effect. "Do you think," he added softly, "that because you have seen all this trumpery here, because I have let you into some of my secrets. I have no power?"

In the scheme for bringing together Robin and Frances, Henry Howard was not only helped but goaded by Kate Suffolk, his niece by marriage and seafaring Tom Howard's wife. Northampton could have done with less of this intrinuing femining ambition. When he the

by marriage and seafaring Tom Howard's wife. Northampton could have done with less of this intriguing feminine ambition. When he, the wise old scholar, set his traps and his lures, it was that a great House might rule England, that the old Faith might be restored, as

well as for his own personal advancement.

"Take care," he warned the impatient woman, "that you do not urge the girl too far. Remember that she is not only your daughter, but Countess of Essex, that within a year at least Robert Devereux will

return to claim his wife--I want no disgrace."

"Next year can take care of itself," replied Madame Suffolk.
"Besides, if we gain Robin Carr it seems to me that we may let

"There was a marriage," the Earl reminded her dryly.

Robin Devereux ao."

The woman gave a hollow laugh. "It is no marriage as yet—one ceremony can annul another ceremony."

"You disturb me." said the old man quietly. "I was writing here. Kate.

and, meditating upon many things—and as for what you have come to talk about, I have already arranged it."

"But it is so," replied the lady harshly. "The entertainment you

arrange is poor, compared to that which this young Scots boy sees

every day at Whitehall. Cannot Frances be put in his way in some more subtle manner?"

The Earl placed his thin white fingers together, and after a sigh of resignation replied, making his plans simple for this stupid, ambitious woman:

"Do you think it so easy to bring this boy and girl together? She is wilful, proud, vain and heartfree. The boy's absorbed in his sports, his dogs, his horses, his stables; he is like a child let loose into a room full of toys; he is not glutted yet with all the King can offer him. All women look the same to him--ay, even your divine Frances, my dear Kate, glitters no more brightly before Robin Carr's eyes than a hundred others whom he has seen at Court. This butterfly," added

Northampton with a dry chuckle, "has been freed into a garden of golden flowers--how will you see that he pauses and sniffs at the particular honey, in your particular bloom?"

"You must get hold of him--you should get hold of him." The Countess

crossed to the window and looked out into the unfinished gardens below. "There must be ways and means. Even when I want to ask

"No, I would do it my own way. But this, I warn you—" The old man rose to his full lean height; he was still, despite his stooping shoulders, tall. "Take care how you play with the girl. Remember she is a wife, even if it be only in name. See that she does not become talked of with this Scots adventurer."

The Countess shrugged her plump shoulders.

"Frances has a heart like a diamond, she thinks of nothing but her own advantage. She, too, has many to choose from. Do you think

him to my entertainments you will not let me."

that she will cast a longing eye on Robin Carr when she may have Prince Henry for her servant, at the lifting of her little finger?"

"I do not know." said the Earl wearily. "And you do not know either.

Kate. And," he added, "since Frances is so indifferent to this youth, will she play our game?"

"Ay, that she will, and willingly too," replied her mother readily. "She

"Ay, that she will, and willingly too," replied her mother readily. "She has noted young Carr at Whitehall and thinks he carries his head too high. She is glad to be able to bring him down."

high. She is glad to be able to bring him down."

"I hope," replied Northampton coolly, "that she may be able to do so.
See that she is dressed up and displayed in the most fitting manner

to strike his senses--see that she has every opportunity of enchanting him. Tell Anne Turner, who is with her so much, to train her in her part."

With these instructions the Earl nodded towards the door, desiring his niece to leave him. He disliked women who meddled in his

schemes and intrigues, and he was very weary of what seemed to him the greed of Catherine Suffolk. Nor did he leave the chances of his scheme in female hands. When next Dr. Mayerne came to advise

Howard at Whitehall no more than a passing civility. It ended with the passing of a packet of powder from the physician's pouch to that of my lord.

The moon was full on the night of the entertainment at Northampton House and touched the swans on the river and the undersides of the willow-trees with faint shades of silver.

My lord, whose taste was so sure, had not tried to vie with the ostentatious splendours of Whitehall, with which both Prince Henry and Robin Carr were glutted. He had hired the best men in their various professions to help him--Daniel for the words, Inigo Jones for the devices and Ferrabosco for the music. But for the masque itself, it was to be a delicate, airy affair, without pretension yet arranged to make a vivid impression.

upon the treatment of my lord's gout there was a brief conversation between the two men on the subject of Robin Carr, who seemed to prefer dogs and horses to women and who had offered Frances

tapestries and the rich tints of paintings. Servants and pages in the Howard livery stood on every second step of the great stairway and waited in the courtyard holding torches that sent up flames and faint trails of smoke into the purple night air.

The only guests were Prince Henry and his gentlemen and Robin

The great house, newly finished, still fresh and clean from the craftsmen's hands, was set open to the summer air and lit with wax tapers that threw a soft glow over the bright colours of newly woven

The only guests were Prince Henry and his gentlemen and Robin Carr and his secretary, Tom Overbury, who had celebrated his knighthood by purchasing a better suit than any he had worn before.

Northampton acted the host with exquisite courtesy, and supporting

him was his niece, Catherine Suffolk, who, ever since King James had come to the throne, had trained herself to be civil to handsome

hearty, brave, dull sea-dog, the noble Admiral who shut his eyes to all these intridues and despised them in his heart, yet who made his profit by them and did what he could in a guiet simple way to help his cunning wife fish in the corrupt waters of Whitehall. Rich music filled the house and hovered over the stately banquet. The food was served on silver gilt plate and the wine in rock crystal goblets on enamelled stands; yet there was no ostentation of rare meats or out of season fruits. The luxury was beyond show, it was cold, rich splendour, splendidly offered. Prince Henry, the Earl at once noted, was melancholy and uneasy. Under cover of the light easy monody of the viols and wind instruments he asked where Lady Frances, who had been his companion so frequently of late, lingered? The old man nodded and said she would appear presently in the masque. Then to cover the Prince's low spirits and seeming not to notice him while he talked. Henry Howard discoursed pleasantly of the first masque that Ben Jonson had written for Anna of Denmark. which was called the Masque of Blackness, that had been given on the marriage of Sir Philip Herbert to the Lady Susan Vere. His niece Catherine Suffolk had played Kathare and the Queen, who was famous for her brilliant fair skin, had had the mood to disquise herself as a Negress...for his part, he said, he preferred it to the Masque of Beauty, that had been given at Court the previous Christmas. Prince Henry listened courteously but, when the old, soft voice came to a pause, he said, staring across the table at Robin Carr. who sat silent beside the watchful Sir Thomas: "I think all these masques, pageants and entertainments come too costly. We spend too much, all of us, on frippery and trumpery. Not that I would be slighting your entertainment, my lord," he added

vouths who might catch the royal favour. With her was her husband, a

stem of his glass. The old Earl, with gentle instinct, left the sentence unfinished, and so did Robin Carr, for he knew not what to say. But with misplaced audacity. Tom Overbury put in, leaning across the glittering table: "Your Royal Highness would prefer the money spent on navies and the schemes of Phineas Pet?" By this Tom Overbury meant to raise a smile at the expense of the Prince, his master's rival and enemy; but clever as he was, he was not as yet properly versed in the ways of a Court, and all he got for his sally was a look of disdain from Henry, who answered gravely: "Av. that I would, and on bettering the people and on men of great intelligence and worth--not so much on shows and tricks one forgets or grows stale in remembering." With that the young man rose, and all the others got to their feet except Overbury, who, in defiance of the Prince's rebuke, dared to linger a little in his place to finish his glass of wine until the old Earl cast him a severe look, and he too had to stand up. Then they went out into the cool, dark garden to watch the entertainment. Out of the obscurity of the garden into the circle of lamplight, came masquers, disguised as Negroes, who drew in a great concave shell glittering like mother-of-pearl, curiously made to move on invisible wheels. The scene was lit. too. by twelve torch-bearers who had lights burning out of whelk or murex shells. All these masqueraders were attired alike, in colours of azure and silver with a scroll of antique dressing of feathers on their heads and jewels interlaced with ropes of pearls. The light-bearers wore sea-green, waved about the skirts with gold and silver, their hair, loose and flowing, garlanded

sweetly, "vet, when one goes abroad..." He paused, fingering the

Henry Stewart leaned forward watching this show and forgot who he was with and why he had been brought to Northampton House, though he knew well enough that it was to set him against Robin Carr. The young Prince was shrewd and had intelligent advisers and understood well enough the game his father played and that played by Northampton and the Howards, but his mind was above all this, and he would not have come to this show to-night had it not been for Frances Howard, who had for him a rare enchantment. He was brave, modest and honourable and it distressed him that this daughter of a great House and the wife of an Earl, should appear like a player in a masque, though he knew that his own mother did not hesitate to black her face and dress herself fantastically for these pageants. Still he disliked it, and even more did he dislike what he suspected to be the truth--that Frances was there to lure the new favourite. Robin Carr. into an alliance with the Howards. However, since he was young, and romantic, the night beautiful and the moon bright, music was in his ears and lights before his eyes, the

with sea grass and stuck with branches of coral.

masquers and revellers and lead her down through the fragrant gardens to the landing-stage and perhaps induce her to come in his painted barge on the moonlit river, away from them all.

While he was lost in these thoughts the old Earl was observing him keenly, wondering what England, what Great Britain would be like when this young man was King. He was different in everything from

his father, who some said had great intellectual gifts, and others

young man's thoughts strayed from all these sordid matters, and he kept his glance fastened on the shell, certain that Frances was lying curled up inside it and presently would spring out to dazzle them all. He fell to musing over how he would take her away from these

that James Stewart could argue on points of Latin grammar and set lawyers aright on details of the law, but knew nothing of human nature or the arts of government nor any rules of decency or decorum. Henry Stewart was not like this strange father of his, or his blonde frivolous mother with the fine eyes and the dazzling skin and the flaxen hair. He was a tall, lean youth with a grave face and brown hair, and more plainly dressed than any other man there, in a suit of murrey colour, indifferently put on and carelessly laced with a silver cord at the

declared was little short of an imbecile. To Henry Howard he seemed to be nothing but a cunning fool of gross appetites whom George Buchanan had turned into a pedant by means of the rod, so

From him the old Earl glanced at Robin Carr, to whom the Countess of Suffolk was whispering jests and flatteries in vain, for Robin was suspicious and even sullen, and his natural courtesy was strained by the tedium of the evening. He felt jealous and uneasy in the presence

throat.

of Prince Henry, whom he heartily disliked and slightly feared. Robin had no imagination, so the pageant to him was just a number of paid players disguised in strange costumes moving about over a garden

as yet unfinished, and the moon to him was just a moon. He would rather have been in the company of King James, with whom he had

much in common and where he did not have to be so rigid, and formal, as he did before Prince Henry, with whom he could discuss dogs and horses and feats of strength and games.

Robin was dressed too splendidly, as Northampton, correct in his own elegant black and silver, noted with disdain; yet the old lord,

gazing at him with detachment, decided that the sullen boy was a gorgeous and splendid creature and well fitted himself to be the

figurehead in a pageant. The old Earl could read very clearly the young man's expression; "he feels here nothing but tedium and that sly dog who follows him has told him all my intentions in asking him here." The old man cast looks of delicate hatred towards Tom

him. Northampton could not hear the words that passed between them, but he knew well enough that they were expressions of contempt for himself and his efforts to buy the favourite by such obvious means as this entertainment and its attendant flattery. Henry Howard enjoyed the situation; this shadow fight between two civilised subtle intellects was much to his taste, and he was even more interested in his delicate battle with Tom Overbury than he was in securing dull Robin for the House of Howard, even though dull Robin had the King in his pocket.

On some given signal, all the lamps and candles were withdrawn or extinguished, the music took on a fuller note, and everyone turned to look keenly at the empty stage before them; even Robin Carr stopped listening to Tom Overbury's spiteful whisperings and gazed

Overbury, who, with a smug, self-satisfied air and a lift of disdain on his thin lips for all this display of Howard pride, sat on a stool at his master's feet, and now and then touched him lightly or whispered to

curiously at the moonlit space of green.

Between two upright pillars of verde antico marble that stood on a little grassy knoll to the right of the stage moved a little, airy figure; the silver light that mingled with the moonbeams came from a lantern shaped like a crescent which she held above her head. The thing

little grassy knoll to the right of the stage moved a little, airy figure; the silver light that mingled with the monbeams came from a lantern shaped like a crescent which she held above her head. The thing had been very cunningly arranged; no one had seen her coming.

From the hidden masquers came the cry—"The Moon!" and the musicions who were out of sight set up an undergood. As it floated.

rrom the hidden masquers came the cry—"The Moon!" and the musicians who were out of sight set up an undersong. As it floated over the gardens everyone looked at the figure of the girl who represented the moon. She stood with conscious grace between the marble pillars that her lantern silvered with delicate light. She was

wearing white, showing her rounded limbs through the thin folds of her dress; round her thighs, her knees and ankles were wreaths of pearls, on her head was a turret of close-packed white roses, from which hung a yeil of dark blue spangled with stars. She held herself

Northampton beckoned to a page who stood behind the torchbearers, peering at the show.

"Take a goblet of wine," he whispered, "to Sir Robin Carr and his friend. Sir Thomas. But bring it first to me, that I may see there is no

So the golden goblet of heavy Frontignan was brought on a salver to the old Earl, and while no one was looking Henry Howard slipped a little powder, a powerful approdisiac that Dr. Mayerne had given him.

erect, her lovely face like a silver mask.

and nails, across her childish bosom.

error "

into the wine.

who was exposing herself as deliberately as if she had been a slave in an Eastern market-place, drank up the wine impatiently and waved the page away.

Then the song ended: there was a pause. Then the moon came

down from her place and walked up the turf that served as the stage, bent her pearl-wreathed knee to Prince Henry, folding her long hands, which had been carefully whitened and silvered on the backs

In another moment the page was on one knee beside Robin Carr.
The young man, gazing, half-admiringly, half-suspiciously at the girl

The young Prince rose impetuously frowning at this mockery, and looked to right and left, then bent forward, and taking his dark blue cloak from his shoulders flung it over the barely veiled charms of Frances Howard.

"The moon is in eclipse," said the old Earl with a dry laugh, and all, taking their cue, broke into laughter, as if this were part of the pageant.

take her away from you. He thinks it unworthy to set her out thus for your pleasure like a painted player. Frances Howard is not for your gaze, Robin, young Henry thinks."

"Frances Howard," repeated Robin Carr stupidly.

He had seen the girl many times before but had not been concerned

Tom Overbury did not join in this laughter; he tugged his patron by his sleeve and whispered: "It is from your eyes he covers her--he tries to

"The wine was strong," he muttered, and put his hand to his golden crest of hair.

"Or drugged." thought Tom Overbury. He could always understand

in her, or indeed in any woman, but now he felt exalted, like one who wakes from a heavy sleep, eager to satisfy awakening desires.

another man's cunning and he knew the close alliance there was between Northampton and Dr. Mayerne. A love potion! Well, that suited him too; he wanted Robin Carr in full chase after this silver girl, but whereas those who had let her loose wanted her to return home unscathed, Overbury intended that she should be brought down,

unscathed, Overbury intended that she should be brought down wounded, broken and humiliated.

Prince Henry clasped the cloak round the girl's bare throat and said in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes in her ear."

Prince Henry clasped the cloak round the girl's bare throat and said in her ear: "It is chill for a summer night and there are many eyes upon you. Did you attire yourself like this for me? You know I prefer you in a modest gown."

you in a modest gown."

Frances Howard laughed with a touch of insolence. This part of the show had not been in the rehearsals and she was vexed that the Prince, to whose homage she was well used, had spoilt the effect

she was trying to make on stubborn Robin Carr. Henry looked over her shoulder, for he still held the ends of the cloak lightly, at the young Scot who was slowly leaving his chair and coming towards her. Frances whispered: "It is all a jest, a diversion, arranged by my great-uncle--an innocent play. You hold the mantle too tightly, it hurts my throat." Rebuked, the Prince let the taffeta slip between his fingers and the girl stepped away from him and stood half-naked in her pretty disguise between the two young men. Tom was close as a shadow behind Robin. "If she runs, follow," he whispered. "Take no heed of the Prince or any other." Then he slipped aside, laughing to himself at this play of wits between poor Tom and the great Henry Howard.

walking softly in front of the line of spectators.

hands. "Up, up, youths and ladies--a hue and cry for Cupid!"

There was a stir of movement and of laughter among the guests. The Prince spoke to Frances. "Come with me, sweet madam, we have

"A hue and cry!" exclaimed the old Earl, rising and clapping his

no more part in these revels," but the girl laughed in his face:

"A hue and cry, sir!"

She turned to Robin, who was staring at her and put a silvered finger.

She turned to Robin, who was staring at her and put a silvered finger on his sleeve and peered up into his face as if she tried to puzzle out his mind.

Robin heard the laughter and movement of the spectators behind him as Northampton rose and broke up the show. He was conscious of the dark, sad figure of the young Prince looking at him but he had eyes for only the girl; a light breeze had taken her gauzy garments and stirred them so that he could see her rounded limbs, all

wreathed with pearls. Then she put her finger to her lips and ran away into the darkness of the garden. Robin heard the Prince's voice commanding her to return, but she took no notice and Robin ran after

her, vaulting over the rounded marble pillars that lav between myrtle

On the landing stage he caught her. She was breathless and laughing, her crown of white roses had fallen off in her flight and her spangled hair was silvered by the moon and hung like a net over her shoulders. She paused with her gauzy dress stirring about her in the breeze, peering down into the rushing river, and at the pearl-white swans that slept among the reeds.

"This was not meant," she cried, laughing, and thrust together her hands under her chin, shuddering. "It's cold, it's cold! Was ever a June night so chill?"

"I have no mantle to offer you." panted Robin Carr. "But I can warm

She had always thought him slow and dull, and she looked at him shrewdly, wondering what had changed him. His face was flushed

and ilex trees, crushing down the beds of coloured lilies with his golden boots, pushing aside the garlands of streaked roses that hung from gilt pergolas, pursuing Frances Howard in her gleaming white and silver to the river's edge, where the gardens broadened

into a lawn set with box-hedges and a tall sundial.

vou well enough."

and amorous and he caught her hands more boldly than any man had dared to do before. Her first feelings were ones of wounded pride, and she was about to cry for help to her great-uncle's men, the Prince's men, to punish this upstart who had dared to touch her, but she had no time; for Robin Carr had taken her in his arms and began to kiss her violently with rough, hot lips. Frances struggled with little

cries and writhed to be free, so that the pearl circlets were broken from her legs and ankles and wrists and the great gleaming beads went rolling down the landing steps and splashed into the river

among the upright reeds.

It was Tom Overbury who rescued her, coming up breathlessly after

away now. It will be a brawl--the Prince is looking for you. You cannot behave like this yet, but you may when the time comes."

The young man's befuddled wits could hardly comprehend this warning, he kept the struggling girl close. Thereupon Tom struck him hard on the breast, and he fell back a little, in surprise. The girl slipped away out of his arms and stood sobbing under her breath.

his patron: he pulled at Robin's sleeve and said with that violence he rarely used, but knew very well how to employ. "Come away, come

light of the moon.

Tom Overbury gave her a cold look, edged with a disdain that she had never seen before in anyone's eyes and which she was never to forget.

her frail robe nearly torn from her, almost wholly naked now in the

"Lady," he sneered, "come away--the masque is over, and you are the Countess of Essex."

She stared at him and then at Robin Carr, who was frowning at her

She stared at him and then at Robin Carr, who was frowning at her with his hand still on his breast where his friend had struck him, all the tinsel bravery that he wore glittering metallic like armour in the moonshine. Forgetful for the first time of his faithful Tom's advice, and intoxicated by the sweet poison in his veins. he cried:

"Oh, my dearest! When may I come to you?"

Tom Overbury clapped his thin hands over his friend's mouth and told

the girl in a thin tone of contempt, as if she had been a milkmaid, "to go her way."

Frances did not move. She stared, bright-eyed, at the young man

Frances did not move. She stared, bright-eyed, at the young man who was struggling with his friend and speaking to her thickly, words that she could not understand or even disentangle. But she

before he could touch her turned and ran away holding her torn clothes about her, lightly leaping over the marble columns, rushing between the dark, cool trunks of the cypress, the ilex and the laurel. past the blind, blank-faced statues to a side-door in the brick house and there to her private stairway to her bedroom. She was not expected, for the festival was not supposed to be over yet, but was planned to end up with a concert and the setting of the moon, and for that there was an hour still to go. So Frances Howard found herself in her room alone: even Anne Turner, who had been so diligent in designing the moon goddess's robe, was absent. One little light burnt above the mirror where Frances had preened for many an hour in readiness for the day that was now past. She did not look at her own reflection now, but stood shivering in her torn dress by the polished carved pillars of the great bed in which she had so many nights lain alone and dreamt of love. She had begun the revel as a vague and light-hearted diversion, and now it seemed to her as if the whole evening had been distorted and fantastic, touched by sombre phantoms. Everything was different from what it had been before: she thought of the garden, so familiar to her even on moonlight nights, as if it had been the scene of a nightmare--all those figures of sprites and nymphs and Negresses that she herself had seen dress in all their trumpery and cardboard finery seemed now as if they really had been immortal. The young man Robin with his great splendid sleeves fastened to his shoulders with diamond pins and his ruddy hair curled on his low forehead-she had seen him, too, often enough in Whitehall and mocked lightly at his dullness--he, too, had seemed different--he had pursued her, he

had held her, he had called her "Dearest." She remembered his eves glittering above the hand that Thomas Overbury had put over

understood the rhythm, the purpose and the intensity, and she bent towards Robin. flexible as a willow bough before the wind, then,

She huddled against the white wool coverlet of her bed and her slim body shook with the words "My love, my love." and then "Robin, Robin." It seemed to her that she was being swept away on the sea of some irrepressible and dark emotion that engulfed her in tremendous waves; it seemed to her, too, as if her secret life, in

which she had always walked alone, had been suddenly invaded and

his mouth, which she had felt on her neck, bosom and shoulders.

that she could never be solitary again.

When Anne Turner came lightly in in her robe of saffron-coloured silk, prattling about the festival and the success of the masque, Frances Howard turned on her unseeing eyes and did not answer and looked

so strange that the pretty woman began to lament and hoped that my lady had not caught a chill or been disappointed or become tired? Frances shook her head and Anne Turner, who had never known a profound or serious emotion in her life, chattered on merrily about the moonlight and the magic, at the way the young gallants had applauded and stared at the vision of the moon goddess. It was a

pity the festival had ended so early, no one knew where Prince Henry

was...he had gone without any leave-taking...

come in to-night."

"Bring me a robe," whispered Frances. "I am cold."

Anne Turner went to the press and took out a garment lined with white fur, glancing the while over her shoulder at the girl's almost

white fur, glancing the while over her shoulder at the girl's almost naked body and uttering gay obscenities and talking in the same breath of a new dye she had discovered that turned partlets, ruffles and cuffs a delicate yellow that set off the complexion far more sweetly than the pure white of the old-fashioned starch.

and cuffs a delicate yellow that set off the complexion far more sweetly than the pure white of the old-fashioned starch.

"Lock the door, sweet Anne. Do not let my mother or my great-uncle

Frances rose, took a flask of jasmine water and poured it over her hands, rubbing off the silver tinsel that stained them, then shook the silver dust out of her hair and huddled into the fur-lined garment. while she stammered, "The swans I never saw so many swans-asleep in the moonlight." Anne complained: "The musicians have gone home, the banqueting hall is empty--why was it all ended so soon?" Frances flung herself down on her bed and for the first time in her life felt as if she believed in God. Anne Turner tripped away with a shruq and a smirk and went down to the butler's room, where she had her glass of wine and her plate of cakes before she tip-toed away with the serving-man who had been waiting for her at the postern gate, and took the Lambeth Ferry across the darkness of the Thames. Prince Henry returned to St. James's Palace with his retainers and

torch-bearers and his blue cloak that Frances had, for a second, worn, cast about his face.

Robin Carr went back to Whitehall, leaning heavily on the thin shoulders of Sir Thomas Overbury, and staggering far ahead of his servants. The dark crooked roofs of the city seemed to his confused senses to rock against the paler sky and the sinking moon to glow with the lovely nakedness of Frances Howard. He talked thickly and incoherently, while Tom Overbury whispered soothingly: "You shall have her. I promise you shall have her, only a little patience, leave it to me."

Old Henry Howard lit himself to bed, holding his one candle carefully, smiling at his thoughts. The Earl was very pleased with his meddling, even though the melancholy young Prince had seemed vexed--"but

what does that matter. I shall be dead before he is King."

Two - The Golden Sty

Simon Forman was continuing his search, for a brisk and subtle

unsuccessful

poison, for it seemed to him that one who could make the discovery of such a weapon as this would be more powerful than the greatest

of kings. He often amused himself as he sat in his great chair by his fire of an evening or walked under his cherry- and pear-trees on a summer afternoon by considering how almost every person, great or small had someone whom they secretly wanted to be rid of. One might take the King, who was publicly rebuked to his face by his son Henry for his vices and follies, his extravagance, his favouritism of Robin Carr (whom he had lately created Viscount Rochester). What would not the King give for a pinch of some sauce on Prince Henry's

meat that would kill him swiftly with no blame to anyone? And what would not Henry Howard and all his House give for a taste of that same sauce to serve to Tom Overbury, who governed Robin Carr as Robin Carr governed the King? And what, thought Simon Forman, of Lady Frances, who was playing fast and loose between Prince

for a perfumed letter that she might send to her absent Lord that would prevent his ever returning to England? But so far he had been Anne Turner visited Dr. Forman guite soon before my Lord of

Essex's return. The sage kept her paid, though not handsomely, for what scandal and gossip she could bring him from the Court, for the patronage of those foolish hysterical women she escorted to his back-door, shivering in mantles and masks, clamouring for love potions and charms. In another way she continued to be a very valuable ally, for she was in the confidence of Frances Howard, who was the link between the two who together made the most powerful

combination in the Kingdom--the House of Howard and the favourite.

Henry and Robin Carr, and, like a bird dancing round a snare, getting her own wings limed, he suspected--what would she not give "How goes the affair? How goes it?" he demanded impatiently. "Does she love him?"

And pretty Mrs. Turner, for whom the word love had very little meaning, would lift her shoulders and say: "Ah, she plays her fancy-now it is the Prince, and now it is Lord Rochester, and now it is to shut herself away from both of them. But Robin Carr, and I can hardly think of him by any other name, is really in love with her, I believe. He has never looked at another lady since he came to Court, and, from the night of the masque when he saw her as the moon goddess..."

Robin Carr. Lord Rochester.

Mrs. Turner broke off into a meaningful laugh and snapped her fingers in the air, adding: "Ah, Ia, Ia, that was successful!"

"That lascivious show roused the lout who had never looked twice at the same woman before." muttered Forman, stroking his beard. "I

"Dose or no, he looked at her twice--and has looked again and again. And he and Prince Henry, they hardly meet...The King," added Mrs. Turner eagerly. "is all for Robin and hates his son daily more

suspect Theodore de Mayerne dosed his drink."

and more. They say he would break succession if he could, and leave the crown to Prince Charles. But gay Anna is all for her beautiful Henry and so are the people. One must be a little careful, you know;" the frivolous woman nodded with the wise air of a politician.

"What will the Lady Frances do when my Lord of Essex comes

home?" asked Simon Forman. "Friends, they say, have sent for him, I am well informed of that. It is four years since he was married and he is of man's estate."

"Oh, she will go with him--her father and her mother and her great-

lose a good customer, for he will take her to Chartley and that is in Staffordshire, you know--a long, long way from London and the road so bad and dangerous!" "You have enough clients at Court not to miss Frances Essex."

replied Simon Forman, "But I suppose the child's heart is snared?"

uncle will see to that," replied Anne Turner with a sigh, "and I shall

"Nay, that it's not, and who is to say that Robin Devereux is not as good as Robin Carr? He is better born and has better wits from what I can hear and remember of him--and the child Frances is light as thistledown. She will go with him and become his wife and his housekeeper and a great lady, just as she should." And Anne Turner

sighed and smiled together. "But it will not close Northampton House to me," she added, "for my Lady Suffolk still lives there, and the more

her beauty fades the more she requires my help." Then stretching out her dainty feet in front of her, as she sat in the window place, she vawned and laughed. "Are you still looking for a poison, good Doctor?" she asked lightly.

"I should not have thought," he said reflectively, "that a rustic gentleman like Robin Carr-I can hardly think of him as Lord Rochester--had the address or the wit to make himself acceptable to a well-bred lady like Frances Howard."

He nodded, still smoothing his beard into the pleated folds of his ruff.

Mrs. Turner sat up eagerly and replied conspiratorially:

-done with exquisite taste. I do assure vou."

"But you would hardly believe how witty and accomplished he is! He sends my Lady the most beautiful sonnets, verses and letters, one

after another, most smoothly writ out on special scented parchment,

with the letters finely drawn, the whole tied with knots and braids of different coloured silks and all excellently sealed with secret devices"Ay, indeed, I have seen these letters myself--they have moved my lady towards him. Compared to his verses, those that Prince Henry sends her are nonsense. This Robin has a most delicate turn of wit, his flattery is very subtle--in brief, sir, he knows all the arts, and though they cannot meet in private because the Howards feel they have gone far enough and must keep their little beauty locked up, still, he woos her by means of these verses."

"And you are the go-between to carry them, I suppose," sneered Simon Forman; "and that is why you always have a new coat on your back and a new hat on your head and Sir Arthur has gold pieces in his pocket and your children a new carriage to go out in."

Mrs. Turner laughed. "Oh, Robin is generous enough with his money," she admitted lightly. "And why should he not be, since he

"Robin Carr does this, he with his thick Scots tongue that an honest Englishman can scarcely understand?" demanded Simon Forman.

narrowing his eves.

"Have you any other news for me?" asked Simon Forman, as if he had spent enough time on this subject of Frances Howard and Robin Carr.

The little woman then leant forward, and, whispering gravely into the sage's ear, told him various scandals of the Court in which he might

has the whole Treasury of Great Britain to dip his hands into?"

make his count—of medicine required here, a potion there, an interview here, some misery to be helped, some folly to be glossed over, some silly woman to be encouraged by the man whom she regarded as a notable magician.

Then Mrs. Turner took her leave, on her arm in a neat little basket, various potions and perfumes for her clients in Whitehall. And the last

"When you come again bring me, if you can, one of those sonnets or letters that Robin Carr sends to Madame Essex " She nodded and laughed and said it would be easy enough. She had the girl's entire confidence and there were so many of the poems that the girl's closet was strewn with them.

words that Simon Forman said to her were:

vears, not five as was arranged."

restored in honour to her husband."

patron, "and we. Robin, shall not be here to welcome him. The King goes on a progress and you and I will accompany him, while the young Lord makes his bride's acquaintance." Robin answered sullenly: "Who sent for Essex? He should have been in France and Italy another twelvemonth. He has been away only four

"Lord Essex comes home in a fortnight." said Tom Overbury to his

"The Prince has sent for him," answered Tom Overburv softly. with a hint of that note of contempt for his friend's stupidity that sometimes, for all his care, he could not keep out of his voice. "Prince Henry is among his friends."

"You think Prince Henry has sent for him!" exclaimed Robin amazed.

"When he, too, would be my lady's servant?"

"Precisely because of that." explained Overbury patiently. He forbore

the comment he would have liked to have made on Robin's dullness. and added: "There are different qualities in affection--there is what some call love--and some call lust--and what Prince Henry feels for the little Howard girl is love. He admires her, reverences her like the

virtuous and heroic lad he is--she might have been a gueen had she been free--And since he may not have her himself, he would see her your good fortune lest it be frightened by your voice and takes wings." He added sharply: "Essex will take his wife to Chartley and that's a long way from London. You will not see much of Frances Howard, Robin, in the future."

"Why not?" demanded the young man with a haughty look. "Essex will do as the King commands, and the King will do as I please."

"And will you say that you please to keep Frances Howard in London? You must reckon with her parents and with Northampton."

"Do not they flatter me? Have they not used the girl to win me?"

"Ay, to a point they have gotten your friendship and your alliance.

They have been useful to us and we have been useful to them. It is a friendship that works very well, we could hardly do without the Howards and they certainly could not do without us. Robin," added Overbury with a flush on his thin cheeks and a note of excitement in

"Henry, then, is Essex's friend," said Robin slowly, trying to think for himself what this new combination might mean. "Essex will return-what is he like. what manner of man is he? But what does it matter? I

"Do not boast," advised Overbury carefully. "Do not talk too loud of

have the King in my pocket and the two Kingdoms also."

his quiet voice, "do not lose your wits now. We are playing a very difficult game and for high stakes. I say that without the Howards we are nothing but a couple of adventurers--with the Howards we do rule the two Kingdoms."

"Bah!" replied Robin angrily. "I do not need that old man, that noisy Thomas Suffolk, that sly greedy woman, his wife, to help me. And you think they will support Essex after they have flattered me?"

"They must--they could not risk the scandal that thwarting him would

straight-limbed and comely enough. She'll go with him willingly."

"And I must let her go," muttered Robin Carr softly, biting his underlip.

"Let her go," said Thomas Overbury with that disdain of the clever for the stupid, the strong for the weak that he could no longer control.

mean. She, however proud and wilful she may be, is worldly and still a child, and she'll give way. She'll go with him-ay, for all I know, he is

"Have you ever had her? It's a month now she's kept you dangling and the Howards have played you like a toy on the end of a string. She's untouched by you--for all you know she may be Prince Henry's mistress--she certainly is not yours. Yet," added Tom, with a heightening of his cold sneer, "I have written you more than fifty

sonnets and love-letters, two and three a day, and you had opportunity enough, wandering when you would through the corridors

of Northampton House, going on the river with her, walking in the gardens until they took fright and shut her up. You are a slow lover, I commend your prudence."

"Yes, I am slow," hesitated Robin, "and I do not know what I should do without you to guide me, Tom. She is Essex's wife..."

"That would not have prevented her being your lover, had you not been drowned in sloth," cried Overbury impatiently. "Was not that the game I wanted you to play? I wanted you to take her, have her, make her yield to you. Essex would never know, and if he did he would not

dare speak; would he be the only cuckold at Whitehall? And the Howards, then, would have been in our power for ever. We have some of her letters already, but they are still the prattlings of innocence. Could we have entangled her deeper, Henry Howard and all his House would have been our servants."

"It is an ugly game," sighed honest Robin with a grimace.

such lecherous tales; it would have made a fool of Essex, whom we dislike as the Prince's friend, Robin. It would have been a good jest about the Court and have set you up much in the esteem of all the women whose favours you want to catch. But most of all it would have bound to us the House of Howard; we could have published and blazoned abroad the love-making of pretty little Frances Howard, left too long a virgin bride."

Robin Carr turned his brilliant eyes slowly upon his friend. "I suppose, a few years ago when I was a new-comer to Court, I should have struck you for that, Tom, but now, all honour seems blunted, like a sword gone rusty at the edge--and I suppose you are right and this

would have been a pretty game to have won her and made a strumpet of a Howard girl. Ever since the night of the river-nymph masque I have desired her--but she has eluded me. I had, at first, chance enough. Yet I have not been able to do it. Tom, and that is

because of vou."

"Ugly, but clever--ay, so clever!" grinned Tom Overbury. "It would have thwarted young Henry, who might, in an underhand way, have been allowed to guess: it would have pleased the King, who likes

"Ay, because of you--I have read some of the verses you have written for me, and your letters too. They are not silly and common, but beautiful and she thinks I wrote them, Tom, and so has set me up for much better than I am." Robin laughed sadly and pulled at the golden

laces at his wrists. "For much better than I am, Tom, now, of all times, yet you know I was not always a scheming placeman, or a King's minion—you remember in Scotland walking under the cherry orchards by the banks of the lake and the talks we had..." He broke off with the

by the banks of the lake and the talks we had..." He broke off with the air of a man who is afraid he will say too much, then added: "Sometimes I could turn rebel and escape you all."

"I think I might be, Tom. Your verses and letters have made a world for us apart from the Court, a fancy, an illusion, what you will...at least she does not know me for the fool I am--and I do not know her for the wanton she might be."

"I always said," smiled Sir Thomas, "that your brave looks and my brave wits would make a fine combination--and see, between them, they have won the little diamond heart of Frances Essex!"

"How can you write those letters," asked Robin curiously, "when you are so cold, when you do not even guess what love is?"

"I have that wit," said Tom coldly, "that can understand the humours and affections of lesser men, though I am myself above them all--"

"I believe you are in love with her," said Thomas scornfully, "like a

voung boy in his first college year."

"I was, Tom, I was. But this Howard entanglement has something wrong about it. She is so young, so lovely, like a little toy--"
"Lily, rose and violet!" sneered Tom. "a harlot for you, Robin--"

"What do you want out of all this. Tom? Sometimes I detest it all!

"Leave that to me. Are you not content with your brave fortune?"

"I was bred a gentleman," interrupted Robin heavily. "I had my hopes, and ambitions—well, they seemed honourably satisfied. I like old Dad, and the place I have, and the sports—all that—games, feats of strength, horses, dogs--"

"Why recite this to me--I know it all."

Where are we going? What is the end to be?"

"I wonder!" sighed Robin uneasily, but Tom struck him lightly on the shoulder and laughing at his simplicity cried:

"Leave it to me!"

When the young Countess heard that her husband was coming home, nearly a year sooner than had been his intention, she took

very little notice. She was so petted and pampered by her greatuncle and her parents, she was so much the darling of the Court, and so wrapped in her own secret romantic love that it seemed to her she was under a spell that nothing could break. Robin Essex might come and Robin Essex might go; she had, she was sure, only to

"I am saving it aloud to make it all clear to myself--I liked all that, and

"Your senses are stirred—or else your heart—you'll be yourself again when these are satisfied. Were she yours, you'd tire of her in a

with your help, it was easy--but now."

week."

pout and plead and Northampton would stroke her yellow hair and say that she might stay as long as she wished in his pleasure-house by the Thames. Her indulgent parents too, would protect her from this husband whom she scarcely remembered, and who, for all she knew, might not even wish to claim her, for she had heard that Robin Devereux was austere and silent, disdained pleasure and amusement and had no interest in wit or beauty or splendour.

The first realisation of what the return of her husband might mean to her awoke in Frances Howard one day when Prince Henry came by river to Northampton House. He met her on the yellow terrace by the

statues of satyrs that were now placed in position laughing on either side of the shallow winged stairs.

The young Prince looked preoccupied and sad, Frances noted,

It was a bright May day with a few white clouds in the blue sky overhead. Frances wished to be free from the Prince; there were few people now for whose company she cared—only Robin; her confidante, Anne Turner; and her old great-uncle who had spoiled her so. For the rest she liked solitude, to sit at her window and watch the river at the end of the garden and read over and over again those exquisite verses in which her Robin told of his love.

But she had to suffer the Prince, and so walked with him slowly over the new marble flags. He said:

"Frances, your husband is returning soon, within a month as I think. He wrote to me from Padua."

without compassion, that he looked haggard, and his clothes were neglected. He said that he would not go into the house to speak to her great-uncle or her parents, for it was she herself that he had wished to see and he asked her to walk up and down the sunny

terrace with him.

Paris?"

him he should return."

The girl flashed him an angry glance and bit her lower lip. "And in what way, sir, was it your affair?" she asked; and her voice, usually so low and sweet, was edged with spite.

"Why did he not," asked Frances childishly, "stay in Padua or in

"He is of an age to come into his estate, and you are of an age to set up housekeeping. Frances. And it was I that wrote to him and told

"Frances," replied Henry Stewart quietly, "I perhaps see more clearly than some of my age and station. I do know, I think, gold from dross. I think your great-uncle, even your parents, are sometimes careless

"But I must tell it to you, Frances. You and Lord Rochester are much spoken of together. My Lord Northampton allows this, and for his own ends. It is very clear, Frances, that your family care little what happens to you, as long as they may retain the friendship of my father's favourite."

These words were spoken so gravely that Frances was startled. She stood rigid for a second and withdrew her hand from the Prince's

with your name. I would rather see you in a husband's keeping."

"You talk like a Puritan divine." cried Frances, hotly, "and I will not

ask your meaning."

arm, unable to think of a reply. Hostile and bitter she stood silent.

"You may hate me for this," added Henry Stewart sadly. "But it is because I love you that I say these words. Love you in honour, Frances, with reverence and gratitude for your beauty and your sweetness and your grace. And if you had been free, I would have offered you the double crown that one day will be mine."

These words caused Frances Howard to forget even Robin Carr for a moment. Queen of England and Scotland! Well, she could play the part as well as Danish Anna...she turned her large blue eyes with an alluring, questioning glance at the grave young man--what was he about to suggest?

"Robin Carr," continued the Prince quietly, "is an upstart, an adventurer, an obstinate fool, vain and greedy. Behind him he has a

"You would not say that, sir," replied the girl warmly, "could you read

sly, cunning, working rogue, that Thomas Overbury who thinks to outwit even your uncle in intrigue. If I were King I should lock them

both in prison for corrupt scoundrels."

"Ay, he is Robin to you?" asked the Prince, pausing in the quick steps he had made away from Frances towards the marble balustrade of the terrace. "He sends you verses? He is Robin to you, then?"

"To all the world. I think," replied the girl guickly, "Yes, he is my

some of the verses that Robin sends to me."

cavalier and my servant, as you yourself, sir, said you wished to beso you should think no shame of Robin. And if you could read his verses you would see that he is more than the King's minion—he has noble thoughts and places me very high. But for yourself, sir," she added with a superb coquetry, "if you would speak for yourself?"

"I did not speak to dazzle you," replied the young man sternly. "You are Robert Devereux's wife before God and man, and so I called him

At this Frances laughed and held up her face, so that the sun was full on it. What was this but jealousy? She had seen that sour look, heard that frozen voice before, she was flattered and excited, Robin was not yet so deep in her heart that the prospect of a crown did not

seem glorious.

"Sir, if you had not of late neglected me, perhaps I should not have accepted the service of Robin."

"I honoured you better by leaving you untainted by evil talk--slander that might have arisen if I had remained your servant."

"Great princes," she mocked, "should be above paltry malice---"

"Paltry malice can pull great princes down, ay and pretty ladies too."

"I have my quardians--"

home--and in his care I will leave you."

very well and the game that your great-uncle and Sir Thomas Overbury--"

"I dislike Tom Overbury--I have told Robin to send him away--he depresses me with his mincing ways and sick face."

"I know their worth," returned the youth harshly, "I understand them

keeps him where he is, but my talk is of small purpose, I hope that Robin Essex will be able to deal with all of them."

He paused and gazed wistfully at Frances Howard as she stood in

her glowing beauty in the gentle English sunshine.

"Your Robin could not do without him," said Henry; "tis Overbury

"I wish you, madam, would leave these Court sports--these false and fleeting delights--this common corruption of the town--"

She was vexed that he took this boring tone instead of telling her more of the love for her that he had hinted at, and she replied petulantly:

"Leave that sermon for Lord Essex to preach!"

"Then--if that is what you want, Little Frances, I'll be gone again."

With that the Prince left the terrace and walked through the well-set gardens where the statues were now in their places, and the temples

in order, and all the trees were blooming in the English May, and without looking back went to the stairs and his barge, wishing he had not meddled, yet resolving to send another messenger to his friend, Essex. in Padua.

Soon after Henry's visit, the Countess of Suffolk decided to take her daughter into the country to the great house at Audley End. Here the

Hatfield or Theobalds. Robin's alliance had been procured and he would from henceforth be a good friend of the Howards and they would be his good friend, too--until this favourite was discarded as Sir Philip Herbert had been. Then, said Madame Suffolk with her loud laugh, an excuse can be found for casting him off. She patted her daughter's cheek and told her she had done very well in the play assigned to her grace and wit.

Frances Howard made no reply; she despised her mother and felt in no need of her advice. All the time that she was at Audley End, twice every week a messenger came in the Howard livery to deliver a paper of compliment to the Earl and Countess and secretly, by way of her chambermaid, Alice, who had been a sewing girl under Anne Turner, some verses beautifully written and a letter from Robin to Frances. This was all she needed, these words of love and flattery,

worldly woman spoke sharply to the girl; her husband was returning and she had gone far enough with Robin Carr, there must be no more exchange of letters and sonnets, no more partnering each other in the masques, no more riding side by side in the chase at

afternoons, played card games with the Countess in the evenings, went early to bed. But always near her, in the bosom of her dress, or between her pillow and her mattress was a packet of letters and verses from Whitehall.

With her mother she was meek and prim, but with Alice, the roguish disciple of Anne Turner, she chattered gaily—always of love and of

these warm, amorous phrases that lapped her like a gentle breeze, perfumed and soft, these hints at delights to come and a love that should outlast the stars. She was very dutiful to her mother at Audley End. sat at her music or her sewing patiently, rode out in the

Robin Carr.

When Frances returned to London it was high summer and the gardens of Northampton House were full of roses and exotic plants

sunshine, the flowers and all the beauty and comfort of her life. She ran with a light step into the library at the eastern end of the house to greet her great-uncle in her usual fashion by flinging her arms round his neck and kissing his sallow cheeks. But on the threshold she paused, for there was a young man who was a stranger to her, and yet vaguely familiar, standing by her great-uncle's desk. He wore

that the Earl, at great expense, had had brought from Persia, France.

The young girl felt a sudden lift of joy in her heart for the blue sky, the

Italy and the East.

long straight brown hair fell on to his plain collar. He turned narrow, dark, questioning eyes on Frances, and, bending his head, greeted her without a smile.

"This is your husband, Lord Essex," said the old man smiling from his hooded chair. "Come and kiss him, Frances. He has arrived in

travelling clothes. A long cloak falling from his shoulders to the ground increased his height, a folded hat was crumpled in his hands:

his hooded chair. "Come and kiss him, Frances. He has arrived in London two days before; we expected him-did your mother tell you?"

"You do not seem pleased to see me. madam." remarked the young

man dryly with a thin smile. "We are still strangers, but I should not frighten you." Frances flushed, remembering the harsh words of Prince Henry.

"She is surprised," said Northampton smoothly. "Come here, Frances."

The girl in her green travelling gown crossed the shining floor lightly, and smiling proudly, murmured a formal welcome to her lord at whom she looked fixedly.

"She is tired." said the old man, patting her hand. "She came up

country air has become her well--this is your Robin, Frances--"

At the word Robin the girl cast down her eyes, then kissed her greatuncle's brow, and with a brief curtsy left the library, walking stiffly, like
an offended child, haughty and wounded.

The two men were silent. Northampton cursed silently the mischief

maker who had brought the husband home before the lover was got rid of, and Essex, full of distrust, suspicion and stung pride, wished he had never been married but resolved no other man should have

his bride

wooing?"

from Audlev End to-day. See how pleasant-featured she is. Robert--

"When does she come to Chartley?" he asked at last, striking his dusty boot with his bright-handled riding-whip.

"When I bid her," smiled Northampton quietly. "Put your house in order, my lord, and your housekeeper will be ready to take charge of

it--but--" and his voice was suddenly thin and cold--"Frances is young, merry and admired--will you not give yourself a little time for

"That was done for me when I was a boy," replied the young man coldly. "I am not one to gild with levity this business alliance that you, sir, yourself arranged."

"Ah, harshly spoken!" The old Earl smiled. "I only thought to save you

vexation--"
"What vexation should I have in my marriage if my wife has been properly bred?"

properly bred?"

"A sharp sentence!" The old man laughed outright. "Go your way.

Robert. The girl is yours when you are ready for her. I'll answer for her breeding. Her beauty you have seen—is she not dazzling?"

had been put on his guard by the rumours he had heard of his bride's behaviour and by the reception she had given him. He disliked the Howards and their suspected poperv and hated the corruption of the Court, so he answered haughtily: "As to that. I think her too little, and too fair; but when a man's marriage is made for him, he is seldom matched to his liking. But, if

she be virtuous, sir. I may forgive the fact that though she dazzles she

So he took his leave, indifferent to the hatred that leapt to old Howard's eyes as he heard his beloved niece slighted by this cold

does not blind me."

His keen eyes darted a glance that was almost wistful at the youth. as if he begged for admiration for his darling; but Essex was hurt and

young man. In the galleries of Whitehall that night Frances Howard, walking with her mother, passed Thomas Overbury and Robin, who bent towards her: and bitterly whispered "Who brought Essex back before his time?"

She replied over her shoulder: "Prince Henry: he is not your friend." There was a masque given at Whitehall for the investiture of Henry as Prince of Wales, and the Court was in so much hurry and bustle and excitement over these revels, sports and laughter that matters of more serious importance seemed to be forgotten, or, at least, were

only turned over in idle moments by gossips and tittle-tattlers.

Frances Howard continued to reside at Northampton House and Essex in Essex House. The rumour was that the bride had pleaded

that she might have until September in order to enjoy the gajeties of the Court a little longer before she went with her newly returned lord

Prince Henry's party, and was seldom at Whitehall though often at St. James's, and that the Prince had ceased to be the servant of the Lady Frances, whom he never saw except in public when he treated her coldly. There were rumours, too, of frightful scenes in Northampton House when the rough Earl of Suffolk, with a medley of sea paths, had stormed and raged at his daughter, telling her to do her duty and go with her new lord, while her mother had wept moaned and talked of scandal and the loss of the King's and Prince's favour. Even Northampton had told the girl grimly not to be such a fool as to take in earnest what had been in play. If this were true then Frances Howard had outstood them all, for she continued to take her part in Court life as freely as she had done before her husband returned. Whatever the truth, even the gossips admitted that on the surface all was smooth enough. The young Earl seemed patient and waited on his young wife's whims with a cold, magnanimous restraint that should have touched her heart; but of flatteries he gave her none. So the time for the investiture came, and the architects engineers, designers, milliners, dress-makers and stage-hands were all busy with this great entertainment, Mrs. Anne Turner and her assistants designed dresses, cut rich stuffs, pinned, sewed, nipped and ruffled until, from sheer fatique, they fell asleep over their scissors, pins and needles. The pageant or festival, which was called "The Queen's Wake," was written by Mr. Daniel, the licenser of plays and groom of Priory Chamber to the Queen. The dresses and scenery surpassed in magnificence anything that had been seen, even at Whitehall, before; and when it was all over, when the jewels and the tinsel had been put away and the King, who had eaten and drunk himself into a severe sickness, had gone to Theobalds to recover himself in the

company of Robin and Tom for the chase. Lord Essex came to Northampton House and told old Henry Howard roundly that he

to Chartley. It was noted, too, that Essex had attached himself to

wanted to have his wife at Chartley by September.

not employed before, and the girl, who was physically weary and somewhat broken in spirit by the long struggle against her family and that other combat in her heart, felt the first chill of fear.

"Why do you look so frightened?" asked her great-uncle. "It has been a merry play and you have enjoyed it. Why are you so alarmed when the curtain comes down and the masque is over?"

"Do not speak to me in parables." sighed Frances, sinking on to the

When the young man had gone, the old Earl sent for Frances, who was weary after the exhausting delights at Whitehall, and told her dryly that the days of folly were over, that she must follow her lord to Staffordshire by September. He used a tone of finality that he had

word has been tossed about like a feather ball, but I think, and I mean what I say, that I love Robin Carr--and therefore I cannot go to Chartley."

Northampton peered shrewdly down at the languid girl. The candles were lit and the night-moths fluttered in at the window. He was curious, a little pleased, because he disliked Essex and liked intrigue, but he spoke with icy prudence.

"You and Robin have played together long enough. Who has kept

your name from being slandered? Only two men--Henry Stewart, who holds your husband back and teaches him patience, and Tom

stool at the old man's feet. "It must be that Llove Robin Carr. That

"I hate Robert Devereux," sighed Frances. "So cold, so dark!"

"So do I." agreed the old Earl. "A dry Puritan--"

Overbury, who restrains your stupid Robin."

"He does not want me. He does not woo me. he has not sent me one letter " "He wants his wife, your dowry too--he's not so rich. And he must have his wav."

Frances rested her golden head against the old man's knee. He understood her well: she was more in love with love than with her Robin: with careful management her husband might vet have her heart whole, and in time win her to dutiful wifehood. Kate Suffolk had

been vigilant: Robin Carr had had no more of Frances than a snatched kiss. But why should they be so careful to preserve the honour of Essex, who rejected them? Why should the girl not have

her love before she went to Chartley? One night's meeting would bind the favourite very closely to the Howards, debase Essex and discountenance the Prince, his friend.

"Well, my darling, my little poppet, what do you think of?"

The girl stared at him mutely. The old man put his hand under her smooth chin and smiled. "You have until September-that's some weeks. Maybe in that time

Robin Essex can win your heart as well as Robin Carr." She shook her head. "Never! Never! I dislike him. I would not have him as much as put his hand on mine." She drew closer to her great-

uncle and laid her coaxing hands on his black velvet sleeves. "My lord, if I do--if I promise to go quietly in September--can I, will you help me to see Robin? If it may not be any longer openly, let it now be secretly. There is no harm in it! The rest of my life will be spent in

a dull fashion! I am only seventeen years of age--may I not enjoy myself while I can?"

Love's name could not be erased from the heart of so pretty a creature as Frances, and so sent her off, easier in her mind. The Earl of Northampton liked meddling, he liked mischief as much as he disliked Prince Henry and his friend. Robert Devereux, so after a little inward laughter he sent for Anne Turner who was, he knew. supping in the buttery, and when she came she had a long

conference with the old man, then ran to Frances Howard's

apartment, scratched on the door and was admitted.

The old man laughed and pinched her cheek and said that it was a harmless wish in one so young to want a gay playfellow, and that

She found the girl drooped in the window place, her face fallen in her hands, looking forlorn and childish in the splendour of her great chamber, Mrs. Turner ran to the little Countess, sank down on the cushion at her feet and, pulling her fingers down, said: "Listen to me, child. I can help you, only you must confide everything to me and promise to obey me in all."

It was a source of great pleasure and excitement to Anne Turner to be able to bring this new client to her patron. Simon Forman, She had had no difficulty, with her air of wisdom and experience and knowledge of the ways of the world, in persuading the girl to do exactly as she wished. Lord Northampton and Frances's parents were all at Audley End,

and the girl was free not only to see Mrs. Turner whenever she would. but to visit her at her town house in Paternoster Row and, to sit with her in one of the temporary galleries in Whitehall Palace, built of

firwood hastily as an annexe to the great hall where the masques were performed. There Mrs. Turner would snip and sew and write out her lists for buckram, calico, feathers, cardboard and tinsel, and

make her costings, which were always too high, for the masquers

House.

Now, Mrs. Turner, though a silly woman, was well experienced in the symptoms of love, and she began to think with the flutter of expectancy of the capital she could make from her discovery that Frances Howard had taken seriously the play devised by Tom Overbury, Lord Northampton, the Suffolks, and Dr. Mayerne, and that she was beginning to regard Robin Carr with a deep and headlong passion and to think of the possibility of her withdrawal to Chartley with her husband with genuine aversion.

"Doctor Forman will help you," was Mrs. Turner's refrain; and one day after the Earl of Essex had shown a stormy displeasure at being refused admission to Northampton House and a severe letter had come from Kate Suffolk at Audley End to Frances, bidding her return to her senses and not cause a scandal, Mrs. Turner took the girl

next Christmas, while Frances would sit on a little stool at her feet and discuss her own affairs with a good deal of eagerness. While she thus spent her time she always refused to see the Earl of Essex when he came, either, alone or with his retinue, to Northampton

As the two women were rowed up the smooth running river, Anne Turner told Frances in an excited whisper many wonderful tales of Simon Forman, who was, she declared, the most notable magician in England and could perform any manner of miracle.

under cover of dusk by water to Chelsea from the common stairs by St. Paul's, where the dress-designer's own watermen were waiting.

"Only you must trust him," she insisted. "Remember that he already knows all your secrets through his arts, so that it is useless to try to conceal anything from him. Remember"—she patted the girl's still hand reassuringly—"that he alone can help you."

"Am I then to put myself in his power?" whispered Frances from the

and warlocks were held; she had been told by her great-uncle that Simon Forman lived within the jurisdiction of the Archbishop that he might better escape the authorities...she had heard, too, that he had once been in prison for trying to raise the dead; she shuddered, halfafraid, half-excited. But Mrs. Turner laughed as the boat came to the landing-stage.

shadow of her hood. She knew well enough in what repute witches

"Simon Forman has had half the women in the kingdom ask him for help, and has any one of them been the worse for it? Besides, it seems to me that you are in such a pass, madam, that none but a man like the Master can help you."

round which were clustered the sleeping swans. Darkness had fallen and they had no light but the lantern in the boat, and she spoke with a

certain coldness in which there was a hint of menace.

"Am I in a pass?" asked the girl to herself in a low voice as she stepped ashore, "Yes, I suppose I am." She threw up her head with an air of resolution and walked forward in

front of Anne Turner with that stately grace that had made her so admired in the gardens and the masgues. She assured herself that she loved Robin and that nothing else mattered.

Simon Forman was prepared to receive his new patient, as he

called her, with all the ceremony due to one likely to prove so profitable, but he had not made the mistake of any crude or vulgar display, for he knew well enough that Frances Howard was used to

the tricks of the stage and would see behind a plaster mask and

mock at a tinsel wand. So the sage allowed himself to be discovered in a room hung with

sombre sad-coloured cloth, lit by five candles, each one of which

The doctor himself wore a long black robe with a fillet of white wool bound round his smooth forehead, the ends of which flowed down into the beard that hid his mobile mouth. On the table beside him were several books bound in wood and brass with great clasps; on a slab of stone, close to the edge of his robe stood a small brazier that burnt a fragrant charcoal, from which fumes arose.

was stuck into the tip of a finger that twisted from what appeared to be a dead hand, so cunningly was the metal modelled and painted.

round. Then she boldly advanced, and following Mrs. Turner's example, bent a knee to the quack. Forman bowed his head gravely and bid the two women take off their cloaks. When they had done this he looked very sharply at Frances Howard, noting her extreme youth, her exceeding beauty

Frances Howard stood hesitant for a moment on the threshold of this strange room; her large clear eyes glanced apprehensively, haughtily

and her profound emotion. "Why do you come to consult me?" he asked in a stern voice. "Remember, before you answer, that I know who you are, and your

story." The girl answered gravely, yet tightly gripping Anne Turner's hand: "I have as yet no story, sir, and it is easy for you to know me. I may, without difficulty, be seen in London."

The magician replied harshly: "You must come to see me in humility and faith, madam. Maybe all the world knows that you are Frances Howard, wife in name to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, but I have

deeper knowledge. I know that you love Lord Rochester, that you receive from him letters an sonnets, that the thought of going with

Lord Essex to Chartley as his wife fills you with loathing."

"Anne Turner has told you that," whispered the girl, glancing towards her friend.

The sage waved his hand contemptuously. "I do not need Anne

Turner's information, madam. What is it you want of me?"

For the first time Frances Howard faltered. "I hardly know-I scarcely know myself. I am in great distress. It's true that I dislike my Lord Essex and would not go to Chartley. I am to go in September-I want

"Perhaps," said Simon Forman with a faint smile, "that may be contrived. But remember, if I undertake to help you I shall be putting myself into great peril and to vast expense. What you demand can only be achieved by the aid of the spirits. You must swear to become their servant, swear complete obedience to me and my spirits, and

to him who is the Master of us all. Simon Magus."

a respite, a delay."

Frances Howard stood silent, biting her lips and frowning while she glanced at the floor on which were drawn chalk circles and magic signs.

Simon Forman and Anne Turner exchanged a glance, which said.

'This child is not such an easy dupe.' Then the charlatan in his most formidable and piercing voice, said:

"You have another trouble besides dislike of your husband. You are in love with Robin Carr—but he is not your lover. And you long for his

In love with Robin Carr—but he is not your lover. And you long for his love, his kisses and embraces."

This shot in the dark struck home. It revealed the girl's desires to herself; her breasts heaved, her face flushed. But still she would not speak, and stood there sullen and doubtful looking sideways from the sage to the dress-designer.

tired, you are excited and distressed. Drink this," Frances Howard did so mechanically, not thinking any harm, and the sage rose and assisted her into his handsome carved chair that was cushioned in black velvet. There she sat beautiful and bright,

Anne Turner knew what to do. With a leer at the sage she went out of the room, and quickly returned with a thin glass in her hand. "You are

shivering a little; then the powerful wine, lightly drugged, ran through her veins and loosened her tongue. She put her elbows on the table and her face in her hands and began to weep softly; her reserves were melted, all her proud defences down. She told these two, whom she took to be her friends, that she did desire the love of Robin Carr. but though he was her servant and sent her his sonnets and his

letters, he had not wooed her as she wanted to be wooed, except once, the day of the pageant at Northampton House when he had

chased her through the dark garden. "And there he held me, against his heart, and I felt that he loved me truly. Since then it has been my fingers, and, lightly, my lips, And he has said to me, 'You cannot be my wife, or yet my mistress'--and again, 'A Howard cannot be the woman of a Carr.' It seems that he has held me in more respect than passion." "And you?" urged Anne Turner, bending over the chair and delicately

and playfully lifting the yellow tendrils of hair damped with sweat that hung on the child's brow. "And what would you have?"

"I would have," whispered Frances Howard, looking up, her face distorted with passion and flushed from the wine. "I would have his love, even secretly and shamefully."

A hint of triumph showed under Simon Forman's broad eyelids. This was better than he had hoped for...Frances Howard in love with the

King's favourite! "I suppose," he thought, "the fool hangs back out of

gross sportsman who wearies himself with games, but we can remedy that...no doubt Doctor Mayerne dosed him the night of the pageant at Northampton House."

He then turned to the girl, and addressing her in vigorous and incisive tones, said:

fear or because his blood is cold and sluggish--it is so with many a

"Daughter, we can help you--but you must acknowledge me as your father, you must acknowledge me as the Master, the servant of Simon Magus, and in my turn the overlord of powerful spirits. You

must trust me and Anne Turner, my sweet daughter here, absolutely. We will have you from your husband and will obtain for you the love of Robin Carr. But if the spells that I am to work for you are to prove potent, I must have faith, obedience, patience and courage."

He made a signal behind Frances's bent golden head, for the girl was now sobbing into her hands, and Mrs. Turner twitched aside a panel of the hangings. This showed a recess like a cupboard, glassed-in; there, on a white satin couch arranged on a gilded shelf, lay the waxen woman, the girdle of stars round her waist and hair of vellow silk trailing on her pillow.

Frances Howard stared at the image and blushed. "It is myself!" she cried, clutching her hands at her breast.

"She does not lie solitary," simpered Mrs. Turner, and taking the

girl's hand she drew her close to the alcove.

Beside the image lay another, cunningly fashioned to the likeness of Robin Carr, even to the crest of golden locks on the forehead.

"These two can be joined, and forever, if you do as I say," said Mrs.

Turner, throwing her arm round the girl's thin shoulders. "But first you

must become initiated into the Master's mysteries."

both led and held in contempt by Tom Overbury.

Tom Overbury soon had a rare piece of news for his friend, who had just returned from Theobalds, where he had been in attendance on the King. But first he allowed Robin Carr to tell his own tale, as he always did, for it was his policy to show a certain deference to the patron whom he despised and not to allow him to see how he was

So Robin Carr, who was in a light-hearted mood, glanced at the account books that Overbury put before him, closed them without perusing them properly and began to talk of the sport they had had at

Theobalds, of the ungainliness of the King, who would follow the chase on his strange saddle that was like an arm-chair fastened to the back of a horse with straps and paddings to keep his rickety limbs in place, and even with that contrivance would usually fall off when the beast started. Then, when he had made his jest out of his royal Master, which caused Overbury to laugh, a certain weariness that was like the weariness of disgust came over the naturally passive face of the young Scot as he said:

"The King is a rare fool for all that odd manner of learning. I have to follow him as close as Master Jowler, his dog. Old Dad never washes his hands, Tom, for fear he should spoil their whiteness, and when he eats or drinks he dribbles so that the food and liquid run down his beard. His eyes roll so in his head that many for shame go

out of the room, not bearing to look at him. And what is his talk? Shrewd enough, sometimes, yet often like that of a sick girl. And he hates his own son and makes iests of his own wife. And I am weary

"Hush, hush," said Tom Overbury. "This is His Majesty's own

of being dressed up like a doll for this fool's pleasure."

palace."

"This is but a mood, Robin, and will pass. The King loves you--you must think of that, of his kindness towards you. Think of the revenues he has given--he has made you a Viscount, he may make you an Earl--and you shall have the Garter."

He spoke on such a note of alarm that Carr looked startled.

"My appetite for these things is not what it was. The gold I snatched up so eagerly seems tarnished already."

"You need a diversion," said Tom hastily. "And now I must give you my news. Lord Essex is taken suddenly sick. Doctor Mayerne goes

twice a day to his house. You can imagine how my Lady Frances

rejoices. She scarcely dare ask for news of her lord for fear she learns he is recovering."

Robin was startled by this information. Overbury watched him turning over the situation in his slow mind. Then he said:

"So Robin Devereux may miss his bride after all, and you may come to your mistress without any danger. Little Anne Turner came to see me. Oh, she had a good excuse. She wanted the measurements for the suit of primrose and silver the King desires to see you in. The

sleeves are to be a novelty. She brought her tailor with her and they talked fripperies for an hour. But afterwards she found a chance of saying to me that Lady Frances pined when you were away and read nothing but my poor sonnets and letters—that she thinks your handiwork, Robin."

"What would you have me do?" asked the other young man brusquely. "Is she for me to take like an over-ripe peach from the wall, to toss or throw away--Northampton's great-niece and Essex's

wife? I am not quite the fool, Tom, that you think me. Maybe the King likes to roll a scandalous story over his tongue, but this would strike

"He need not know," replied Tom Overbury softly, "and Robin Devereux, if he recovers, need not know, is it that you have no fancy for the girl? Even if that were so and I were in your place. I'd take her--first to spite Prince Henry who brought Essex home to spite you." Tom Overbury tried to speak lightly, but he was impatient and angry

him too near. He'd hardly chuckle if I made a cuckold of Robin

Devereux "

desperately at this plot; the fish that they had thought would be the most difficult to catch-the girl-had swum willingly into the net, happy to be caught. Northampton, Mayerne, the Suffolks, all had played their parts. Only Robin Carr, for shame and awkwardness and fear and indifference to women, held off, and was likely to ruin everything with his cowardly squeamishness. But Overbury knew that he must control himself; every hour of every day he reminded himself that

everything he had and was depended on the favour of Robin Carr. as everything that Robin Carr had and was depended on the love of the

King. But he did venture to sav softly:

with his patron. So many people had worked so long and so

"Leaving all lust and liking for the woman out of it. Robin, remember if she is compromised, if we are able to guide her future and ruin her name, we have the family of Howards in our hands, to raise up and cast down as we wish."

The other young man did not answer, but stood sullen with hanging head. So Tom Overbury opened and shut the account books

impatiently and said in a thin voice:

"Well, then, leave the girl, who is eager for a lover, to Prince Henry, and let him laugh at you for a laggard, as he already laughs at you for an upstart."

"Ah, you harp too much on that string," replied Robin impatiently. "Henry and the Howards, and contriving and combining this and that! Cannot you take the good that is offered you, Tom, without all this scheming and contriving?"

"The good that's offered me," replied Tom Overbury dryly, "is the result of all my scheming and contriving. You have the easier part, Robin. You may amuse yourself at bowls or billiards and tennis or the chase and riding the great horse and making a display in the tilt-yard and dancing in the masques." The lean young scholar spoke with unusual force. His eyes, generally veiled, flashed with suppressed passion as he added:

"But I have the harder task—I must keep your accounts and see that

your revenues are well spent and that you sell all the offices put in your power at the highest rates, that your establishment is run

"That's enough, Tom," interrupted Carr impatiently. "I know I owe you much, almost everything-without you I certainly could not have climbed so high. That is well known and acknowledged. But you are

smoothly, that your supplicants are considered--"

"He'll not laugh at me long," said Robin Carr harshly and thickly. "I have so far forborne to ruin him with the King, but I could do so. I tell you the King hates and fears him. I believe he would very willingly have him put out of the way and make Prince Charles his heir."

"Well," smiled Tom Overbury, "that would suit Northampton too. It would leave the Howards completely in power. And there would be nothing in our way either as long as we were allied to them."

a dry fellow, Tom, and talk too much of all this business and intrigue."

"Do I not sit up at night," added Overbury, walking up and down,
"writing your verses and your letters for you? If you win this girl, you

face, then added quickly: "But let us forget all these matters. Come with me this evening to Mrs. Turner's house in Paternoster Row. She will show you the new garments she has designed for you--they are made to set off the iewels the King gave you."

win her through my cleverness." He glanced at his friend's downcast

"Well, she has other diversions too. Come with me, she is an amusing woman. Does the King return to town to-night?"

"No, he has had a fit of ague, and the pain in his great toe, which he refuses to admit is gout--and Doctor Mayerne has been sent for. I must go down to him again to-morrow--when I'll beg," said the youth

with a wry smile, "another holiday," "I will make it one in earnest," grinned Tom.

Dr. Mayerne was not interested in His Majesty's illness, which he

learnt from one of his gentlemen.

"I am tired of clothes, iewels," muttered Robin Carr.

knew to be the result of excesses working upon a miserable constitution. Two days out of three the king would stumble to bed, or be lifted into bed, intoxicated and every week or so he gave himself a severe indigestion by his gluttonous appetite. He lived, too, in a

state of perpetual panic and fear, which also had an ill-effect upon his health, and overheated himself with the thick padded clothes he wore in dread of the assassin's knife. So the learned physician rode back to London after ordering possets and caudles and draughts for His Maiesty, and went directly to Essex House where the young Earl

understand the cause of it in a man so young and temperate as Robin Devereux, and his mind worked continually round the

lay sick. This illness did interest the good doctor, for he could not

circumstances of the beginning of my lord's illness, which he had

and he had been deeply angered by the support that seemed to be given to this conduct by the King, who, the scandal-mongers said. was watching the interests of his favourite. Robin Carr, who was well known to be the lady's servant. Urged by his friend. Prince Henry to take a definite course, the young Earl had ridden to Northampton House and demanded an audience of Lord Northampton or the Earl of Suffolk: on being told that both these gentlemen were at Audley End. Essex had then demanded--and in no gentle manner--to see his young wife. To his surprise he had not been refused. The major-domo with much courtesy had conducted him into the long chamber where the old Earl held his banquets, then, after a few moments, to the surprise of the Earl and his gentlemen, the young Countess had come down and greeted her lord in a modest, respectful manner, making a curtsy and allowing him to kiss her hand. She had then spoken a few formal

The Earl had been brooding continually, it seemed, over the behaviour of his wife. He had been galled and wounded by her refusal to leave Northampton House and accompany him to Chartley.

sentences that were beautiful and pleasant, and Essex, who had come with his heart full of tumult and anger, had been embarrassed and awkward and had hardly known what to say for pride and The gentleman who had given Dr. Mayerne this information had been

pleasure. present at the interview, and he told the physician that the Lady

Frances seemed of a very sweet disposition and that she had told her husband she would accompany him to Chartley in September, and offered him, with her own hand, a glass of wine into which, in the

prettiest manner possible, she had floated some late rose leaves. Blushing and awkward the young man had drunk from this loving cup.

and, reassured as to his wife's disposition towards him, had left Northampton House and mounted his horse. He had not, however.

The young Earl had been brought to his house, which was farther down the river towards the cathedral, and there he lay, half-unconscious and in pain, and often in fever, daily, as it seemed to Mayerne, losing strength.

The fat learned Frenchman thought over this business very carefully. "It is none of my affair." he said to himself, "but I'll save the young

got farther than the confines of the village of Charing when he had fallen out of the saddle in a kind of fit or convulsion, which his

attendants had thought to be the beginning of the plague.

"But the plague it's not." said Dr. Maverne thoughtfully.

man if I can—though I think that will spite someone."

Dr. Mayerne left Essex House in a thoughtful mood not unspiced with amusement, for the whole situation between the King and the King's favourite, the Howards, Tom Overbury, Simon Forman and Mrs.

Turner was to him like a comedy shown on the boards by able actors.

There passed him, in the gathering dark of the narrow street, without his seeing them, Robin and Tom, who had come from Whitehall in a boat that had paused at the common stairs of St. Paul's Cathedral. There the two young men had stepped ashore: they were

unattended, and Robin at least felt the freer for being plainly attired again and without pages or fools or servants about him.

They crossed St. Paul's Churchyard and went down the filthy streets of overhanging houses that bordered it, and so to Mrs. Turner's trim mansion in Paternoster Row, which was lit by candles and full of

The little dress-designer was a good entertainer and knew how to

music and merry voices.

Arthur. The night was for her one of relief and rejoicing, for she had heard of the death of her husband, Dr. George Turner. The thought of this grave man, to whom she legally belonged, had been a thorn in the side of the woman for a long time, and she was glad that the censorious, sad creature had gone at last to Heaven, which for her part she thought he should never have left.

This kind of easy company that was neither vulgar nor ostentatious suited Robin Carr better than the gaudy splendours to which he could never become used, and he was soon happy in that little party which consisted but of himself and Overbury. Sir Arthur and Mrs. Turner

put people at ease. She kept her children and their governess in her other house in Lambeth, and often lived here with her lover. Sir

evening pass very pleasantly, the more so that Tom was always at his elbow, subtly prompting him and setting him off as it were before the company and making him out in his own estimation a far finer fellow than he knew himself to be.

But Robin did not know that his sense of ease and good fellowship

and one of the most good-humoured of the King's fools, Sir John Merryweather. There was music and singing, there was wine, there were wicked stories and coarse jests, and Robin Carr felt the

and lightness of spirit, that the way his blood seemed to bound lustily in his veins was the result of some of Simon Forman's potions, with which his wine had been liberally dosed.

When the meal was over the fool and Tom slunk away, with many a sly laugh between them, and roaring Sir Arthur slipped out into the moonlight to continue his drink and his amusement at a tavern nearby that he frequented, and Robin Carr was putting on his cloak

and making ready to depart also, though he felt drowsy and a little dizzy. Mrs. Turner detained him, insisting that he should have one more cup. She put out all the lights except a little lamp that she set on

the middle of the table: from a nearby room came the throb and tinkle

him more lovely than any melody he had ever heard before. Mrs. Turner flitted about and filled his glass. He heard the singers clattering and fighting for oranges on the stairs, and the watchman go past and cry out, and a city church clock strike and Mrs. Turner laugh pleasantly.

of sweet music, and to Robin languid in his easy chair it seemed to

Then an inner door opened as if by itself, and the little woman exclaimed in a bright voice: "Ah. I have a lady staying with me--one, who, like yourself, Lord

Rochester, is tired of state and all the tedium and noise of the Court and is here for a little repose. But you must never mention who it is." Robin felt a surge in his blood. He sat still, watching the door.

Through it came Frances Howard, simply dressed like a citizen's daughter in a suit of grev cloth with her hair hanging in maidenly

fashion on her shoulders. Robin rose unsteadily and remembered the last sonnet Tom had given him, which he had now inside his doublet. He pulled out the roll of vellum with its scarlet ends tied and laid it silently on the table beside the lamp, while he stared at her in wistful expectancy,

wondering what it all might mean and where her playing was to lead

Frances Howard came forward: her lovely eagerness was like a flood of light over her face.

them.

"This is for me, Robin? This is for me?"

dress and laughed sweetly.

She put the roll, warm from his breast, into the open bosom of her

curtaining at the windows--curtains that let no shadow through. "Now, my love, we can be quiet at last--tell me something about vourself--I know so little about vou." He put his arm round her and she nestled against his breast; into his free hand she pressed a little nutmeg in a gilt filigree case and a long thin chain. "You are to wear that, and think of me." "I think of you too much already." "Why too much. Robin?" "I fear to feed the spite of others--I do not know how they would entangle us--" "Robin! At first I led you on--for a sport--because my Lord Northampton bid me--but your letters, your verses--" "Only those?"

He followed her into the little bedchamber which was small and fragrant with bunches of herbs hanging over a bed that was curtained with a thin yellow silk. There was a chest, half-open, full of ladies' disguises, and a lamp above, and little else but rush chairs and thick

"He is sick-I have friends-I will never go to Chartley, I will never belong to him."

"No, you--all of you. I do truly love you."

"What is the use? You are married to Essex."

They stood clinging together, the sounds of the city night coming

She answered deliberately, for now she knew her own mind.

"I love you, I will be faithful. "Il not go to Chartley-or, if they force me to, he shall not touch me. I'll be faithful."

"Could you be faithful to me?" whispered Robin in her ear. "I have the

faintly to sweeten their sense of privacy.

only these. I'll be true or I'll die."

King behind me, and a way might be contrived--"

Her promise seemed to him to give this stolen passion the nobility he needed in his love, for though he was far from perfect he wanted some gloss of perfection over his secret fantasies.

"Stay with me. Robin, this one night. These minutes are ours, and

her hands over the roll of parchment above her heart. He bolted the door, put out the lamp and found her again in the dark where she was weeping softly.

Mrs. Turner went yawning about and extinguished the lights in her discreet little house, drew the curtains and locked the doors, while Tom Overbury picked his way through the gutters of the Strand and went sniggering home. He sat up all that night reading a learned book, going over his accounts, making schemes. Towards dawn he

He put her from him gently; she sank down on the bedstep and put

went to a cupboard and took out tarts and jellies and ate them as they were from a tray with a kind of fastidious greed.

He was at this occupation when Robin Carr returned, stared at him, laughed shortly and crossed the antechamber towards his bedroom.

began to feel hungry, and since he was very fond of sweet things he

"It is the dawn," smirked Tom, wiping his fingers on his taffeta

"You were always too fond of sweets." "Yes, the sun rises--I never tire of seeing that first glow above the city. How went the entertainment at Mrs. Turner's?" persisted Tom. "You're a glutton--you were ever fond of sweets." repeated Robin. He

sighed and vawned together.

handkerchief. "Have you enjoyed your dainties as I enjoyed mine?"

the amazement, the excitement, and delicately snapping his thin fingers. Tom said to himself: 'That for the House of Howard!' At this same hour Mrs. Turner was discreetly escorting Frances Howard back to Northampton House. As she hurriedly, on the back stairway, kissed the flushed excited girl good night. Mrs. Turner whispered triumphantly, "Did I not tell you that the Master could do

Overbury looked at him shrewdly, saw the change in him, the triumph.

everything? Has he not removed a husband out of the way, and have you not had your Robin?" "It's that devil of a Frenchman, Mayerne," grumbled Simon Forman. "He guessed the manner of the ailment and cured it!" "Well, the drug did its work," replied Mrs. Turner lightly. "It has given my lady and my lord a pleasant interlude and put a good deal of money into your coffer and mine. And it has made the honour of the Howards." she added slyly, "our plaything! The little fool's letters, the

notes of her visits here and to me, and your prescriptions, fill now a fair chest, good Doctor." As the sage did not answer, Mrs. Turner continued with a sigh: "But it

would have been better if Robin Devereux had died--then my lady would have had all the great Essex estates as well and been able to marry Robin Carr."

recovered and demands his bride, the only way to save us all is for her to obey him and go to Chartley."

"That she will never do," said the dress-designer roundly. "No potions were needed to send her into love—it's Robin, sweet Robin.

lovely Robin with her, Robin noon and night. And him, too, she has

"But as it is not so," replied Dr. Forman grimly, "as the husband has

him now enchanted. Though he may have hesitated at first she is now his dearest dear—they're well in, I warrant you."

"It may be," replied the good doctor with a sour smile. "But for all that, she must go with Essex to Chartley. If she will not take that order from you, bring her here. Remember that she has swom obedience to me. I have given her what she asked for. She cannot be an utter fool. Have you not told he what is likely to result for all of us if she continues to resist Lord Essex and he investigates the reason for her refusal? He with Prince Henry behind him! Ay, with all who hate the favourite! And their names begin to be legion," he added with a sneer.

continues to resist Lord Essex and he investigates the reason for her refusal? He with Prince Henry behind him! Ay, with all who hate the favourite! And their names begin to be legion," he added with a sneer.

So Mrs. Turner in some trepidation took this stern warning message to Frances Howard, who continued to live in Northampton House under the protection of her great-uncle. Her husband's severe illness and slow recovery had afforded the girl a long respite, and she had lived joyously through the late summer and early autumn, meeting her lover in Paternoster Row, in Simon Forman's house in Lambeth, trusting entirely in him, whom she termed her 'sweet father,' and Anne Turner, whom she called her 'dearest friend.'

She had of late received stern warning and half-menaces from her great-uncle and her parents, who had told her, with furious violence, that the time for childish whims was passed and that she must lay

aside her wilful obstinacy and accompany Lord Essex to Chartley

all Frances Howard had paid little attention to these threats. but when Anne Turner came to her and told her that Simon Forman, her 'sweet father.' and the loving Master.' had said that she must obey, then she grew pale and broke into wild weeping. Seeing this, the little dress-

designer began to tremble and with the dexterity of a shallow woman

unless she wished for a scandal that would blight her and ruin them

in a dangerous position, she began to plead and argue with her dupe, speaking of her own danger, which she had run for the sake of helping her sweet friend. Her friend's terror, by no means entirely feigned, sobered Frances. She dried her tears and listened to Anne Turner's agitated advice.

which was they should both go to consult the 'sweet Master' at

Lambeth and accept in everything his advice and instruction. It was a few days after this secret visit to Lambeth, that Frances Howard told her great-uncle in a guiet obedient manner that she was ready to accompany Lord Essex to Chartley. She only asked that she might be allowed another week, in which, with her mother's help, she might choose her country apparel and her waiting women. Lord

Northampton smiled his pleasure at this submission, patted the girl's golden head and kissed her cheek, which was not, he said, as rosv as it might be. He had always known that she was a sensible child

and would realise when she could make trouble no more. "It is not the desert at Chartley, Essex has a great estate, and when next there is a fine masque or entertainment at Whitehall you may

ask leave of your lord to come up, and he will not be slow to grant it." Frances Howard replied with dutiful formalities; the old man did not care to press her further. It was a matter of indifference to him if she

went to Chartley willingly or not. Through the pretty, wilful child, he,

Devereux seemed to the old man as likely a youth as Robin Carr, and one bedfellow was as warm as another on a winter night. So he commended her obedience and let her go her way.

That way was, as soon as night fell, to Mrs. Turner's house in Paternoster Row, accompanied by the dress-designer, both disguised as citizen wives of the meaner sort.

Lord Rochester was waiting for Frances in the little inner room that was so dear to both the lovers. As soon as she saw him she threw herself into his arms and lay across his breast without speaking, sighing in bitter anguish. He, too, was haggard and distressed. He had gone farther into this than he ever meant to go and been trapped as he had never thought to be trapped—the gin prepared by his

enemies had snapped on his very heart. He did not know what to do,

"Robin, I must go or we shall all be ruined--but he shall not touch me--

"How will you contrive that when you are at Chartley?" asked Robin

Henry Howard, had become intimate with the foolish Scots lad and his sly adviser Tom Overbury. He believed that he knew them in and out, every pleat and fold of their characters, and so, as long as he lived, and maybe that would not be long now, he could use them for his own ends. So he patted the girl's cheek again and hoped sincerely that she had found her pleasure in the interlude, as he hoped she would find her pleasure in her splendid marriage. Robin

"I shall. Mrs. Turner has given me some powders to bemuse him-to

make him hate me."

and this was a case in which Tom was no help.

"Poisons?"

wretchedly.

She looked anxiously at her lover as she spoke, for she knew he disliked such practices and she had never told him of her visits to Dr. Forman. For a second Robin's face was shadowed, he had early learnt a horror of anything that smelt of witchcraft or magic, and had caught some of the King's frightened loathing of supernatural evil, but Frances, seeing his uneasiness, pressed close to him and whispered:

"What else shall I do?"

And Robin began to consider only how he might keep his love for himself—she was his now and the husband an interloper who must, somehow, be got rid of. As he pressed her to him, he felt that he could allow her to go to Chartlev only if she had these powders to

"Ah. no! harmless enough--to bring sleep and dullness--to make a

man forget he has a wife."

stupefy young Essex.

or die."

They kissed on that. Her resolve now seemed noble to Robin; her frantic desire to keep herself for him gave a generous glow to their love, he felt that they were lifted above common things like the goddesses and gods in the pageants in which she had so often played. He put her from him and held her at arm's length. Every way

"It is harmless," she whispered, "and simple, dear Robin. I must do it,

she turned, every way the light fell on her, she was another picture of delight. Somehow he must have her always: the King, who had given him everything, must give him Frances Howard.

"Be true to me," she said gravely. "Listen to nothing against me, send me often your secret verses—and, Robin, I do not like Thomas

Overbury." This, coming after she had asked for Tom's verses made

Robin uneasy: he cried unthinkingly. "Ah. I never heed what Tom says!"

friend--let him ao."

"He speaks against me!" she cried, and he was startled at the quickness of her perception and began to stammer--"No. no--" but Frances put her face close to his and whispered: "He is not my

Robin was fascinated by the energy, passion and pride in that small. lovely face, and he thought--"this is no common affection." He felt

exalted and vet afraid and hid his face in the girl's shoulder as he drew her down into the great chair with arms, where they sobbed their farewells

Frances Howard left Northampton House in the Essex coach, drawn by four grey horses, with armed retainers before and behind; with her was Alice, the evil girl trained by Mrs. Turner, who kept whispering comfort under her breath

Ahead of his men rode young Essex, with his broad-leafed hat pulled

over his eyes and his cloak flung over his broad shoulders. It was a windy day and the last leaves were tumbling down from the trees in the fine new gardens. Henry Howard had come to the steps to wave a last farewell, glad that Frances, wild, wilful Frances had proved prudent at last, though he was a little puzzled by her brilliant look, absent and ardent, almost like a dedicated martyr, he thought, and by an ironic air in her submission--had she left her Robin too easily? Prince Henry had ridden from St. James's Palace to bid his friends

"God speed"; he stood at the door of the heavy coach and held aside the leathers as he gazed at Frances Howard.

"God bless you--God have you in his keeping, sweet madam."

pray for this—"

He kissed her hand and let it go, the leathers were drawn and the cavalcade started for the Midlands.

Simon Forman was seated in his private closet casting up his accounts, a task that brought him considerable pleasure, for it

"Pray for that, sir." she said quickly. "Remember me at Chartley and

unexpected visitor; no less a personage than the great Court doctor, Theodore de Mayerne, was at the outer door and begged permission for a few words with Dr. Forman.

The sage raised his evebrows and pursed his lips. It was true that he

He was interrupted by Weston, who announced to him a most

proved that he had a good deal of money in hand.

held a licence from the University of Cambridge to practise medicine, but he had always been ignored by other physicians and even prosecuted by the College of Medicine. So he looked suspicious and even alarmed, though he kept his control as he bade sulky Weston ask Dr. Mayerne into the discreet closet where the more respectable patients were received.

The two men met courteously and glanced at each other with sharp curiosity. They had much in common—interest in medicine, skill in the practice of it, the unscrupulousness with which they pandered to their patients and that knowledge of the vagaries of the human soul which often served them better than their knowledge of the evils and diseases that attacked the human body.

There was not much to choose between them in character or intellect. Dr. Mayerne had been more fortunate and possibly more discreet; he was also better educated. But it would not have needed much of a turn of Fortune's wheel for the Frenchman to have been the

that Dr. Mayerne had not come as he said, out of pure friendly curiosity to look over the laboratory where a colleague worked with such industry.

"I believe," Mayerne said with a civil smile, "that many of my patients come to you when they believe they can get no further help from me, and that if I am termed 'The Angel of Death,' you, my good Doctor

quack counting up his illicit gains and the Englishman to have been the courtly physician to whom the great ran for help in their distress.

Forman knew at once that there was something behind this visit and,

Forman bowed in formal acknowledgment of the compliment, which he believed was simply an attempt to trap him into an admission of witchcraft and unholy practices; he felt he was on delicate ground and that silence would best become him

Forman, are sometimes known as 'The Angel of Resurrection.'"

But the Frenchman seemed much at ease. He admired the house and the garden, the pictures and the hangings, and complimented the doctor not only on his noble residence but even on the black-browed wife whom he had passed in the corridor.

"I should like, if I may, to see your laboratory, for I have heard a good

he made no demur to show his workshop to the other physician, who suavely admired the furnace, the retorts, the limbecs and all the apparatus for making medicines, perfumes and ointments.

"Perfume, sir; I distil perfume," answered Simon Forman gently, but

deal of the work you do there."

Though he spoke lightly, he soon made it clear that he was learned and shrewd, and Franklin, who was working at a prescription, and Weston, who was blowing the bellows for the furnace, glanced

"I should like to have such a workshop as this," said the genial Frenchman, "but I am too busy--the lords and ladies keep one running to and fro. Why. their Maiesties themselves occupy most of

my time--if the King has not the gout, the Queen has the ague, and if both are well one of the Princes must sprain his ankle at tennis or

sideways at him with considerable alarm.

bump his head falling off his horse." And the pleasant fellow laughed in a genial fashion, but Simon Forman noticed that his small, deep-set eyes were roving quickly round the room.

"You make, no doubt, to satisfy your pretty clients. Doctor Forman, love potions. drugs?"

The sage shrugged his shoulders with an air of candour. "I make up a little harmless medicine sometimes to give sleep, or maybe dreams. I put together an amulet or so to be worn above an anxious heart. Ah, well you know all the tricks of the trade, no doubt. It is as necessary to soothe the mind and appease the appetites of these frail creatures as it is to minister to their bodies."

The fat Frenchman padded across the room and stood thoughtfully behind Franklin, who dropped his hands on to his knees and stood mute, staring at the stone on which he had been grinding the medicine, while Weston, on one knee beside the furnace, let the bellows fall so that the nozzle touched the stone floor, and kept his glance downcast.

glance downcast.

"It is curious that with all our researches we never hit upon a subtle sudden poison," smiled Dr. Mayerne. "Have you ever thought what a

valuable weapon this would be in the hands of the man who could discover it? Nothing crude or vulgar like your arsenic that tears and burns and is always discovered—but something that would send a

man, or maybe a woman, to Heaven on the snap of a finger."

Ay, indeed. I have been tempted, however, Doctor Forman, to investigate both that and other dark matters, such as raising of the dead, predicting the future, enquiring into black magic—to see how much of it is mummery and trickery, and how much of it has a grain of truth in it."

"You have heard, no doubt," said Simon Forman suavely, "that I not only investigate but trade in these forbidden commodities?"

"No, indeed, I have never heard any ill of you," replied the Frenchman, turning away and walking slowly down the laboratory. "Nothing, indeed, except that you amuse the follies of these pretty, silly creatures who are idle and excitable and who must always have

a lover. You and Mrs. Turner are very useful in keeping the idlers amused. But I think," he added sharply, "that there is someone in London who has access to the Court and who is practising in drugs—and perhaps in poison. That illness of my Lord Essex, now—" He paused. Simon Forman returned his sharp look with a blank gaze.

"I have thought of it," replied Simon Forman boldly. "I have never seen a man experimenting in medicine who has not. I think."

"And you have never discovered anything?" asked Dr. Mayerne, thoughtfully stroking his soft, white chin that creased above the ruffles

"No," replied the sage, "nor have I pursued my studies far in that direction. I think the possession of such a secret would be more

"Dangerous!" agreed Dr. Maverne with a sidelong look, "dangerous."

of pleated lawn.

dangerous than profitable."

"Was that not the plaque?"

"Nay, it was neither the plague nor typhus nor smallpox-nor any

vanity, with a less skilful physician." "Av. so it may be." replied the sage unmoved. "The country is open to foreigners. Frenchmen and Italians, and you know what tales we hear of their Court--and what a foul reputation the old French Queen had--And how they die in Padua and Venice and Florence!" "These things are but travellers' tales." smiled Dr. Mayerne smoothly. "much enlarged in the telling. There was a curious story." he added as if dismissing the subject, "that of my Lord Essex and his lady-she became all submission and has gone with him to Chartley. He had the family coach new-painted for her and four grey horses trapped in

illness that I know of. I believe it was poison, and that if I had not been in attendance on the young man he would have died. Yes, I think that whatever poison my Lord Essex drank--for I believe, it was taken in a glass of wine--would have killed a younger man, or one, forgive my

"Why, then, should she not have gone willingly?" guestioned Simon Forman, smiling as if in mere courtesy and not in the least as if

scarlet to draw her on the North Road--and he followed with a retinue

like a prince."

concerned in the fortunes of Frances Howard. "Because." replied. Dr. Maverne. "everyone knows, that is everyone save my young Lord, who was sick in bed most of the time, that Lord Rochester is her servant--"

"It is but one more Whitehall scandal." smiled Simon Forman. suddenly showing his uneven teeth through his grey beard, "and I have not the acquaintance of either my Lord Rochester or my Lord Essex or the Lady Frances."

"But you are a friend of Anne Turner's--she frequently comes here. and she seems to be the confidente of Lady Essex."

dame's fortune told and another pretty dame's hair dved. And what is it all to me? I am a sober man and no doubt approach my end. I have nearly had my allotted span of days. Doctor Mayerne." The French physician smiled and nodded, then expressed his grateful thanks for the visit. "I know that you have met with some misfortunes and setbacks in your profession, Doctor Forman, but,

believe me, I shall always stand your friend. I think you are a very skilful man and one who has much power for good in your hand."

"Maybe, maybe---I never heed a woman's chatter, Little Anne Turner comes and goes, buying her perfumes and her soaps--and maybe an amulet or what she thinks a love charm or two, wanting one pretty

So with graceful compliments he left the brick house and the trim garden and mounting his stout horse ambled back to the Archbishop's palace, where he was staying for a while, His Majesty having no need of his services and His Grace being ill of a flux. As soon as they were alone Franklin, the dwarf, looked up from his

work, to which he had sullenly returned, and said: "That cursed Frenchman knows too much." "He knows nothing at all." replied Simon Forman. "He is merely

making guesses. He is a clever man with a shrewd knowledge of medicine. Of course it was easy for him to see that Essex's drink was doctored. Does it take much wit for one in his position to guess

that Frances Howard has only gone guietly to Chartley because she has been given drugs to kill her lord's desire and liking for her? He is Lord Rochester's physician, too, and no doubt has noticed that he

has been dosed with love potions. Bah! What does it matter? All

these are but surmises--he can prove nothing, and his kind is always silent."

the conversation "Because he wanted to steal my secrets. Cannot you see how convenient it would be for him if he could find this swift poison? He is the King's man, and the King is lonely and a coward and hates many people. He is the favourite's man, and the favourite always has his enemies. It would be worth a great deal to Doctor Mayerne if he knew what I am trying to discover." "We have not discovered it yet," complained Franklin peevishly. "And it seems to me we never shall--we waste time and effort. I get dizzy with these fumes and sick with these odours. Besides, we make as much money as we need. Why do we not keep to our love philtres and charms, our telling of fortunes?" Simon Forman did not deign to answer this tirade: he left his laboratory and returned to his accounts. The visit of Theodore de Mayerne gave him great pleasure, for it showed him that the great physician, of whom he had often felt such jealousy, believed that he, the poor quack, was a man to be reckoned with and perhaps to be envied. And that night, when all in his household were abed, he went down to the laboratory, lit a lamp and began some private experiments of his own that he had not confided even to Franklin or

"Why did he come here?" asked Franklin nervously, while Weston, the servant, lifted a shaggy head and listened, eager and afraid, to

Weston, but at which he had been working secretly for many months, and everything he used, when he had finished his work, he locked carefully away in a wooden chest with iron clamps that he kept in the bottom of the cupboard in which he had made the display of the waxen images for Frances Howard.

Simon Forman soon had another visitor, Tom Overbury. The two men had a business-like interview. The scholarly young knight told the sage of the distress and sickness of mind and body of his master

trailed his wings in the lime we cast for the girl. But it does not matter much--only he must be reassured that she is safe. He loves her." added Tom with an air of cynical amazement touched with disgust: "he loves this woman of his and would not have her husband as much as touch her hand." "Nor yet will he." replied the quack. "if she gives him the doses that I have sent her." "But the Earl has written to Lord Northampton and the Suffolks complaining of his wife's treatment of him. He says that she shuts herself in her room and never appears even at his table--he has no company but that of the girl Alice, whom she took with her." "Alice is one of Anne Turner's assistants. She sees that my lady sends and receives her letters. But how do you know what is happening at Chartley?" "Robin has heard it from Lord Northampton, who begins to be

"He pines for her. The affair went farther than I meant it should. Robin

since Frances Essex had gone to Chartley with her lord.

"Robin has heard it from Lord Northampton, who begins to be disturbed. He has written to the girl telling her to obey her lord. I think. Doctor Forman, that you should make your drugs a little stronger—and yet not too strong, for I would not have Frances Howard a widow."

"Because I do not wish my master too deep in this passion--it begins to come between us, it mars our friendship. It must be he and I, Doctor Forman, not he and Frances Essex. And what is she but a fool--a wanton?"

"Why not?"

"But you say they love each other," sneered the sage. "We did not

passions are difficult to deal with. But they are very young, and hot-blooded—and maybe in time—"
"Ay, in time, she will submit to her lord, but for the moment you must amuse her. And keep all her letters, and those that Anne Turner has written, very safely. For my part, I have copies of all those epistles and sonnets that I send. I have given my Lord Northampton a hint of the state of affairs—the House of Howard eats out of my hand like a whipped spaniel."

any of us reckon on that, good Sir Thomas. These strong human

"Take care what you do, though; take care how you humiliate these great ones. They are very powerful. And you and I, Sir Thomas Overbury, are, for all our cleverness and our cunning and our wit, but little men whose foothold is insecure."

Thomas Overbury took no heed of this advice. He was angered by the passion that Frances Howard had aroused in Robin Carr. He, Overbury, and all the others who had been in the plot had intended the girl to be the young man's toy, lightly caressed and lightly laid aside lestered of that she had grown to be the most important thing in

the girl to be the young man's toy, lightly caressed and lightly laid aside. Instead of that she had grown to be the most important thing in his life. Because she had gone to Chartley, the King's favourite, who had the world at his feet, was fretting, pining and breaking into secret passions and furies, wasting hours watching for his messengers and

passions and furies, wasting hours watching for his messengers and sitting over Overbury when he penned his letters and sonnets, and behaving, as his secretary thought contemptuously, like a great thick fool. Yet he loved the girl, and the girl loved him-those facts had to be faced, and Tom had done his best to face them. He had soothed Robin by telling him of the medicine with which Frances was

Robin by telling him of the medicine with which Frances was supplied, that would keep her husband so dull and sluggish that he would have no liking for her or any other woman, by dwelling on the girl's passion and fidelity, and by dangling in front of him the prospect of a future meeting.

her" "Av. and Essex too--and what a to do would there be then. Tom. Tom. I can see no way out of this."

"Essex is Prince Henry's friend and Henry will ask him to Court again." soon--and he must bring his young wife with him. Then you shall meet

"Leave a woman's wits to contrive that. You have Simon Forman, the doctor; the dress-designer, behind the girl--ay, and her great-uncle

willing to hold the candle, and her mother and father willing to turn their faces the other way. Leave it all to the future, and remember that

the King will support you through anything." But though Tom Overbury spoke thus, it was by no means his wish that Frances Essex should return to London, because he too dreaded what might happen in that case--with the husband and the

lover face to face, and perhaps the whole ugly story suddenly exposed. Even the King would not be able to support Robin Carr against Lord Essex in the struggle for the possession of the Countess of Essex, and Prince Henry, who liked to play at heroic virtue, would make a formidable enemy.

So Tom played a waiting game and hoped that this passion would die out as it had flared up, that Frances would learn to become a the Court.

But the letters that Frances sent from Chartlev made Tom Overbury a little uneasy when Mrs. Turner sent them to him. They were

wife to her disliked Lord and Robin find another brilliant lady about

addressed to her and to Simon Forman, and bespoke great distress

of mind. As the lean and thoughtful young man fingered the girl's letters, he smiled to see written at the top the desperate and useless

injunction "Burn this letter."

"SWEET TURNER.

Howard was here and said he would not come from this place all winter, so that all comfort is gone; and what is worst of all, my Lord Essex has complained that I keep myself apart from him. My father and mother are angry, but I would rather die a thousand times over. for besides the suffering, I shall lose my Lord Rochester's love if I take that of my Lord Essex. I shall never desire to see my Lord Rochester's face if my husband do that unto me. My Lord is very well.

"I am out of all hope of any good in this world, for my father, my mother and my brother said I should submit to my Lord. My brother

as ever he was so you may see in what a miserable state I am." And there was another desperate letter that Tom fingered thoughtfully, written to the sage.

get me from this vile place.

"SWEET FATHER. "I must still crave your love, although I hope I have it, and shall

deserve it better hereafter. Remember the galls, for I fear, though I have yet no cause but to be confident in you, yet I desire to have it,

as it is vet remaining well, so continue it still if it be possible, and if you can you must send me some good fortune. Alas, I have need of it! Keep my Lord Rochester still to me, for that I desire. Be careful

you name me not to any body, for we have so many spies that you must use all your wits, for the world is against me and the Heavens

favour me not. I am only happy in your love. I hope you will do me good, and if I be ungrateful let all mischief come unto me. My Lord is

lusty and merry and drinketh with his men, and all the content he gives me is to abuse me and to use me as doggedly as before. I think I shall never be happy in this world because he hinders my good and will ever so I think. Remember, I beg for God's sake, and "Your affectionate, loving daughter, "FRANCES ESSEX "

would not have anything come out for fear that my father and mother may be told." Then, after thinking carefully awhile, Tom Overbury sat down at his

"Give Turner warnings of all things, but not my Lord Rochester, I

desk in his rooms in the Cockpit and wrote a letter in reply to this frantic appeal that purported to come from Lord Rochester to Frances Essex, and in this told her to appear to submit to her lord and to go about with him in public at least, so that all gossip and scandal might die away for lack of material, as a fire will die away

when the fuel is consumed. And this, he said, was for both their sakes, lest worse than their present fortune might befall them. At the

end of this letter he added carelessly, hardly taking heed of what he wrote, all those expressions of passionate love that Frances received with such joy and gratitude. Then he sent this letter by his secret, well-paid messenger down to Chartley and returned to his task of soothing Robin, who was beginning to put the King in an ill-

humour by his moodiness and sense of distraction and his failing skill in the games and the chase.

This affair of Frances and Robin occupied the guack, and Franklin and Weston, and Mrs. Turner for many months. With their letterwriting and their drug- and potion-making and their advice and the

spells they had a great deal of work and Mrs. Turner began to

complain and said that all the jewels and money that Frances was

able to send them privately scarcely paid for their toil and trouble.

The quack laughed and said: "We shall be better paid, and in other

coin, later on." And he had a satisfaction unknown to the woman, that of feeling that he held the honour of the House of Howard and the

peace of mind of the Earl of Essex and that of my Lord Rochester.

spied on him whenever Anne Turner came to visit—and that was frequently.

It was after one of these visits, when the sage had risen early in the morning to go down and make his little private experiments, that he discovered that the chest in which he kept his secret apparatus had

the King's golden favourite, in his hands. He had his private troubles, too, for his wife became daily more bitter-tongued and jealous and

nature, moved cunningly and made no open accusation. Though he watched the two men, he could see nothing suspicious.

That evening Anne Turner came to see him on the Frances and Robin affair, and he bade his wife, who was usually obedient and

humble in the presence of his patients, to bring in some wine and cakes for the refreshment of the fair visitor. This she did, though with a sullen expression, so that the pretty little dress-designer laughed at

her and teased her for her sulkiness.

been rifled. The lock had been broken open and the contents taken away; he suspected Weston and Franklin, but, according to his

with her in the garden and down towards the river. She said to him: "It's a pity, the cats and the other little animals that you have poisoned and buried in the garden--I think these are foul experiments."

He did not answer, but walked gravely, his eyes turned downwards.

When the visitor had gone Mrs. Forman asked her husband to walk

Then she began to rail at Anne Turner, to whom she gave several vile names, including bawd and witch.

Simon Forman usually silenced his wife quickly and effectually, but

to-night he felt melancholy and ill at ease. Strange thoughts stirred his mind, and he was troubled, too, by the loss of his secret apparatus and the liquid in the little bottle of purple glass and the pills

last he turned to his wife, and said wearily:

"Anne Turner is my daughter, who was born to me before ever I was married--and I loved her mother better than either of the cursed women who have married me."

At this Madam Forman stopped short and stared at her husband. Her face was twisted with remorse and horror and the sage, looking at her curiously, thought he had never seen a creature so smitten. He took her by the shoulders and shook her, and asked her to come to

in the black box and other secrets that he had kept in the chest. So at

"Your daughter!" she wailed. "And there is a likeness, too, about the brow and eyes--and I never thought of it, I thought she was your woman, she came here so often, creeping in so secretly, and with her odious laugh."

"Cease chattering," commanded Dr. Forman sternly, "and tell me what you have done."

The woman started to cry and admitted that she had broken open the

secret chest; she had spied on him through crannies and half-open

her senses

doors while he was absorbed in his work. "And I guessed you were at some deadly matter—and I flavoured the last wine I gave you with the essence that was in the bottle of purple glass."

The old man took his hand from his wife's shoulder and began to laugh. Then he walked away from her down towards the river, though she called, and ran after him. But he was quickly in a boat, seized the oars, and rowed himself out into the middle of the Thames. Above him was a dark cloud, the inner edge of which was gilt with a mighty light gilding the city, the spires, the towers, the palaces and the weathercocks like precious metal.

house that he had built at the end of the field for their pleasure on summer days.

The sage placed his oars in the bottom of the boat, folded his arms in his cloak and sat for a while thoughtful under the great toss of cloud and the golden light in the midst of the running wind and the first dead leaves, battered twigs and grasses that, broken by yesterday's storm, floated down the river from the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire meadows. Then he cried suddenly: "The span is broken—the arch is overturned," and covered his face and fell down, and two watermen, who were nearby, rowed up in surprise and found the magician dead on the rush-mat bottom of his rocking boat, his features looking bloated and his teeth grinning through his beard.

By that evening the news went round the town that the Devil, who was a frequent visitor to the discreet little house in Lambeth, had carried away the magician and swept off his soul with the first winds of

Simon Forman rowed himself upstream, his grey beard and his grey hair stirred by the breeze over his shoulders. The air was blowing towards the sea, taking with it the first leaves of autumn. His wife remained a little terrified figure on the bank, standing by the brick

autumn. And Mrs. Forman went chattering all over the place that her husband had prophesied his own death, like the great prophet he was, that he had told her the Sunday before—the day of his death being Thursday—exactly when he should die, even to the hour. This was eagerly believed.

Mrs. Forman soon recovered from her grief, which at first had been violent and expansive, and showed herself a good business woman.

out letters of Administration of Estate; she also dismissed Franklin and Weston and locked up the laboratory.

After her husband's funeral and when the excitement of the manner of

Her husband having died so suddenly, he had left no will. She took

away in great boxes and had them locked and sealed and taken with her to her new residence, which was near where she had lived with her husband in Chelsea. She had been left very well off, better off, no doubt, than she would have been had her husband lived to make a last will and testament, for he had had no great affection towards this woman: vet she regarded her present fortune as but small compared to that she might one day enjoy. She knew the importance of the secrets she held, and in particular she kept very carefully the letters of Frances Essex written to Simon Forman and to Anne Turner. At first the little dress-designer was overwhelmed by this great misfortune, the death of her 'sweet master.' But she soon recovered. and took Weston into her personal service, while she employed the dwarf, Franklin, who had set up for himself as a physician in place of Forman, to make the drugs and potions for which Lady Essex clamoured so continuously.

his death had, died away, the widow, alone, entered this room and made a careful note of all the contents--the obscene books, the obscene images, the chest of letters, the rituals of black magic, all the drugs, medicines, powders and ointments. All these she put

So she was able to write a comforting letter to Lady Essex, telling her that though Simon Forman was dead, yet his work would be carried on by his successor. Frances Howard existed at Chartlev only by reason of the intense

hope with which she regarded the future. She was trapped, imprisoned, but she never ceased to believe in her final release. Even though all the world was against her--indeed in the ordinary sense of the word, she had no friend, no supporter--vet she trusted

firmly in the enchantments of Anne Turner and Simon Forman. She was with Alice in the apple orchard when the messenger from London gave her the letter from Anne Turner, relating the sudden and dreadful death of Simon Forman.

Frances sat on a fallen tree round which the grass grew thickly, while Alice, who seldom left her, crouched at her feet.

"We are forsaken." said the Countess, and let the letter fall, "God

But the other girl picked up the paper and puzzled out the dressdesigner's cramped and ill-spelt epistle; at first even mocking Alice blanched, for Mrs. Turner gave a very horrid account of the snatching away of the magician's lost soul. Alice, however, soon recovered and smiling said: "Well, he has gone, but we remain, sweet madam, and we are not forlorn; you see, madam, Turner has sent the galls, and

she says that Franklin can make them-look, too, she writes that the spells hold over Lord Rochester and he thinks of nothing but you."

In silence Frances put out her little hand and the other girl slipped the tiny packet that the letter had contained into her palm.

"Now that the sweet master has gone, what are we to do? Can

Franklin really set the spells? Alice, it would be better for me to die than to remain at Chartley."

"You have the galls, sweet madam."

has punished us."

harshly-his physician suspects these constant illnesses. Oh, I have made him hate me--but perhaps too much."

"He never guesses--what we have from London--what the master did

"But he begins to think I bewitch him. Alice: he speaks to me very

"He never guesses--what we have from London--what the master did for us?" whispered Alice Kenley.

"No-but, Alice, how much longer can I bemuse him? Even Lord Northampton writes to me to submit, my parents rail-and my dear,

my husband--Alice, how am I to do this?"

Alice pursed her lips and mused in silence; the two girls looked gentle and forlorn in the orchard, the red-gold apples hanging from grey boughs, shaded by curling russet leaves above them. The

pleasant noise of country life, the bark of a dog, the shout of a carter, the crow of a cock, stole faintly across the manor fields, but neither girl heard these homely sounds. Frances was thinking with bitter

dear lord urges me to keep an outward appearance of obedience to

longing of Robin and wondering if death would not be better than this hopeless exile, the suspense that gnawed her to her heart's core. She stared unseeingly at the turrets of Chartley Manor House rising above the yellowing elms in the fields beyond the orchard: even her faith in her golden lover was strained. How was it that Robin, who had the King in his pocket, did not rescue her from her intolerable torment?

Alice had different anxieties. She had not found the life on the great estate unpleasant; she was clever, quick and gay, and her loyalty to

Alice had different anxieties. She had not found the life on the great estate unpleasant; she was clever, quick and gay, and her loyalty to her mistress had not prevented her from enjoying some amusing diversions with my lord's gentlemen and ingratiating herself with the servants of the great establishment. Alice had been very comfortable in the luxurious household—but the dark girl knew that all her popularity would be forgotten in a fury of rage if it were even suspected that she dealt in unholy matters, and if it were known that

she helped my lady dose my lord, not a hand would be raised to save her. She would be bundled into the home-field pond or beaten to death with sticks by every labourer at Chartley Manor. She plucked the linen cuff of her mistress:

"Sweet madam, a witch was burnt in Leicester last week-"

"They may burn me sooner than leave me here."

"Have you lost heart so soon?" "Doctor Forman is dead "

"But Franklin knows all his art--have you not even now received the galls?"

"Alice, let us put on rustic smocks and wander away--until we reach London " "Such devices are only for players. Madam, help may even now be

on the way. A little courage--a little patience--" Frances Howard gazed into the brilliant face of Alice which fear had edged with sharpness.

"Who are you, girl, you have never told me?"

"Because there is nothing to tell. My sweet mother left me on the steps of the Westminster Lazar house, and good women brought me up out of charity, then Anne Turner found me when I was ten years old

and taught me to sew--a few other tricks useful to a female--but. madam," added Alice rapidly, "I have served you well, and at some

peril--if you forsake me now I must light a torch to the Devil in some market place."

Frances smiled wanty. She felt secure in the power of her great family, in the protection of Lord Northampton and in Robin's

friendship with the King; besides she was naturally fearless, so she pressed the other girl's hand and reassured her, thinking of her own

distress. It was Alice who gathered up the sheets of Mrs. Turner's

letter and took them to the house and locked them carefully away

with the letters that Tom had written for Robin and that Frances treasured as the very essence of love.

revolving the bitter situation between Frances and himself in a mind that was slow and heavy, but honest and even magnanimous. When he was away from her, he wondered how such a little helpless creature had been able to hold him at bay so long, and why he had not long since taken the advice of the Howards and his own friends and bent her to his will. He believed himself that he could have managed her, if he had not been so constantly ill since she had come to Chartley. Since he had fallen from his horse after the visit to Northampton House. Robert Devereux had been subject to attacks of sickness, a bemusing of his faculties, horrid pains in his head, a failing of his eyesight and a slackening of all his powers that his physicians could not understand. The young man had very much wanted the advice of Dr. Mayerne and had intended to go to London for that purpose, when, on his leaving Chartley, his health had returned, and in a few weeks he had become as rigorous and clearheaded as he had been before he had returned to England. His gentlemen and his leeches nodded wisely together over their cups.

Lord Essex returned after an absence of many weeks to Chartley and at once demanded to see his young wife. While he had been conducting his business on some distant estates of his, he had been

gentlemen and his leeches nodded wisely together over their cups, but Essex himself was slow to think evil or to guess at any out of the way business; to him the world was simple and the behaviour of his wife that of a tempered, proud girl who had taken a dislike to marriage. He had waited patiently for her mood to change, out of a distaste for the whole affair and because of his own sickness, but now, on his return to Chartley he resolved, with the sudden resolve of a slow, obstinate man, to bring matters to an issue.

He had found two letters on his arrival, but did not open them; he saw that they were from his friend Henry Stawart, and before he heard.

He had found two letters on his arrival, but did not open them; he saw that they were from his friend Henry Stewart, and, before he heard news from Whitehall, he wished to deal with his wife.

Frances had been expecting the summons, she came into the

panelled room, defiant and cool. Since she had been at Chartley she

did not even desire the little creature who defied him, he could not see in her the beauty that other men declared was so dazzling. Only because she was so young, so small and so silly, he felt a certain pity for her and would, had it not been for the jibes of his friends and the opinion of the world, have returned her to her family and found a more loving wife. Frances made her courtesy and waited, her long

hands folded on her waist; she was well primed by cunning Alice what to say and she despised the hesitancy of the tall young man

had taken no care with her clothes; her ash-coloured gown was sombre, her face had lost its bloom, though her much admired eyes

Her young husband stood, thoughtful, in the window place; he had no idea how to deal with this situation and no feelings to guide him, he

remained brilliant, restless and watchful.

who regarded her uneasily.

"Sir. I am waiting."

Essex sighed and began handling this matter of poignant delicacy on lines of expediency and common sense.

"Madam, we lead a foolish life. I have treated you patiently, even to

the extent that I am laughed at for it--I have listened to your excuses

and obeyed your whims, but it does not suit your breeding or mine that you should longer indulge this comedy."

Her eyes narrowed with scorn at his clumsiness; she waited for him to expose his stupidity further. He stumbled on, telling her that he needed more than a puppet wife—his establishment required a

needed heirs, he did not want to be the last of his line, he had been too forbearing and was jeered for his chivalry.

"I came here unwillingly, unwillingly I remain," said Frances without

mistress--not a girl who shut herself up all day in her rooms: he

moving. "I was twelve years old when I was married to you." "It was a marriage like any other marriage and I am a man like any other man--" "Ay, that and no more to me," she replied coldly, then, acting on Alice's advice, she added, "And a sick man, too--what manner of interest should I feel in a husband who is so often ill, who lies like a log for days together, who faints at his meat and falls from his horse?" The young man flushed, for he was ashamed of his physical weakness and thought it likely enough that this had disgusted his vouna wife. "My health has returned." he replied uneasily. "I had some ague. caught, maybe, in Italy, it is true, but now that has gone. Come. madam, look on me kindly, for sick or well I am your husband." "You have that name," replied Frances, "but nothing more," "What do you hope for? Is all our future to be this barren hostility?" "Allow me to return to my parents, there are lawyers in London who can contrive to set us free." "No. I will not be so fooled." "What, then, will you do?" "I'll use the power I have forborne so far to use. We will conclude this discussion in your chamber to-night." The young man spoke harshly, against his nature, for she wounded and baffled him. He felt he was groping in the dark for things he did

"You were too long at Whitehall—it is but a golden sty. That painted mischief, Anne Turner, writes to you—?"

"About gowns and such trumpery." She moistened her lips, thinking

not understand. As she stood silent, he added, in vaque bitterness:

of the night to come and the packets of galls in her bosom.

Frances Howard guivered, controlled herself and asked:

submissive. He took Prince Henry's letter from his pocket, broke the seals and read--"the Princess Elizabeth is to marry the Palsgrave, there are to be the usual lewd revels at Whitehall."

"I will tell you to-morrow," he answered. "God knows it is my wish to

Essex hesitated, trying to persuade himself that she was at last

"May we not go?"

live peacefully with you, but this divided existence I will not have."
"I am all duty, sir," smiled Frances.

Frances Essex a little figure in he

Frances Essex, a little figure in her nightgown of grey taffeta was waiting in the antechamber to her bedroom that evening, with her hands turned under her chin and her elbows on her knees. She kept whispering to herself—"He will not dare to come, he will not dare to come."

But presently there was a scratching on the door and Alice, who had

been moving about in the bedroom, approached her mistress fearfully.

"Sweet Alice," whispered Frances, "do it again; this once--we are going to London soon--it shall not need again."

flood of hate, through her body for this quiet puritanical man, with the grave face and straight brown hair, who thought to force her inclination as if a Howard had been a farm-girl.

"It is cold," he said awkwardly. "You should have a fire." He stood staring down at the empty hearth while Alice came forward with a salver and two tall glasses with milky stripes that my lord had brought from Venice. Frances took one in a steady hand and my lord, glad of something to do, accepted the other into which Alice had dropped the powder sent by Mrs. Turner which she called a gall. The young

man drank and the young woman waited, while Alice hurried away to her closet. When they were alone Essex tried to take his wife's hand and to speak to her kindly; for a while she brought herself to converse with him cheerfully about his estates, and his establishment and the coming visit to London, then as he fell into the chair from which she had risen and faltered in his speech she retreated to the far end of the room, and there, her back against the wall, watched

So Alice tripped to the door and admitted my lord. Frances rose, a

Convulsions twitched the young man's long limbs; he cried out in fear and pain, then slipped from the seat and lay unconscious on the floor. Frances snatched up the one candle left alight and ran to the closet where Alice crouched—"Come come, it was strong to-night."

The two girls crept back to stare at the man stretched in front of the

him.

empty hearth, moaning thickly.

hand; she began to laugh. "Go and rouse his gentlemen-let them take him up-"

Alice ran. shouting, to the door, pulled it open and called out down

the corridor "that my lord was in one of his fits and had frightened my

Frances still held the candle, the soft wax ran down over her shaking

Two men came at once, it was still early in the evening and few in the great manor house were abed.

"Take up your lord," said Frances Howard. "He is very sick." She moved towards the bedroom door, a little figure in grey taffeta and

white linen, her bright hair hidden in a coif. "Keep him close, call his physicians--he is not fit to be any lady's lord." She disappeared from suspicious, frightened glances and locking herself in her room, read

over Tom's sugary sonnets with sighs and kisses.

ladv."

When Lord Essex recovered his health, he remained profoundly troubled in his mind; he felt that he now had come to hate his wife as unreasonably as she hated him. She had insulted him, wounded him, avoided him, and, as he now suspected, gave him drugs. She was no longer even pleasant in his sight, but a devil of whom he did not know how to be rid. so, on considering Prince Henry's letters he was

glad of this opportunity of returning to London, that he might take the advice of his friends on what was to be done about this marriage that was one in name only, and how he could, with regard to his own honour and dignity and without too great an offence to the great House of Howard, be free from this woman whom he had endured for two bitter years. He also wanted to consult Dr. Mayerne as to the nature of his strange illness.

for two bitter years. He also wanted to consult Dr. Mayerne as to the nature of his strange illness.

So in the autumn the Earl and Countess of Essex came to London and lodged in Essex House in the Strand. The Earl spent most of his time at St. James's Palace completely estranged from his wife, and

the third evening, after her return to London, a wild windy night of rain and mist, Frances slipped out of the postern of Essex House while Alice guarded her bedroom door and, joining Anne Turner in the shadow of the street, embraced her convulsively and hastened with

her, regardless of the filth underfoot and bitter storm overhead, to the

Robin was there, waiting by candlelight—Robin, the golden lover, held for her as the sweet master had promised—and the little dress-designer laughed and praised them for their fidelity before she softly closed the door on them.

Frances, panting, lay silent on Robin's heart while he kissed her forehead and eyes through the veil of brown gold hair, amazed himself at the strange enchantment she had for him and at the shuddering intensity of her passion, as she began to whisper, stammering, sobbing: "He never touched me—never, never, all this while I kept myself for you, for you, you!" And so the Countess renewed her intimacy with Anne Turner, and even dared to slip away quite often under cover of the evening to the house in Paternoster Row to meet her lover in the little back room that she remembered with such delight. Tom Overbury laughed up his sleeve to think how

little house in Paternoster Row and the dear well-remembered room.

my Lord Essex was shamed, and through him, his patron Prince Henry: while at Whitehall Anne Turner was bustlingly busy with her designs for the great pageant, which was to be the most magnificent ever seen in England and given when the Palsgrave came to marry the Princess Elizabeth. The little woman was pleased and excited about her affairs, for in spite of the death of Simon Forman she had been exceedingly successful, and so had her patron, Lord Rochester, He had been made Lord High Treasurer of Scotland and a Knight of the Garter, while the man who had most persistently thwarted him, Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, had died at Bath--of a surfeit, as Dr. Mayerne declared, of raw fruit, grapes, figs and apples--so that there was only left old Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, as the real ruler of the State

Besides this good fortune there was another matter that pleased the malicious little dress-designer. She had always disliked Sir Thomas

Overbury, although she had had to work for him, and she had noticed with satisfied amusement how unpopular he was becoming at the Court and how his insolence to those whom he regarded as his rivals and his enemies was resented. Mrs. Turner knew a juicy piece of Court gossip, namely that the King used to send all the Queen's letters demanding money to Robin for consideration, and Robin, of course, having no head for such matters, used to hand them to Overbury, who usually gave good advice. Now this had somewhat turned the young knight's head and he had not been able to resist chattering about the contents of Her Maiesty's letters and making jokes of her necessities, and complaining too about her vast expenditure, which came, he declared, to about sixty thousand pounds a year. All this gossiping, which was guite contrary to the nature and usual behaviour of Tom Overbury, and could only be put down to the intoxication of success. was brought to the ears of the Queen, who furiously complained before the King in Council, so that Overbury had to be sent to France for a few months to be out of the way of Danish Anna's wrath. He had soon returned and had become more than ever the governor, as it was called, of the favourite, but Mrs. Turner knew that he had

for a few months to be out of the way of Danish Anna's wrath. He had soon returned and had become more than ever the governor, as it was called, of the favourite, but Mrs. Turner knew that he had suffered acutely during those weeks of exile and that he had made a powerful enemy of the Queen, and though he held his head high and expected soon to be made a member of the Privy Council, yet Mrs. Turner believed that Tom Overbury was riding for a fall. She also

knew that the Countess of Essex disliked Tom Overbury and that she was setting her lover against his friend, as he, himself, had from the first feared.

Mrs. Turner was making a good deal of money out of her labours on

Mrs. Turner was making a good deal of money out of her labours on this occasion; she had hired a little house at Hammersmith, where Robin and Frances could meet, and meanwhile, running about

Whitehall, busy with preparations for the pageant, it came to Anne Turner's ears that there had been a violent quarrel between the King

furious and at the same time so afraid that he had said out loud before all who were present, that Prince Henry schemed to come to the throne and would bury him, his father and King, alive, in order to get at the Crown. The King's fool reported, and Mrs. Turner believed him, that His Majesty had said positively to Dr. Mayerne: "Have you

and Prince Henry on the subject of the Essex marriage. His Highness having spoken out hotly for his friend. Robin Devereux, and threatening His Majesty to make a scandal of the whole business. Mrs. Turner heard that after this scene His Maiesty had been so

When she was engaged in her work for the pageantry that was to celebrate the German marriage, Mrs. Turner forgot all about what she had heard, but when she had a little leisure she ran to Frances

no medicine to silence this young braggart?"

Howard, who was shut away in her riverside apartments in Essex House, and told her all this news. "And indeed, madam, you must be careful, for my lord has Prince Henry for his friend and he is working shrewdly against my Lord Rochester, and it may be that your husband will take you back to Chartley before ever these pageants be begun..."

Frances Howard was walking up and down the room in her shift of

watchet-blue silk, the girl Alice sat at the door like a dog on guard; it was night-time, the curtains drawn and the candles lit. The girl had her hands in her sleeves, lined with ruby velvet, and her freshly combed hair hung down her back.

"If my lord takes me anywhere again it shall be to Hell," she cried passionately. "To Chartley--never!" Then she fell back on the old story and told her dear friend the hideous life she had lived in the

great Manor House and her efforts to keep herself for Lord Rochester, to which end she had drugged her husband continuously with the potions or galls sent her from London. "Why could you not married Robin."

Mrs. Turner reflected on this in a sly manner. Then she replied cunningly. "One has to be a little careful, after all, madam, I know that

Doctor Forman, the sweet master, was on the verge of a great discovery when he was taken off-and mind you. I have my

make one of them a little stronger, Mrs. Turner, that he had gone to his bed and never got up from it again? And then I could have

suspicions as to the manner of that taking off--and he often hinted to me that he had found a certain sauce useful to ladies in such a circumstance as yours. But, indeed, I have not got it."

"Does not Weston, your servant, who was so long in the employ of

Doctor Forman, know anything?" asked the Countess of Essex impatiently. "Does not Doctor Franklin, who has taken up Doctor

Forman's practice, know anything?"

"If they do, they would not tell me. I am considered a silly, light woman, not to be trusted with such dangerous secrets."

"People are not so innocent as you think," said Frances Howard, "or

as I thought when I first went to the House in Lambeth. These schemes are employed by people who have the knowledge, always and everywhere. Have you not just told me that the King would like to dose his own son's drinks?"

When she heard the matter put thus boldly, Mrs. Turner winced and tried to play down her words. "Oh, I know not that he made any such horrid threat seriously--he spoke only in anger. And I only told you the tale to warn you that my Lord Essex has powerful advocates working for him and that he means to make you truly his wife."

for him and that he means to make you truly his wife."

"And yet he hates me," replied Frances sombrely, pausing in her walk. "That man hates me, and yet he would force me to my own

humiliation, degradation and ruin me with my poor Robin."

"Well," said Mrs. Turner, "what's to do?" And she added lightly: "The King stands as my Lord Rochester's friend—and therefore why should we trouble ourselves?"

"But Prince Henry becomes more powerful in the country than the King, and I have heard of others who work against me and my Lord-Sir Ralph Winwood and that man Lake, and even my Lord of Canterbury. Oh, I have my spies too, and my wits about me--I'm not

the child I was when I went to Chartley."

Mrs. Turner glanced at her sharply, and in some alarm. It was beyond her comprehension to understand the passion that ravaged this girl.

For Anne love meant a light, pleasant emotion, not stormy tumult, so a little afraid, she began to console Frances, telling her to use again

the drugs and potions that her sweet father had made if Essex tried to molest her. Then a serious thought crossed her shallow mind.

"You know, sweet madam, that Simon Forman's widow hates me, and all the women who used to visit him, for she was jealous as a

fury-and as he died so suddenly he made no will and destroyed no papers, and she has everything."

"What does that matter?" asked Frances Howard contemptuously.

"Well." said the little dress-designer, holding up and regarding with a

critical eye a length of gold-looped brown-blue velvet against the girl's taut body, "she must have all the letters that you wrote to her husband, and many of mine--and his diary with notes of our visit and

husband, and many of mine--and his diary with notes of our visit and all the figures and charms you used--also his waxen woman and the figure of Robin Carr, and much else we used when we went to the house in I ambeth "

sumptuous velvet and asked: "Is Robin coming to the house in Hammersmith to-night? I could get away earlier than I contrived to last week--tell him so, sweet Anne." The prolonged and gorgeous festivities for the wedding of the Palsgrave and the Princess Elizabeth pleased everybody, for the bride was as popular as her brother with both the greater part of the aristocracy and the common people. There was day after day of

great pageantry, not only in the halls of the palace but even in the streets and on the river for everyone to see, and in the evening there were fireworks, for the King, having overcome his fear of gunpowder. had given his permission for these displays on the farther bank of the

Thames

Frances did not answer, she scarcely heard, she put aside the

On one of the nights when there was a light pastoral in the great hall of the palace. Prince Henry sought out Frances Howard, who had been dancing in a gauzy dress of pearl-colour taffeta, covered with alittering stars in gold and silver, and hung with silken poppies and daisies. The Prince, who had been moody throughout the festival and kept himself apart, stood suddenly before the laughing girl, and

asked her to walk with him in the gardens.

she thought at once: "He still has some liking for me, and may be I can beguile him into withdrawing friendship from my husband and giving it to Robin Carr." The young man and woman came out into the private gardens, from

Frances took from the nimble hands of smiling Mrs. Turner her long cloak of sea green velvet, and not unwillingly followed the Prince, for

which all the flowers had withered in the first frost a few nights before. There was nothing now but the dark green of the Italian trees rising with clear-cut leaves against the sky, lit by the light of a full moon and

flecked with the alitter of fireworks that rose, shone and broke

The Prince was very depressed. He had had another guarrel with his father that evening, and though soon after the King had sent him a loving message together with a great basket of hot-house grapes. the Prince knew that this gift had come, not in love, but in fear; and as he was honest and upright this whole matter distressed him

almost to sickness, and he could have found it in his heart to wish that lightning from heaven might strike Robin Carr and all the other wretched minions with whom his father amused his luxurious idleness. He had wearily eaten of the blue-purple grapes, for the King's messenger. Sir John Millicent, one of the minions, had said

incessantly beyond the stairs and the river.

he had orders to stand by until the Prince had done so, in a sign of forgiveness. Now he felt a cloying sweetness in his mouth and believed that the fruit had been overripe. So he said to Frances Howard, who had taken his arm in a familiar fashion:

"Let us go down to one of the fountains, for I am thirsty."

under her cloak a delicate, polished shell that she had used in the dance, "See, I kept this because it is so beautiful. But did you bring me into the garden, sir, that I might give you a drink of water?"

"I will be your cupbearer," said the fair girl smiling; she took from

"No, madam, that I might talk to you of your unhappy marriage. I am your husband's friend, and he has many others and there is the peace and honour of two noble Houses at stake." Then the young man added gravely and with a touch of harshness: "And your own peace and honour, madam."

At this rebuke the girl could think of no better reply than the usual impatient answer of wilful youth: "Sir, I can look after myself and my own peace and honour."

Robin Carr " At this Frances Howard was annoved and a little startled, for she had believed that with the help of Mrs. Turner and Alice she had been able to keep her love-affair secret. But she laughed lightly and replied that His Highness must know my Lord Rochester had always been her servant and that it was likely enough he should seek to be in her train when she returned to Court after two years' exile in the country.

The Prince's next words reassured her worst fears, for she could see that he did not know the truth, or anything of the long exchange of

"That it seems you cannot do," replied the Prince wearily, "all London--ay, and for all I know, all the country--is talking of you and

correspondence, of the drugs and philtres and the secret meetings in Mrs. Turner's houses at Paternoster Row and Hammersmith, for he answered: "I know that you have not gone beyond too great an easiness, madam, but the vulgar will talk, and all will listen, and my Lord Essex cannot much longer endure the slights you put upon him."

"He has talked to you, then, of our life at Chartley? I had thought he had rather be silent on his misfortune." "Rather yours than his," replied the Prince. He paused, moved his arm so that her hand dropped from his stiff-laced sleeve, and turned to face her, the moonlight and the fireworks that rose and vanished overhead and the great huddled palace buildings as their

background. "Madam," he said, guietly, "my father is a frail man. It takes all Doctor Mayerne's skill to keep him in life. Consider this--that I might, in but a

short time, become King of England and then I should have no

The girl shuddered when she heard these words, yet she felt a certain immortality in her love. It did not seem possible to her that any misfortune should overcome herself and Robin, their passion seemed a strength to hold them both upright; nor could she look that far ahead—the present alone mattered.

"The King has always been ailing and always lived--your Highness

They came to a fountain, a small basin of white marble, in the centre of which was a statue of Diana; from her breasts water should have flowed; but there was none, the mechanism had gone awry.

"Your Highness is thirsty, and there is no water," Frances said, wishing to gain time and wondering how she should handle this

patience with those who had pandered to my father's extravagance and riotous living—and Robin Carr and his wretched secretary Tom Overbury, and some others who follow them would be in the Tower for the dishonest scoundrels that they are, taking bribes and selling

places and dealing all manner of corruption."

must forgive me if I hope he will live long."

situation and in some way turn it to her advantage.

The Prince sat on the rim of the basin and clasped his hands on his knees; his face looked like a silver mask in the moonlight. Fatigue and sickness of heart had sharpened his young features, now haggard above the glitter of his carnival dress.

The girl sank down on the marble beside him, gathering round her shivering figure the velvet cloak.

"Sir," she sighed in a low coaxing voice, putting her face close to his so that he could not escape her beauty. "do not urge my Lord Essex

to take me. I can never be his wife. Some way must be thought of of

not been wicked to tie us together? Consider, sir, that we were married as children-that I was, as it were, carried to the altar, an innocent, knowing nothing! Consider that since I have found..." She paused, looked aside, then continued quickly: "You used to honour me with some regard--continue it. I entreat you. Tell my Lord Essex to forgo me. I tell you." she urged passionately. "he hates me!--and I hate him " "But you are his wife. At Chartley you did all in your power to humiliate and insult him--you shut yourself away from his company. you refused him admission to your apartment, you made a fool of him before his own people and servants."

setting me free, of setting him free--he hates me as I hate him. Has it

"Should therefore he not let this pitiful woman go?" asked Frances Howard passionately, and she muttered as if in threat: "I have my great-uncle behind me, my parents too--they all repent this Essex marriage." The young man shivered in the wind: from the river, where the voices of the merry-makers coming from barge and foreshore made a

distant clamour in the night. Then he began to plead with the girl. using every argument of either God or man that he knew of, for her own sake, for the noble name she bore, for that of her husband--for the sake of Robin Carr himself, whom she was likely to lure to his and housekeeper.

ruin--to submit to her lord, to return to Chartley, to her duty as wife Frances listened dutifully, but she too felt sick at heart, for she saw that this austere, righteous young man was not to be dissuaded by any of her charms; on the contrary he would make it exceedingly difficult for her to refuse her lord and continue in the possession of Robin Carr. She could not answer, but sat silent, her lovely head bent sideways under the coronet of pearls she wore.

The girl took the shell she held and dipped up some of the water that lay stagnant in the marble basin. A faint, foul smell arose, the Prince noticed it and said: "We are too near the cesspools—they taint the air." And he added bitterly: "What is the whole Court but a gilded cesspool?"

The girl offered the young man the water in the shell; it looked, she thought, dark in the moonlight, but he drank eagerly, though he said the water had a brackish taste, that it was stale. He asked her to come with him to some place where they might find purer water; so she followed him, obstinate and forlorn, while he continued to plead with her to leave passion and lust and follow her duty, until she was

The Prince sighed at length and whispered, "I have taught you nothing. My throat and lips are dry--since the fountain is no longer

running, give me a drink out of the basin."

weary and broke from him sadly, saying it was cold in the private gardens and the wind from the river was sharp.

On the following Sunday in the royal chapel at Whitehall, the preacher chose a sad and ominous text—"Man that is born of woman is of short continuance and is full of trouble."—Why that, at a time of festival?

This was remembered when, sitting at his father's table that afternoon, Prince Henry fainted in his place, and, being found to be

dangerously ill, was taken to his palace of St. James's.

That afternoon, which saw the breaking of the autumn weather and a great storm riding up from the sea towards the capital, it was known that the Prince was desperately sick and that Dr. Mayerne, the King's physician, had been sent to attend him. It was also soon known that

the Frenchman had guarrelled with the other doctors, Butler and

On a wild day in November the Countess of Essex went from Essex House to her great-uncle, Northampton; she brought news, for Mrs. Turner had been quicker than the spies of the old Earl.

The Prince had died an hour before in St. James's Palace.

"Dead! Dead!" repeated the beautiful girl wildly, "and now there is no

one to interfere with us, sir. You will be the greatest man in the state, and there will be no one to scold me or to support my husband--and

The old man nodded from the hooded chair. He was glad that the tiresome young man had gone; he had often stood in the way of the Howards. The King and Robin Carr were easy to manage, but it had

Atkin, about the treatment of the patient, and even as to what disease he suffered from. The young Prince lay unconscious for a fortnight, and the wedding festivities were suspended, though the Court continued to be quite gay, for the King ordered that the joyful

time should not be interrupted.

everything will be different."

been difficult to deal with Prince Henry.

"Dead, in the midst of his sister's wedding festivities!" he said softly, smiling: "there is much moralising that might be made on that text."

"It will make no difference—it is known already that the King will have no mourning. The funeral is to be immediately and with little pomp,

and after that the masques and jollities may continue."

"Ay, ay. Is that true, girl?" asked Henry Howard. "That will start rumours."

"There are rumours enough already, Anne Turner has brought me rumours enough these last few days—it is said the King seemed to rejoice in his son's sickness, and that Doctor Mayerne had orders to

him myself but can get nothing from him—that fat Frenchman can be silent when it suits him. But perhaps you have heard something, child? You have sharp ears for these Court scandals."

"Doctor Mayerne said it was typhus," replied the girl carelessly. "I remember he complained of foul smells, that the Court was built on a cesspool. and Doctor Mayerne says that, if you live among foul

see that he did not recover. But that I do not believe. There are other silly stories too, such as, that the Prince was poisoned by a bunch of

"What does Doctor Mayerne say his illness was? I have guestioned

grapes that his father sent him after their last guarrel."

smells, you may catch a foul disease."

that we are free."

At this the old man laughed and pursed his thin lips. He preferred instead of any such fantasy to believe in the story of the poisoned grapes. Why not? The Prince had been a plague to the King for many a day, and Dr. Mayerne was skilful enough; no doubt he knew these subtle secrets—how to make away with even the young and strong.

"The Queen rages," continued Frances Howard. "She talks of murder. I believe she would fasten it on to Robin, as the King's man." She laughed excitedly. "Do not let us think of these things, sir--only

"Yes, it will make a difference, the Prince of Wales gone and his brother a sickly child," said the old man cautiously. "How the wind blows! This storm has hung about for a week. Fasten the windows as I will. I cannot prevent them rattling or the curtains blowing out."

"Sir," exclaimed the bright girl, turning swiftly to the old Earl and putting her two slender hands on his bent shoulders. "You are now the most powerful man in England. There is no one to withstand you-

"Yes, child, I suppose it may be so. And there are many who would think I was a fool at seventy to care if it were so or not." "I care nothing, sir, I am coming here to live with you, I am leaving my husband, Alice, Mrs. Turner and my other servants are bringing all my belongings from Essex House to-day," she added passionately, "to-day! I never want to look upon Robert Devereux's face again."

you can do as you wish with the King. Is not that so?"

"I'm all Robin's--body and soul."

longer to be feared. "What is your purpose. Frances?" asked Northampton gently. "I wish my marriage with Robert Devereux annulled. It never was a marriage--only a ceremony. We could prove that--I've been no wife to him. Nor has he been a husband to me," she added laughing wildly.

The old man stroked his beard, then smiled. It might be a good and clever move-for once a woman's passion might serve the turn of a man's cunning. Essex had lost his friend, his protector: he was no

"Sh! Sh! discretion, discretion-even in Northampton House, I might petition the King to set up a Commission to enquire into your marriage, Frances. A decree of nullity, eh? And meanwhile you can live with me, or maybe hire a little house out of town. Discretion, my

child, discretion and a little patience, too." "Do you think Lord Essex would contest any such divorce?" asked Frances with the utmost eagerness.

"I think he might for his honour's sake and because he would have to

return the dowry, and that might mean he would have to cut his timber down. I do not know, who can tell? But I think we shall gain our point. Frances. And then!"--he put his finger on his withered lips. But the

power, the girl of twenty for love. Frances blessed the memory of Simon Forman, who had always predicted good fortune and no doubt helped to bring it about by his spells, and guite forgot Prince Henry, who had had a true regard for her peace and honour, as he had tried to convince her the last time he had walked in the private gardens. But Dr. Maverne, when next he came to Northampton House and found Frances there, reminded her of Henry Stewart, "The poor young man often spoke of you during his last torments, madam, he was much your friend." Then, with a passing pang, Frances did recall the pleasant times she had had with the dead boy when they were no more than children, and all his concern and kindness for her, and his gentle ways, and how, if she had been free he would have given her a double crown--but this light shadow did not lie on her happiness. for her return to Northampton House was like a return to her own iovous vouth. She burnt unread the letters that came from Lord Essex and saw Robin privately very often. The wedding festivities were over: the Palsgrave had taken his sparkling bride to Germany. So, glutted with merriment, the glitter of gold, the sparkle of wine, the flare of fireworks, the sound of music, the courtiers began to discuss the actions of Lady Essex, who had left her husband and spent her time between her great-uncle's house and one she had hired from Sir Robert Aston at Hounslow.

reckless girl ended for him--"Then I shall marry Robin at last, at last."

So the two Howards schemed together, the man of seventy for

advisers and servants had retired or disappeared and there was no one left to check the King and his corrupt Court. People believed that the Countess would find no difficulty in securing her divorce, for it

Robert Cecil, Lord Salisbury, had gone, and Prince Henry had gone, and after his death all those wise, honest men who had been his

girl." No one paid any attention to the Queen, railing and weeping because of the death of her son, or of the wild things she said; and everyone paid court to old Henry Howard, now the most powerful man in the Kingdom, for he held the King's favourite in the palm of his hand There was one person to whom the talk of this approaching divorce and subsequent marriage brought wrath and dismay, and that was Tom Overbury. He felt that he had been outmanoeuvred by old Northampton, and he suddenly saw his own position, which had seemed more secure than that of any other man in the Kingdom, threatened and precarious. He knew that Frances Howard disliked him, he knew that her great-uncle despised him and had always tried to work against him, and he saw that his patron, his friend, his master, his puppet. Robin Carr, was being won from him by this girl who Tom thought of as a wicked shameless woman. It had been his intention to see Frances and her House humiliated by her becoming Robin Carr's mistress. He had had no intention of her becoming Robin Carr's wife: that would mean that the Howards would be all-powerful in England, that they would be able without any difficulty to be rid of poor Tom, who had worked so hard to set Robin up and keep him in his place. Besides these personal considerations Tom Overbury saw that the situation was dangerous for Rochester. It was all very well for him to be so self-assured with the King behind him, but there were powerful influences working against him--the Queen and men like the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Ralph Winwood and Sir Thomas Lake, and these, though no doubt in secret, would try to seize the pretext of the Divorce

Commission to break Rochester, and, if Rochester were broken, Overbury would fall down too. Both out of spite and prudence he

was known that Rochester was urging the King to see that the Commission got to work without delay, and that the King had said good-humouredly that if Rochester "wanted the girl he must have the

"You go too far, Tom. You think to rule me as if I were a schoolboy or a fool. Take care how you speak of the Lady Frances Howard."

"I speak of the Countess Essex," replied Overbury bitterly. "I speak of your cheap woman. Do you wish to make her your wife after you have slept with her in Anne Turner's back room?"

At this Robin, furiously angry, was tempted to strike Tom or seize

him by the throat and dash his head against the wall, but prudence restrained him, for even he, after some years at Court, had learned a certain discretion and he could not but remember that Tom Overbury knew all his secrets, had written all his letters, all his verses, and been his go-between, and he thought of a saying he had often heard since he came to Court--"It is a rash fool that offends his pander." So he tried to mollify Tom, saying: "This just cements the alliance with the House of Howard, and the King has promised me an Earldom as

warned Robin, with far more passion than he usually employed, to get rid of Frances Howard. The young man, obstinate, proud and

deeply in love, answered violently:

a wedding present—and I want the girl and must have her, Tom, as old Dad says."

"You want her, and you have had her," replied Overbury sourly. "And I have helped you to her. Do you think she would have fallen so easily into your arms if it had not been for my verses and letters? Does she know that I wrote them?"

"No," replied the young man uneasily, "and I would not have her know. But she loves me for myself, Tom."

"Ay, she loves my wit and your body," replied Tom with increased

bitterness. "She is a foul, base, cheap girl—and wicked too. Look to it. Robin—if you link yourself to her, you link yourself to evil."

shuddered and went into the window place.

"I've served you long," insisted Tom. "I've served you very faithfully. You've climbed on my shoulders, I've helped you every step of the way—without me you'd have tumbled down in the dirt and stayed there long ago."

Robin knew this was true, so he stifled his rage and bit his finger and replied: "I know, Tom, I know, and you shall be rewarded. My lady will reward you herself."

"She hates me," broke in Overbury bitterly, "as I hate her. She knows me, and I know her. We are not fools as you are, Robin. We understand each other, we understand you and the world, Frances

There was an edge to his friend's thin voice and a sparkle in his eyes that impressed Robin despite his infatuation for Frances. He

were to tell of the meetings in Paternoster Row and the little house in Hounslow and the letters that used to be sent to Chartley and the flavourings she dropped into my Lord Essex's drinks to keep him from her?"

"The drugs were harmless enough," answered Rochester sternly, "and she did it to keep herself for me. You've neither mind nor heart to conceive of love, Tom."

"I can conceive of that as well as of other things," replied Overbury furiously. "There's little love in this case, but wanton liking and lust."

Then he controlled himself and began to argue in a quieter tone, trying to explain to Robin's dull, stupid mind the net that was being spread for him and how the whole thing was simply a trap for the

Howards to get him body and soul.

Howard and I." And he added in harsh mockery: "A Commission to enquire into the Essex marriage! Would she get her decree of nullity if it were known that she and you were lovers? What if someone

Tom was not angry for long; he believed that he could stop this marriage and keep Robin to himself and ruin the woman who had upset all his plans. So he refused to write letters or poems for Robin. and, worse than that, he began to spread abroad stories of Lady Essex, giving out from his own knowledge what he termed "the truth

of the matter" and laughing at the proposed divorce.

must be silenced--or there might be no divorce.

But Robin would not listen and presently threw him out of the room.

Northampton did not remain long in ignorance of Thomas Overbury's actions. The old Earl had always hated the clever, eager scholar, and this behaviour did not surprise him. He had been waiting for Tom to slip, so he sent for Rochester and told him dryly that his secretary

"That scab's tongue must be slit:" he said. "or evil will come of it-silence him, Robin." So Robin went furiously to the royal apartments at Whitehall, where his secretary came to him with some papers for him to sign, and there was a guarrel between the two men, but in undertones so that

the King, who was in a drunken drowse in his bedroom nearby. would not be disturbed. Someone was singing a song and some fools were laughing at a card-table and under cover of this the two men exchanged bitter words, Thomas Overbury reminding Robin of

his services, and Robin saving that he could now dispense with them. "My own legs are strong and straight enough to bear me up, and I will be even with you for this."

Overbury whispered back viciously: "Well, my lord, if you do marry that filthy, base woman, you will utterly ruin your honour and yourself. You shall never do it by my advice or consent, and if you do you had

a divorce; and in his turn the old Earl told his great-niece:

"That wretch will get in our way, Frances. Your Robin has told him too much-he knows all his secrets. He must go--but how?"

"He'll keep Robin from me?" whispered Frances.

After this fiery scene Rochester went to Northampton House and told the Earl the story, and added that he was more or less in Overbury's power and that the miserable wretch might well upset their plans for

best look to stand fast."

lving on her bed, sobbing hysterically.

"Ay, my child, he is a dangerous fellow."

That evening when Mrs. Turner came to Northampton House to find out how the Divorce Commission went, she found Frances Howard

Throwing herself into the arms of her good friend, the girl stammered out her trouble.

That villain, that scoundrel, Overbury, was standing between her and her beloved Robin, trying to steal her lover from her just when she

was sure of him, spreading frightful rumours about her, not only to every scandal-monger in the city, but even to Robin himself.

"And if I am not careful he may persuade him, he may take him from

"And if I am not careful he may persuade him, he may take him from me! Oh, dear Anne, what shall I do? If only the sweet master were alive, if only I could ask his advice."

Anne patted the white cold hands that hung round her neck and tried to reassure the frantic girl.

"Hush, darling, I think I know what to do--just as well as if the master were here to advise me. But you must keep cool and gay, and let no

The little woman tip-toed to the door, opened it, found there was no one in the corridor, went to the windows and drew the curtains as if she feared the stars or the wind might spy on her, then returned to the bed and began to talk. Till late into the night the two women whispered together in the handsome bedroom which was hung with

tapestries that represented the Triumph of Justice and the Seven

one see how you are disturbed."

Heroic Virtues

Tom Overbury had his spies, chief among whom was his bodyservant, Payton, and his own shrewd intelligence to warn him of his dangerous position. He knew that he was without friends, that all these people whom he had used as his tools hated him and would gladly remove him. All these people!—ay, he meant all of them, from

the King to whom he had cringed, but whom he had mocked behind his back, down to the meanest placeman about the Court, who envied him his good fortune. But Tom Overbury was not alarmed; though he had no friend, he had a powerful protector—Robin, who.

even if he came to dislike him, must support him.

So he continued to work against Robin's marriage with Frances Howard and to do what he could to prevent the divorce from going through and to help those who were scheming against the Howard faction. Tom knew there was no one about the Court who did not regard him as an upstart, who did not resent his sly, arrogant manners, who was not sick with envy at his amazing good fortune.

He knew that Northampton hated him and intended to get rid of him; as for the girl Frances, he did not think much of her, but he knew that Essex must loathe him, poor Tom, and the same went for all the late Prince Henry's friends. Still, he relied on Robin, and carefully

continued to work against the Howard match.

Robin often quarrelled with him on this score, but Tom always had

Though Tom Overbury had no supporters about the Court, at least he, or the cause he espoused, had many among the common people. The setting up of the Divorce Commission had caused great scandal and offence to the Puritans, and Tom knew that His Grace of Canterbury, though he was President of the Commission, was bitterly troubled in his mind about the matter and would gladly refuse

the best of these arguments. He had simply to remind the favourite of how he was in his power, and the talk would end in a mutter of angry

words and Scots oaths from Robin Carr

to give Frances Howard her freedom.

Howard, but in a manner honourable to his own name and estate, one that did not prevent him from undertaking a second marriage. And as he had his friends and his partisans working quietly for him, the Commission did not find it easy to perform its dirty work. The King, who had at first enjoyed the investigation, began to be

impatient, and this impatience of his focused in his dislike of Tom Overbury, while Frances Howard, feeling herself cheated of her

Lord Essex disputed the suit; he wished to be rid of Frances

husband and her lover--fearing that she might be exposed by Robin's sly, treacherous secretary--could scarcely control the frenzy of her rage, and every time her lover visited her, either in her house in Hounslow or in Northampton House or even in Mrs. Turner's room in Paternoster Row, she urged upon him to find some means of getting rid of Overbury.

So as his beloved's wishes chimed with those of the King, and of most people at Court, and as he himself had come to fear and dread the pale clever man who was always at his elbow urging him against his wishes. Robin Carr began to consider seriously how he might get

rid of the secretary who had done so much to advance his, Robin's, fortunes. Yet all the while Tom was still confident that in Robin he had a protector and perhaps a friend, believing that Robin, despite all

had indeed risen on his. Tom's, shoulders. So, at the beginning of April, he went to Robin and told him of a plot he had heard of to murder him. Tom, and added boldly that he believed the Lady Frances was at the back of it. At this Robin stared at his secretary in amazement such that he

that had fallen between them through the Howard woman, really valued him and perhaps loved him. They had been through so much together; his services to Robin had been incalculable; the Scots lad.

was in the Queen's household, and had petitioned the King in some suit. The King had consented to Sir David's desire, and the papers had been sent to Robin and then to Tom. It was a matter, said Overbury smoothly, of more than two thousand pounds.

could not speak, so that Tom was able rapidly to relate his tale. namely that Frances Howard had sent for one Sir David Wood, who

"And of that I remitted one thousand to Sir David and kept the rest for ourselves. Since, I have had much trouble with this fellow. He has threatened to have me waylaid by his men and beaten. He has

offered for me to go to France, and there meet him." "Well, well," said Robin, finding words at last, "what is this to do with the Lady Frances? Your insolence goes beyond bounds. Tom. You

are like a madman when you think of the Countess of Essex." "It is you that are like a madman when you think of your woman."

replied Tom. "But listen to my story. I know that she sent for Wood and promised him his thousand pounds--ay, and more--if he would meet me and kill me. Sir David would not because he feared Tyburn, and then she told him that you were behind her--still he would not, but went away and told the tale--secretly, of course, but it has come to me."

"You set me up!" cried Tom passionately. "Do you not see that even those who try to be rid of me, do it to injure you? For they think without me you will not long carry your head so high. And they are right. Get rid of me, Robin, and you will fall at once, you have neither the wit nor the cunning to keep you in the high and difficult place into which you have vaulted with my help."

Rochester flushed at these words and bit his lip like a rebuked school boy, for he feared that they were true, and his secret wish was to keep Tom with him. Indeed the man was indispensable to him, doing all his work and leaving him free for his sports and his pleasures. So he said, with an effort at kindness:

"Tom, do not be so angry with me. It's only on the question of this

"This is another of your falsehoods, Tom," said Rochester. "Do not plague me with your lies and inventions, for surely I shall come to

hate you and set you down as I set you up."

must sit and the speeches must be delivered—and all these intrigues amuse the King. But my Lord Northampton has met the husband's relations at the house of the Earl of Essex and the matter will surely be arranged—Essex, poor wretch, wants to be free too, and the lawyers will be allowed to do as they wish as long as in some form the decree of nullity is declared."

This was news to Tom Overbury, who was first startled and taken aback and then anory. He broke out in bitter abuse against Frances

marriage that we quarrel. Cannot you see that it must be, and will be? Why, even now an agreement is come to, but the Commission

Howard and the Earl of Northampton and all the Howard pack.

"Do not you see what they do with you? They get you with this

marriage, they bind you hand and foot--then they will set you down for the nothing that you will be as soon as they have got rid of me." "You think that I," asked Overbury grimly, "can live in the same house as Frances Howard? Does she know who wrote her letters and sonnets? She will hate me even more when she does." And he added with the air of a man speaking finally; "I'll stay--and you must do what you please in the matter."

Robin Carr could think of nothing, but the King and Northampton were more resourceful. The old Earl persuaded His Majesty that it

"Nay," said Robin, "I will not argue with you on this matter, Tom. I do not think to get rid of you. but to keep you with me always."

was very perilous to keep about the Court one who knew as many secrets as Tom Overbury and who governed so absolutely the King's favourite; one, moreover, who was stiff-necked and arrogant and had dared to criticise the King and the Commission that the King had set up.

"The scab," repeated my Lord Northampton, "must go."

James nodded his lolling head with a glint of anger in his watery eyes and said: "Yes, the fellow must go. But how? The Queen is for having him sent to the Tower at once."

But my Lord Northampton was always in favour of working without scandal, of which enough had been given to the people, and he reminded the King:

"Sir, you can hardly set down Overbury in a violent manner without

"Sir, you can hardly set down Overbury in a violent manner without making it appear that you rebuke Robin Carr, for all know they have been but as one mind."

For a while there was a pause in the movement of events. Tom and Robin seemed on the surface to be friends again and the secretary slyly congratulated himself on having won the difficult game he had

Lord of Canterbury and there told, as it were casually, that His Maiesty had a great honour in store for the industrious secretary of Robin Carr and that he proposed to send him as Minister to Muscovy. At this Tom laughed aloud and reached for his hat and cane. The implications were obvious, and he said: "My Lord Archbishop. Your Grace must understand that I feel myself better in my present service, that my health has been poor for some months, and I could not undertake the rigours of this distant journey." And he returned to his chambers in the Cockpit at Whitehall feeling elated that his enemies thought so highly of him that they went to this trouble to get rid of him, and he told the whole thing as a joke to Robin, who frowned and bit his lips and said: "The King wishes it. Tom--it were better if you went. I told you you may have the post of Treasurer to the Chamber when you return." "When I return," sneered Tom. "It is not intended that I should return." Robin remained uneasy and sullen, he could only repeat: "It is the King's will that you go, Tom; it is the King's will. Such a post is a great honour for a man of your birth." "I prefer." retorted Tom bitterly. "the post that I have." And he added

Then, one bright spring morning, he was bidden to the house of my

been playing.

In the last week of April there was a Council held in Whitehall Palace and Sir Thomas was ordered to attend, which he did with an air of great self-assurance, for he still believed, though he knew the King,

in fury: "It is your woman behind this. It is her great-uncle Northampton that has turned the King against me. But I'll not go,

Robin. You dare not send me."

There was the King in his great chair, lolling on the padded arms, his chin sunk in the ruffles that rose about his guilted doublet; and there was Robin standing behind him--"In the place," thought Tom, "where I put him." There were the lords sitting soberly with their rams' parchments and inkhorns in front of them; and there was the window and the river and the spring sunshine and the windy clouds in a high

the Queen, the Essex faction, the Howard faction, were all against him--that he had them all in his hand. So, full of confidence, he made his appearance before the lords sitting round the Council table, on

which was a handsome carpet from Persia.

blue sky beyond.

on the table

Council, and this was that he should be again offered the Embassy to Russia, which was for his benefit and honour. Tom listened to the formal rigmarole that disguised the trap. Then he said in that mincing familiar tone which irritated everyone:

It was the Lord Chancellor, Ellesmere, who, leaning forward courteously, told Tom the reason of his being brought before the

language the Muscovites speak. I am not strong in body and have a great dislike to ice, cold, wild men and bears, and I am very well in England."

"My lord. I am grateful for His Maiesty's care, but I do not know the

"You make excuses," said Lord Ellesmere sternly, and the King

looked up at Robin and nodded, as much as to say: "You see, the fellow is impossible to move."

"Consider more carefully your replies," smiled the Lord Chancellor, tapping, with elegance, his guill on the smooth parchment before him

this in Paris instead of Muscovy I should say the same." Ellesmere motioned him to retire, but not to leave the room. So Overbury went to the window and looked down into the gardens and across the river. He saw Robin turn his head and glance at him and whisper to the King; then the King, lumbering on Robin's arm, left the room and the lords whispered among themselves. There was only the sound of their subdued voices and the scratch of the guills of the clerks as they wrote. Then Ellesmere went into the inner room to consult. Tom supposed. His Maiestv. Despite his self-assurance and the knowledge of the power that he held in his hands Tom felt a sudden loneliness; never until now, since he had come to Whitehall, had he realised how solitary he was. He thought with a curious pang of homesickness of those old days in the Gloucestershire mansion with his father and mother, brothers and sisters--peaceful days of study and a homely hearth and the company of those who liked him, maybe loved him--quiet days before ambition had bitten him, before he had met Robin Carr.

"I have considered," replied Tom warmly, "I do not wish to leave England, not for any post that can be offered me abroad--and were

Lord Ellesmere came out of the inner room; he held a paper in his hand. Going to his place at the table he said that His Majesty was so much angered by the refusal of Sir Thomas Overbury to take up the Russian Embassy that he had signed a warrant for him to be committed to the Tower, and to that prison he was now to be carried and kept there till further order. At first Tom hardly realised what had happened. He came from the window place and asked passionately: "Where is Robin?"

"My Lord Rochester." said Ellesmere dryly. "is with the King. His Maiesty consulted my Lord Rochester before he signed this Tom began to speak brokenly, then fell silent; he did not hear the warrant being read aloud by the Clerk of the Council, who had risen

in his place; he was thinking of Robin, who had betrayed him. He would never have believed this possible—his power to be silenced that way, on such an excuse! In one moment all his confidence, his courage, his sense of security crumbled; he looked and saw that a guard stood either side of him; he moved forward and the Clerk of the Council was in front of him. He heard one of the lords murmur

document."

with ironv:

"All is over, fellow. Make your exit like a man."

On this mutter of scornful advice, Tom Overbury drew himself up and bowed to the Council and followed the Clerk dumbly out of the room

thousand times and more on Robin Carr's errands and for his own advancement and pleasure.

They took him through the covered ways to the garden steps and there he saw the barge with six uniformed rowers and the Lieutenant of the Tower waiting, so he knew the whole thing had been prepared:

and through the corridors so familiar to him, that he had traversed a

of the Tower waiting, so he knew the whole thing had been prepared; Northampton's work, no doubt. Had he been a lunatic when he had tried to pit his wits against those of Henry Howard? He stepped into the barge, the silent Clerk of the Council and the guards accompanying him.

The day was beautiful. A golden haze lay over the budding trees that grew in fields and gardens along the river banks, and gilded the tips of the reeds where the young swans shook out their ash-grey wings to the sunshine. The turrets and tower of the churches and palaces of the great city sparkled in the bright light.

the midst of this April warmth, as if a great wind had blown on him and chilled him to the heart. Three - Resalgar And The Masgue Of Hymen

Tom Overbury sat huddled, his lean knees pressed together, his elbows in his lap, his fingers doubled under his chin. He felt cold in

When Tom Overbury arrived in the Tower he was given two comfortable rooms but denied the company of his man, Payton, for which he earnestly begged; nor was he permitted any exercise, though he was allowed paper, pens and ink and a few books to

divert his dismal leisure. So Overbury set to work to find out what he could of his own situation and what was happening in the outer world. He discovered that there was a new Governor in the Tower, Sir Gervase Helwys, who was Northampton's creature and a friend of Sir Thomas Manson, the King's falconer, who was a gay gentleman, a popular dancer in the masques and who often went to Mrs. Turner's house in Paternoster Row. These facts were discovered by Tom from the man who was given him as a bodyguard, one Richard Weston. He was a sullen fellow, and it was only by employing great cunning and patience that the prisoner induced him to talk, and even

then he could obtain little from him save this news of the Governorship of the Tower. Other information Overbury obtained from Sir Gervase himself, for this gentleman, genial son of a Lincolnshire esquire and educated at St. John's, Cambridge, later paid his prisoner a visit and spoke to him courteously. "Keep up a good heart. Sir Thomas. The offence for which you are here is trivial, and surely my Lord Rochester will soon see that you are released."

Tom sat propped up in bed. He had not lied when he had told the

Now that there was no need for action he had relaxed into a natural feebleness of body. "Tell me some news of my Lord Rochester." he said. "Ask him that I may have at least larger apartments with a little more air and that I may be allowed exercise." Sir Gervase smiled and shrugged his shoulders uneasily. He was in

Council that he was too ailing to undertake the Embassy to Russia: he had been in poor health, indeed, a sick man, almost all his life. only kept up by the energy of his spirit and the force of his ambition.

good-humoured, and he wished to make Tom Overbury's punishment as light as it was in his power to do. So he said: "Rochester is always with the King, either at Theobalds or Newmarket or in Whitehall--so surely he can put in a word for his friend."

everything Lord Northampton's man, but he was also pleasant and

"What is intended to be done with me?" asked Tom, turning his head sharply on the pillow.

Sir Gervase had no answer ready: he had paid Lord Northampton fourteen hundred pounds for his place, and his instructions had been that he was to keep Overbury very strictly. Tom was to receive no communications from anyone except the Earl of Northampton or Lord Rochester, while any letters that he might write--and he was to

be encouraged to write freely--were to be sent to Henry Howard. So. though Sir Gervase did not know very much of this matter, or indeed concern himself greatly about it, he knew that he was there to see

that Tom Overbury made no more mischief in the affairs of Frances

Howard and Robin Carr. Yet he was sorry for the man, and would have given him comfort if he could.

spat out, "and I hope she is cheated of her heart's desire--and I hope that if she obtains it she finds it nothing but a curse." "Hush, hush," whispered Sir Gervase warningly, "Those are not the words to get you out of the Tower. Cease to concern yourself with these matters. Sir Thomas, and it may be you will be returned to your family." "Returned to my family!" cried Tom, picking quickly upon these words. "Am I not to be returned to Whitehall in the old post I had about Robin Carr's person?" Sir Gervase would not venture on this dangerous ground, but contented himself with ordering what comfort he could for the prisoner's ease, such as more pillows and warm coverlets and a fire. for his room was damp, even in the summer evenings. "Take, I pray you, away," complained Tom, "this sour man, Weston. I do not like him and he is not trained as a body-servant. I want my own man. Pavton."

"Weston may be clumsy," admitted Sir Gervase a little austerely, "but

"So that he may spy on me!" retorted Tom passionately. "Well, I have nothing to conceal--and I hope the man reports to those who pay him what I say of them. And who does pay him? The old grey Howard rat.

"I tell you this," he said. "The Divorce Commission drags along its business in a way that makes Lady Essex, they say, half-crazed with fury. It is the Archbishop that makes difficulties now. He argues on points of theology and conscience with the King, and will have his

Hatred sparkled in Tom's dim eyes. "She is a base, evil woman," he

own way, obstinate Puritan that he is."

I have orders to put him about you."

It was no part of the Governor's business to inform Tom that he had quessed the obvious truth; Sir Gervase had got his cosy post cheaply on condition that he kept this difficult prisoner strictly, and he went no further into the business than that Tom, in his loneliness that was in such sharp contrast to the bustling. exciting life that he had led, considered his own case with intelligent detachment. From the first he had seen the core of his misfortune. the woman. Frances Howard: she had engineered this outrageous imprisonment he was sure, she had urged her Robin and he had urged the King, who could deny his Caro nothing. Tom's teeth ground together in rage. He remembered the story of Sir David Wood, who had hinted that Lady Essex had tried to bribe him to take Tom off, either in a duel or even by assassination; at the time Tom had not really believed the tale, though he had carried it with zest to Robin. Would even Frances Howard be so bold and so stupid? But the recollection of that ugly story came back to him unpleasantly, and when he remembered the small brilliant face of Frances Howard and the damaging tales he had spread about her and the efforts he had made to keep Robin from her, he felt relieved that he was in the Tower, safe from her fury. There was, however, always the possibility that the vindictive girl might try to bring him to the block, but Tom soon dismissed that fear. There was no accusation against him at all and though the cowed man knew himself friendless except for Robert Carr. vet in that one ally he trusted completely. Robin had betrayed him, ves, when he had stood behind the King when James had signed the warrant for Tom's imprisonment, but Robin would, Robin must, stand by him now and get him out of this nasty plight. There was another face besides that of Frances Howard which Tom

remembered, though vaguely. He felt sure that he had seen the man

no doubt."

countenance.

One day as Weston was putting out Tom's shirts from his possessions that had been sent from the Cockpit, the prisoner laying down his pen, asked:

"Have I seen you in Paternoster Row? At the house of Mrs. Turner?"

The man stared stupidly, then muttered that he had been in Mrs. Turner's employment for a little time, say a week or two.

"Ah," sneered Tom, "so they are all in a tale together—and I hope they will soon all be in a rope together as well."

Weston before, though the grey-headed sulky fellow had a common

He turned over gloomily in his mind the combination that he had against him: pretty Anne a bawd, old Howard a pander and a treacherous clever scoundrel, Frances, a harlot, and all their hangers-on and flatterers. Tom had plumbed deeply the corruptions of the Court; he knew what mercy to expect from such opponents, he knew the character of the King who sat drunkenly astride this stinking heap stuck with tinsel lilies that was called Whitehall. He relied

desperately on Robert Carr, and he wrote daily insistent, bitter letters to his one friend, claiming as a right his instant release. But sometimes the quill would drop from his relaxed fingers and he would stare out of his barred window at the old grey wall beyond, as he reflected how much of a fool Robin was and how deeply in the

power of a wicked woman.

The months of that summer were to Torn Overbury like an eternity. He wrote again and again to Rochester, pleading, threatening, stating his case with moving eloquence. But nothing came back except two brief, evasive answers. Then the desperate prisoner wrote to his old father, the judge, and to his mother, who had always

were being intercepted.

Madame Overbury, indeed, had come in great distress to London with her sons-in-law and her daughters, but she had not been allowed to see Tom, and when in despair she had written to Lord Rochester, then at Newmarket with the King, she had received a brief reply:

"Your stay in town can nothing avail your son's delivery. Therefore I would advise you to retire into the country, and doubt not before your coming home you shall hear he is a free man."

loved him, and to his brother-in-law, Sir John Lidcote, and to his sisters—and there were no answers. Then Tom knew that his letters

The prisoner in the Tower got to know of these visits of his family through Weston, for he was too clever for that fellow's dull wits and could wrest information out of him if he chose. When he realised how his letters were stopped, the thought of his helplessness drove him almost into a frenzy and so preyed on him that for days he lay sick in his bed, unable to speak or think or sleep, capable only of muttering

almost into a frenzy and so preyed on him that for days he lay sick in his bed, unable to speak or think or sleep, capable only of muttering and dreaming in short spells, from which he woke to cry out at the sight of the prison bars.

When Tom was in this downcast state Sir Gervase came to him and tried to get from him some pledge that he would interfere no more in the affairs of the Howards and Robin Carr. The Governor said frankly

that Lord Northampton was behind this proposal and that the great Earl was prepared to allow Tom to return to his family mansion if he would promise to leave Court and never meddle again in matters that did not concern him.

that did not concern him.

"That pledge I will not give," sneered Tom. "Nay, nor make any

promise, nor have any dealings with my Lord Northampton or any of the others of these black, sly Howards--it is they that ought to fear

Then he sat up in bed, demanded a board and his writing materials, and penned a passionate letter to Robin, threatening him with revenge, with publication of all his secrets, and of how he would vet. despite the understanding between Lady Essex and Lord Rochester,

block the progress of the Divorce Commission by revealing the adultery of Frances Howard who so impudently declared herself a

me, not I them."

virgin wife. When Robin received this letter he was alarmed, and as he was a weak man and one who could never act alone, he took it to Frances Howard, still living in Northampton House and waiting, with a daily

increasing fury and impatience, for her release from her marriage. "Look, Frances, how the fellow threatens me. I think it was an ill thing to send him to the Tower. We should have kept him a friend. It should

have been bribery, not violence."

Frances Howard read the fierce, miserable letter. Though her face sharpened with fury she affected to make light of Tom's menaces, and said: "What is it to us what this poor wretch says? He can work no

mischief where he is--and all that he says of me is lies." Then she looked at the letter again, marking this time not its contents but its style, and she thought: "The writing is that of Robin's letters and sonnets that I have cherished so long and so eagerly." and she looked sideways at her lover and asked him: "Whose hand is this?"

wrote well and fairly."

And he, not thinking of what he said, replied: "It is Tom Overbury's own hand. He is a great scholar, he always Robin Carr stood mute and stupid, frowning, and the girl was silent too, crumpling up that hateful letter in her hands. She could read her lover's silence; he had fooled her with his secretary's letters and verses. She felt deeply shamed when she considered that this creature whom she so despised held her most intimate secrets, that it was over his verses, written no doubt with a sneer, and over his

"And he wrote all your letters for you, even those that were sent to me here and at Chartley? Did he compose them too, and the sonnets?-- and is that why I have had nothing from you since Thomas Overbury

was in the Tower?"

"Oh, Robin, how could you do this to me?" Frances looked down, as if she stared through the polished floor to some dreadful region below.

letters, that she had smiled, prayed and sobbed in secret rapture.

below.

He answered sombrely; "I did it for your sake, Frances, because I am glib with neither tongue nor pen, and I knew you had these fancies from your other servants and would look for them from me—or

tancies from your other servants and would look for them from me—or else despise me for my lack of courtliness." He repeated with deep feeling: "I did it for you, Frances."

The woman who listened thought of what she had done for her love.

how she had stooped to drug her husband and other worse things

that Robin Carr never guessed of. As if he read her silence he reminded her of that, looking up at her quickly with his bright eyes:

"If you could sauce my Lord Essex's drinks for our love, Frances, I suppose I could employ Tom Overbury to write letters."

"Yes. I suppose you could, Robin. I need not shame and rage. I

"Yes. I suppose you could, Robin. I need not shame and rage. blame you in nothing--only love me and be faithful to me."

called her, with the added sneer that these names were given to her, a Howard, in every pothouse in the country. Nor could she, had these charges been made to her face, have denied them, for she had been Robin Carr's lover while she was the wife of Essex, and Thomas Overbury knew it and had no doubt copies of all her wild, amorous letters, and of all those he had written in Rochester's name. She turned on the uneasy man a look that was dreadful in its emptiness, and he took her hand and pressed her close to his troubled heart.

"Only love me, Frances, and trust me."

She said this without warmth in a voice touched with despair, for she began to think what she had paid for this love and what she must yet pay and how very little remained to her but Robin Carr. She looked again at the letter and read the ugly names that Thomas Overbury

"I'll silence him, I'll have him out and choke him with bribes."

She lifted her delicate head from Robin's breast and gazed up at him

"I trusted you, and you did that to me-gave my secrets to your

resolutely. "Leave him in the Tower."

"If you will, darling. He is, after all, harmless--all his letters are

"If you will, darling. He is, after all, harmless-all his letters are intercepted."

"Kiss me, Robin, and be faithful to me."
"Forgive me those letters," he begged. "The heart was mine, if the

hand was Tom's."

"Only love me," she repeated fiercely.

creature so that he has the right to call me harlot."

As soon as he had gone Frances went to her great-uncle's library where the old man sat over his papers of State.

"Sir. you know what Thomas Overbury says of me?" "I did not mean that you should. Yes, all his letters are brought to me."

"There is no way." she asked earnestly. "that his wild, foul abuse

could slip through?" "None. Sir Gervase is my man and the scab has Weston for his

Frances stood silent, while the old man tenderly stroked her little hand.

body-servant."

"Robin showed me one of his letters. He threatens."

"Why concern yourself about this wretch?"

"I know, but his claws are cut, his wings clipped--it is but a caged venom "

"I feel humiliated--spat upon. Harlot from Robin's creature! When is this divorce to be granted?" Frances spoke with a vehemence that

disturbed old Northampton, who began to excuse himself. "I do what I can, and Essex is willing--but there is a party against us. the Puritans, those who think us Papists, friends of Spain, those who

hate and envy Robin--"

"I know. I know, but you, sir, and Robin, rule the country between you--cannot you do this for me? Oh, sir, I live in shame and torment--" The girl faltered and fell on her knees beside the old man, stiffly rustling in

her wide skirts, and put her little cold hands in the long white cuffs on his sleeves, imploring him to save her from the malice of Overbury.

But Frances was not reassured. She knew that Overbury was far more clever than Robin, she knew the Overbury family clamoured at the Court for justice, she knew that Sir Thomas was held on a trifling charge, and she greatly feared that he might some way get his freedom or at least find means to spread his tales that would ruin her hopes of a divorce. He might bribe Weston or some other servant. he might induce Sir Gervase to smuggle letters out, one of his family might gain access to him. What then? "I shall be pointed out as a wanton--perhaps as a witch." For no doubt Sir Thomas had seen enough and guessed enough, seen and guessed far more than candid Robin ever had. Frances felt her terrors mount until they almost choked her--she glimpsed a dreadful future, in which she would be not only divided from Robin. but exposed as a wicked woman.

"Leave that matter to me, child," said the Earl quietly, "The wretch is

friendless, he can do no harm."

She would not trust even Lord Northampton. He was old, dry and cynical, he could not understand her torments, he delayed and quoted politics and soothed her as if she were a child; her parents were useless to her also, her father railed, her mother wept whenever the divorce was mentioned. No, Frances had only one true friend, and that was Anne Turner. In hood and vizard the frightened girl, with Alice for companion, hastened to Paternoster Row and was shown at once into the cosy familiar parlour where the little dress-designer was curling her hair with hot irons as she sat before a mirror, for she was giving a little party that evening to some of her satellites and gossips.

Frances began at once to tell her bitter tale. "I have told you

everything, Anne, and I will not conceal this. All those letters from my

magic was very sure! Does not Doctor Franklin know anything? I tell you this Overbury has written threatening letters. He will prevent my divorce, he will take Robin from me. He is clever and cunning, he will make me a laughing-stock to the whole of the country. Think of it, Anne. He read all the letters I wrote to Robin, and replied to themsurely he has copies of everything I sent to my lord from Chartley.

"He must be silenced!"

"Should it not be easy to achieve?" demanded Frances impetuously.

lord that I so cherished were written by Thomas Overbury. Soon he will make that and other matters public, to the shame of both of us. Anne, have you nothing to silence him? Would that the sweet master were alive, he would give me some enchantment to silence him--his

"Yes, yes," admitted the little dress-designer distractedly. "All that is easy." She put down her cooling irons and frowned.

"Then what is the difficulty, sweet Anne?"

"My Lord Northampton is behind everything that I do. Sir Gervase Helwys is his, too, and Richard Weston, who was Simon Forman's man and yours, has been put about Overbury. Doctor Franklin, too.

may have access to him. surely."

Thomas to his account, But how?

The girl was on her knees beside her friend; she rested her beautiful head on the soft folds of the woman's skirt and began to cry like a tired child. The waiting had been so long, the delays and humiliations

tired child. The waiting had been so long, the delays and humiliations of the Commission so tedious, and underneath was her deep fear that she would, after all her torments, lose Robin.

Mrs. Turner was very eager to help her patroness. She had no other thought in her mind than to be the tool of the House of Howard, and it had seemed to her long since that it would be very wise to send Sir

the difficulty was, and it was one that made Mrs. Turner wrinkle her brow in despair, that Simon Forman's secrets had died with him and that none of these people knew of any quick, subtle poison that would take a man off under the likeness of an illness--for nothing less than murder was in the little woman's mind. "Sir Thomas Overbury." she said. "is a sick man now. That is well

known. His father has heard of it, by bribing some of the guards at the Tower, and has been petitioning His Maiesty that a doctor may

be sent to him."

Access to the prisoner was, as she had just said, simple enough. Richard Weston was ready to do any villainy for which he would be well paid, and Helwys had been told by Lord Northampton to keep the prisoner as close as a rat in a trap. Dr. Franklin, too, was willing to brew up a pottage that would silence Tom Overbury for ever. But

"I know, I know," moaned Frances Howard. "But he lives, he lives. Is there no spell to silence him?" "If we could but discover the medicine that the sweet master was experimenting with when he died so suddenly," sighed Mrs. Turner.

"You know, I have my suspicions about that same death. I think," she added reflectively. "that he was made away with foully, and all that talk of a prediction was lies." Frances Howard asked wearily: "Who would attempt the life of the

sweet master?" "I think it was his wife." replied Mrs. Turner in a confidential tone.

"She was so jealous of him and was always spying on him--and I think she found out what he was brewing secretly and used it in his own wine."

"Then." cried Frances, who was entirely absorbed in her own

must ask Doctor Franklin, who has some of the master's recipes and is every day experimenting. But how are we to get it into Tom Overbury's food or drink? Weston is not to be trusted in such a delicate matter. The stuff that Doctor Franklin has now, that he calls resalgar, must be put directly into the food that is eaten."

The girl looked up from the woman's knees. Her face was shining with tears.

"Then it is simple if Doctor Franklin has the stuff. I will write a penitent letter to Sir Thomas and say I am sorry for his misfortune, that I work for his release, and since I have heard he is sick, I will send him tarts and iellies—that you can make, sweet Anne, and the good master.

problem and could waste no thought now even upon her beloved

"Ay, but we cannot ask her for it," returned Mrs. Turner guickly. "We

master, "Mrs. Forman would have the stuff that we need."

Franklin, may flavour."

The two women stared at each other in a second's silence, as if they realised what they were plotting--the destruction of a human being who stood in their way. Then Anne Turner turned aside uneasily, took up a horn of gold powder and shook it over her crimped hair.

"Resalgar stupefies," she murmured. "Deadens the senses, clouds

the memory--"

"Does it kill?" asked Frances, outright. "We spoke of poisons, a quick, subtle poison such as, you said, destroyed the sweet master."

"We need not consider that, madam," smiled Mrs. Turner, "if the end be gained."

"I want him to die. I hate him and fear him--he deserves death for what he has said of me. Let him die, sweet Anne."

"It is dangerous." "More dangerous for him to live. He might have us both charged with infamv. Anne."

The little woman looked down into the girl's face, that had changed since she, Anne Turner, had known her. Gaiety and candour had gone from those delicate features, which now had a hard, cool look

and a sparkling wildness in the eyes. "I daresay it could be done, madam, if Franklin knows enough," And Anne, who had a kind heart, added: "There is not, I think, much

suffering, and if there is, we shall not see it." "Let him suffer." said Frances Howard sombrely. "as I suffer. Only let him be silenced, and quickly."

When Robert Carr heard of his friend's prolonged sickness, he

seconded the appeal of the Overbury family to His Majesty that a doctor might be sent to the Tower to attend, Tom Overbury; so Dr. Mayerne and his brother-in-law, the apothecary M. Labelle, went to the Tower on a fine morning of late summer and were at once admitted into the apartment of the prisoner.

Tom received the two genial Frenchmen with delight. They were the first visitors he had had since his confinement, and as he had received no letters he felt completely cut off from the world. In the days of his success and glory he had not much cared for Dr.

Mayerne, who was the one person about the Court whom he, Tom

Overbury, had not been able thoroughly to understand. He could not decide whether the French physician served God or the devil,

whether he was King's man. Queen's man or Prince's man or worked only for himself; and he, Tom, shrewd and cunning as he was, had

But now he welcomed Dr. Maverne and his brother-in-law, whom he. Tom, knew very slightly, with delight, and sat up in his bed and began to talk eagerly until the doctor kindly hushed him and told him to lie still while they made their examination. Tom Overbury had changed a great deal since he had come to the Tower in April. His close confinement, for he was forbidden any kind of exercise, the passionate fretting of his mind, his loneliness and his fears of the future had undermined a health always frail. He had a constant cough and at night such sweats that he would often drench through three or four shirts: his face was sallow and shrunken, so that the bony structure showed, giving him the appearance of an old man. though he was only about thirty-two. "I find a great weakness," announced Dr. Mayerne, but on a reassuring note. "Yet I think it is due to nothing but the troubles of your mind and this unfortunate imprisonment. We must get you out of the Tower. Sir Thomas--we must get you out of the Tower."

felt a certain awe of the fat physician who went so pleasantly and quietly about the Court and knew more than any other man of the diseases, vices and shameful secrets of everyone, from the King and Queen down to the humblest placeman that hung about the

backstairs.

"Is there any hope of that?" asked the unhappy man eagerly. He sat up in bed, shivering and coughing, and drawing his black silk-embroidered linen bedgown round him. "I think if they keep me here any longer I shall go mad with the injustice of it. I write and write, and Lord Rochester will not answer. Even my own people do not come to me."

Dr. Mayerne put in some soothing words: "That is only because they have not permission. Both the worthy judge, your father, and the

Tears of weakness came into the eyes of Tom Overbury, and he lay down on his pillow like a man ashamed.

Dr. Mayerne ordered the prisoner to have soothing and refreshing baths and watched while his brother-in-law and his boy, John Reeve, fetched water, ewers and napkins and then bathed the wasted limbs of the prisoner and rubbed ointment on his chafed knees and elbows

good dame, your mother, and your sisters and your brothers-in-law, in especial Sir John Lidcote, have been about the Court and are

most earnest for your release."

and washed out his mouth and eyes and combed his hair, so that his body, foul from neglect, became fragrant.

When M. Labelle and his boy had done this, they took their leave with pleasant greetings, saying that they would soon return, but Dr.

Mayerne remained and chatted cosily with Sir Thomas Overbury, giving him news of the Court, gossiping how Rochester stood as high as ever in the King's favour, how there was a party against him-the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury and others who were

jealous of his high elevation--and rage against the Howards for

Papists, who encouraged the Spanish alliance proposed for Prince Charles.

"And the marriage?" whispered Tom from his pillow.

"The marriage will go forward, I think," smiled the doctor, contemplating his smooth plump hands clasped on the knot of his

stands out I think they will find it wise and expedient to give way to His Majesty. Yes, before the year is out I think my Lady Essex will be married to Lord Rochester who is, they say, to have an Earldom."

cane. "Why not? The King wills it. Though His Grace of Canterbury

Tom Overbury lay silent, passive with rage. Then Dr. Mayerne, to put

marriage at all and how the gossips had said that another girl had been sent in her place, with other obscene tales that set Sir Thomas laughing savagely. These indecencies made him forget all prudence too, and he began to rail against Rochester, the King and the Howard faction. "If you talk like that." warned the good doctor, rising and drawing his furred robe round him daintily. "you will never. Sir Thomas, leave the Tower. Discretion and submission--they should be watchwords." "Do not leave me!" implored Tom, in alarm at seeing his one visitor departing, "Come again soon, Indeed, I am very sick, as you can see. Represent my case to my Lord Rochester, and if ever I come into power again I'll not forget it." The fat Frenchman smiled. Was it likely that he. Theodore de Mayerne, would ever need the patronage of Tom Overbury? How these poor creatures who had once tasted power clung to the pathetic fallacy that it would always be theirs! Did they not know when they were dropped, done for, and about to be trampled

him in a good humour, began to give him scurrilous details of some of the proceedings of the Divorce Commission, telling him how it was rumoured that Frances Howard had had to go before a committee of matrons to prove that her marriage had been no

and anoint the prisoner and that he would send him some medicine that he must be sure to take, and so graciously left Tom's company.

As the doctor descended the narrow stairs from the prisoner's chamber he met Richard Weston coming up carrying a neat basket

underfoot? But the doctor took a courteous leave and promised to return soon. He said he would send M. Labelle and the boy to bathe

chamber he met Richard Weston coming up carrying a neat basket covered with a fair napkin; the doctor lifted the corner of this and smilingly peered within. There were several iellies, green, vellow and

"Ah, a present for Sir Thomas," smiled the doctor, and the man Weston replied sullenly:

"The stuff comes from Sir Gervase Helwys, who has them prepared in his own kitchen."

The doctor smiled more deeply and passed on to visit the Governor

red on little plates, each daintily set off with figures cut out of

angelica, and studded with glazed cherries.

interview. he remarked:

"I met his man coming up with some dainties that you had sent from your kitchen. Sir Gervase, so I see that you are solicitous about the welfare of this poor fellow."

Sir Gervase replied suavely: "Those dainties you saw are

and give a report on the prisoner. At the end of the short, formal

substitutes. The Lady Frances Howard—or perhaps we should call her the Countess of Essex?—sent some cakes and pastries. Nay, she has sent them several times, to be given to the prisoner. They were made by Mrs. Anne Turner, who has a famous pastry-cook."

"Ah and why did you intercent these?" asked the genial doctor. "It is

"Ah, and why did you intercept these?" asked the genial doctor. "It is a kind action on the part of the lady to show that after all she bears no ill-will to poor Sir Thomas, who was never, I think, much her friend."

friend."

"Ah, yes," replied Sir Gervase vaguely. "It was indeed a sweet and womanly action. But by some strange misfortune the jellies became spoiled on every occasion on their journey from Paternoster Row to

the Tower, and so I had others made in my own kitchen and sent to the prisoner."

The doctor smiled, made no comment, and took his departure.

he, with the King's connivance, had hastened Prince Henry out of the world with a flavouring of poison on a bunch of grapes--a poison the secret of which Theodore de Maverne alone knew. Sir Gervase stroked his chin thoughtfully and a little uneasily. He did not any longer like the commission he had: he wished that his fourteen hundred pounds was back in his pocket and he was in his Lincolnshire Manor. He saw well enough why he had been given this post, that he might be the catspaw of Lord Northampton and the Howards in getting rid of Sir Thomas Overbury, But murder? Sir Gervase dare not openly voice his suspicions, for he too was in the power of these great people, almost as much as was his prisoner. He had been surprised that Lady Essex should send dainties to Overbury, and the first consignment he had given to a vellow cat. which had died. So he had compromised between his interests and his conscience and had intercepted all the dainties that Anne Turner sent to the prisoner and substituted harmless concoctions made by his own cook, while those that had come from Paternoster Row he had thrown with his own hands into the Tower ditch. He hoped that Sir Thomas Overbury might die a natural, death and he had been very much relieved when Dr. Mayerne had said that in his opinion, and in that of his brother-in-law, M. Labelle, the poor man was suffering from consumption, and that this, aggravated by his state of mind at his confinement, would probably carry him off before the year was out.

The Governor of the Tower looked after him uneasily. He knew the reputation of the great physician and the stories that went round, how

This was very good news for the Governor of the Tower, for the death of Sir Thomas from some Heaven-sent illness would relieve him of his dreadful responsibility. He had not sent the prisoner the letter that Frances Howard had put in with her first presents of pastries, for he thought this crude feminine move would excite the suspicions of a

came from her he would refuse to touch anything he received in his apartment. Sir Gervase did not wish his prisoner to suspect that anyone was attempting his life, for he feared the fellow's frenzy and cunning; he might find some means of spreading the scandal abroad.

So the harassed Governor kept the letter locked in his cabinet, and with it was another to himself from that most foolish woman (as he thought of her), for Frances Howard had written to him telling him not to give any of the wine, custard, tarts or jellies that she sent to Sir

Thomas Overbury to his wife or family nor to eat of them himself--"For." she had written. "there are letters in them."--and by "letters" Sir

The visit of the French physician had made the Governor of the Tower very thoughtful. He reflected: "I can save Overbury from the presents of the Countess of Essex, and I can have the man Weston

Gervase Helwys understood "poison."

members of the House of Howard.

shrewd fellow like Sir Thomas. Would he believe that penitence had stirred Frances Howard? Not likely, and if he thought the pastries

watched, but I cannot prevent Doctor Mayerne, who probably knows more about poison than ever Simon Forman did, or Frances Howard and Mrs. Turner, from giving the poor wretch whatever medicine he chooses. Besides there was Monsieur Labelle and the apothecary's boy."

He tried to put the matter out of his mind, for he was a simple, honest

He tried to put the matter out of his mind, for he was a simple, honest man with no thought but of doing his duty. He dare not speak, for it would mean, he was sure, that the King would send him to join Sir Thomas in the prison of the Tower. He had paid his good money for the post, and he was, in a manner, Northampton's man. It seemed easy to make a compromise--to say nothing, but to prevent Sir Thomas Overbury from eating any of the dainties that came from

At her charming little house, which was always full of amusing company. Anne Turner made the pastries and cakes, the jellies and custard that she sent regularly in the name of Lady Essex to the poor prisoner in the Tower, and into the confections she skilfully mixed the drugs that were supplied her by Dr. Franklin and that he made up from the recipes left by Simon Forman, such of them, that is, that he had been able to obtain. And when Sir Thomas Overbury did not die. and his sickness did not appear to increase. Franklin and Mrs. Turner between them gave the dainties a stronger flavouring, putting white arsenic, resalgar, sublimate of mercury, red mercury and other poisons into the delicate shapes of the prettily tinted jellies and into the tempting fillings of the appetising tarts. After a while Mrs. Turner became suspicious that the prisoner was not receiving these confections, and therefore she arranged with Lord Northampton that Weston should come to her house and fetch them, and this he did. But, through the watchfulness of Sir Gervase. he was never allowed to give the dainties direct to the prisoner. The Governor of the Tower told the man that Dr. Maverne had ordered the prisoner's diet to be supervised, so all these stuffs that came from Paternoster Row had to be sent into the Tower kitchen, there to be inspected by Dr. Mayerne on his visits or by the apothecary Labelle. Weston did not like obeving this command, but he was forced to give way, and when afterwards in his master's apartment he saw tarts and jellies that seemed the same as those he had brought from Paternoster Row by the sick man's bedside, he was satisfied, and reported to Mrs. Turner that her sweetmeats were certainly eaten by the prisoner. "But he does not die!" exclaimed Frances Howard. "The man does not die, sweet Anne--and he writes the most foul letters to my lord and threatens every day more fiercely. What shall we do? What shall

we do? It seems to me that we all stand on the verge of ruin, The man has a charm stronger than ours--he has some witch or devil who

Franklin fretfully assured her he had taken enough to poison all the scoundrels of Whitehall. "Doctor Mayerne says that he is very low-spirited and weary of his life."

"I would he were weary of tormenting my lord and me!" cried Frances Howard, and there was a violence in her that made the pretty little dress-designer shrink.

"Why does not my Lord Rochester make an end of him, madam? He

"My lord still has some tenderness for one with whom he was friendly, who, he thinks, helped him, and was his confidant. He is afraid, too--why I do not know! Robin is simple. He cannot make up his mind to thwart Thomas Overbury, I fear that, too. He is soft and weakens--every time these appeals for help and mercy come from

has it in his power to despatch this wretch."

"He grows very weak," said Mrs. Turner soothingly, and yet uneasily too, for she thought that there was something unnatural in the way that Thomas Overbury was resisting these drugs, of which Dr.

is protecting him."

the Tower my lord insists on reading them and afterwards he is vexed and almost distraught."

"The King, then, the King should act. Cannot he get rid of this fellow? That it should be left to us two poor timid women!"

Perhaps he will. You know the stories that are told of Doctor Mayerne and Prince Henry..."

The dress-designer clapped her hands quickly over Frances

"Ay, the King," repeated Frances sombrely. "The King should act.

Howard's pale lips. "Do not say, do not think such things! Sometimes I feel frightened, think we go too far and do too much. You know I

But Frances Howard laughed bitterly and told Mrs. Turner to go back to Paternoster Row and make another brew to send to the Tower, pushing aside the other's hand that tried desperately to stifle her words.

cannot help remembering that Forman's widow has that chest of

papers."

all I do and he rules England."

The other woman was easily reassured, she did indeed feel safe under this mighty protection--was not Sir Gervase, Governor of the Tower, in this plot to destroy the wretch Overbury?--why, she was safe enough. Weston could be trusted, she was sure, she had just

given him sixty pounds that she had had from Frances. Franklin too, had been well paid; too well. Anne thought, since he had been so

"Why are you so frightened, Anne? My Lord Northampton is behind

unsuccessful. It was clear that he did not know of a swift poison, the secret of that must have died with Simon Forman. While she was thinking thus, Frances was brooding over the delays of the Divorce Commission and over Thomas Overbury, enclosed in the Tower, like a toad in a stone, spitting deadly venom at her. If she had been in her lover's place she would soon have silenced the scab! But Robin was tender with this false friend and though he allowed him to stay in

prison, did not wish him injured, and Frances, to keep her lover's respect, had to pretend that she too had pity for the ailing wretch.

She turned to Anne. "I have a carcanet of emeralds--I used it as a hair lace when I played in the masque--you remember? Take it, show it to Franklin, say he shall have it when this fool Overbury dies."

Propped up in bed Thomas Overbury wrote hour after hour, day after

Propped up in bed Thomas Overbury wrote hour after hour, day after day, as long as his waning strength, goaded by the fury of his mind, would allow him. to the treacherous friend who had forsaken him. His

would advise you not to see it nor take notice of it, but to change your style if you write to my lord of Rochester, and bear with him another while, for there is no honest quarter to be held with him. If you love me burn this, and forbear writing all you can, for it was never so dangerous." Thomas Overbury never received this letter, which was intercepted by Sir Gervase Helwys and put into the box that held the

brother-in-law. Sir John Lidcote, had written him a letter of warning. telling him to study all means to get speedily out of the Tower:

"For. by God. never any man was so trapped as you are, but yet I

correspondence of Frances Howard: and so, with no one to advise or warn him, the unhappy man poured all his feelings upon paper: "Is this. Robin, the fruit of my love and care for you? Be these the fruits of common secrets, common danger? As a man you cannot suffer me to lie in this misery. All I entreat you is that you will free me from this place, and that we may part friends. Drive me not to

extremities lest I should say something that both you and I repent,

and I pray God that you may not repent the omission of this my counsel, in this place where I now write this letter."

Tom wrote no idle threat, he indeed thought it likely enough that foolish, headstrong Robin, who was infatuated with a wicked woman. would find himself one day in the prison where he had set the one man able to hold him in his place.

Sir Gervase sent this letter, as he had sent the others, to Northampton, who gave it to Frances, and she threw it into her amber casket, sick with rage. Sir John Lidcote was a bold voung man, shrewd and cool-headed.

When the Overbury family had returned in despair

Court, trying to pick up information. One day he went to the Tower and demanded to see his brother-in-law with such quiet insistence that Sir Gervase gave way, and took Sir John to Tom's apartments. "But you must talk only of family matters and I must stay with you while you speak together."

Sir John agreed and Weston, sulky and suspicious, admitted the two gentlemen to the prisoner's bedroom. Tom, covered with quilts and

cushions, was scribbling on a board that he held on his hunched-up knees. His brother-in-law was shocked at the change in him--his skin was dry, his face and voice hollow, his breath foul, he had no strength to express the pleasure this unexpected visit gave him. "Johnny. I'm

Gloucestershire. Sir John remained in London, hanging about the

sped. I desire you to make my will—and to remember me to my family." Then, overcome by the sight of the honest familiar face, poor Tom put his wasted hands in front of his face and cried pitifully. Sir Gervase retired to a corner of the room, and sat there uneasily.

For a while the two young men spoke of family affairs then suddenly.

in a low voice. Sir John said:

"I have begged and petitioned for you, I saw Lord Rochester—he told me that your uncivil letters had so angered him that he would not help you."

"Nay, Sir John," protested the Governor, rising hastily, but the young

"Nay, Sir John," protested the Governor, rising hastily, but the young man got out--"Did you receive my letter warning you that you were trapped?" and Tom had screamed "No! my letters then have been intercepted!" before Sir Gervase had plucked Sir John by the sleeve

and told him to leave.

"I have warned him. I'll make a stir of this.—Tom, you are being foully deceived, Rochester is your enemy—every day he goes to see Lady

Essex--old Northampton, too--" Sir John was pushed out by Sir

indeed abandoned him--he had no hope of leaving the prison, that was to be the grave of all his hopes, ambitions and comforts. He lay still on the pillows, utterly exhausted, thinking of the hard bright face of Frances Howard, of grey Northampton in his library, of Robin enjoying all the glories that he, Tom, had procured for him, and a deep sigh racked his narrow chest. How he hated that stone room, with the shabby serge hangings, the hard furniture, the barred window, the dim lamp--the narrow shelf of books and papers--he sat up suddenly, dragged his red taffeta bedgown round him and whispered to Weston to prop him in the bed with cushions and give him a great book, on which he might put his sheets of paper, for he could not rise and sit at the table. Then he took his quill in his hand, and wrote:

"This paper comes under seal and therefore I shall be bold to speak to you, as I used to myself. I understand that you have told my brother

Gervase and Weston, but Tom had heard enough, Robin had, then,

to me, to whom you owe more than to any soul living both for your fortune, understanding and reputation?"

Overbury paused and leant back on his pillows, then gathering a little more strength he began to write again:

"Alas, this shift will not serve to cover your vow, your sacrificing me to your woman, your holding a firm friendship with those that brought

that my unreverend style should make an alienation between you and me hereafter and leave such a rancour as we should never be as we have been. With what face could you tell him that you would be less

me hither and keep me here, and not make it your first act of any good terms with them to set me free and restore me to yourself again: and you bid my brother keep your intent secret, that you might steal away with your wickedness. But that shall not be, you and I will

come to a public trial before all the friends I have. They shall know what words have passed betwixt us hitherto fore of another nature

of letters with my enemies without turning it to my good, sent me nineteen promises for my liberty, then at the beginning of next week sent me such frivolous account of the miscarriage of them, and so slipped out of town. And all this ill-nature showed by the man whose conscience tells him that trusting in him brought me hither, and by him that conveyed all my services to the King and made himself

valued by his master for if and my share to be imprisonment on such

terms that never man suffered vet."

than these. And I pray you keep you my letters that they may see how I much forgot your Lordship in my style. When I heard how notwithstanding my misery you visited your woman, held daily traffic

As Overbury wrote, his bitterness almost stifled him, and he felt indeed as if he summoned his false friend to meet him at the bar on the Judgment Day, as he thought about his nine years' service to him, their common secrets, their common aims.

"The bitterness of my soul cannot conceal itself." he wrote. "The wickedness of this will never die, and I have written the story betwixt you and me from the first hour to this day." He then added how he had written an account of the story of himself

and Robin Carr from the day they had first met beneath the cherry trees on the shore of the Scottish lake, how they had worked

together hand in glove until: "You fell in love with that woman and won her by my letters. All these

particulars I have set down in a large discourse, and on Tuesday I made an end of writing it fair, and on Friday I have sealed it up under

eight seals and sent it by a friend of mine whom I dare to trust,

(taking his oath not to open it) I send to him and then to all my friends.

nobles and gentlemen and women, then to read it to them and make

copies of it, and I vow to have wrote the truth. This I think you will not deny a word. So that if you will deal thus wickedly with me I have

cease to be known as the most odious man alive."

Tom boasted when he penned these threats; he had carefully written out the story of his friendship with Robin and all that he knew of the infamy and Frances Howard, but he had not been able to send it to anyone—if he had had time he might have given it to Lidcote—and it lay, sealed with the wax that he had begged from Sir Geryase and

provided that whether I live or die, your nature shall never die, nor you

of the Tower, either to his father or to Lidcote, but he was tired and when he had given the letter for Rochester to Weston, he fell asleep groaning, with the shadow of the bars across his pale face.

Robin had been at Theobalds with the King, the Commissioners of

the Divorce proceedings had adjourned for the hot summer months and there was a lull in the affairs of the Countess of Essex. Her lover did not often come to Northampton House or to the house she had

the imprint of his thumb ring, beneath his pillows. He meant, as soon as he had rested a little, to consider how he might get that packet out

taken at Hounslow, for fear of compromising her, but it happened that he was in London when he received Tom's bitter letter. Robin, stung, alarmed and a little ashamed, took it at once to the old Earl, after sending an express to Gervase Helwys to search for and impound any writings Overbury might have.

Henry Howard had but one word, which he never changed for Tom Overbury, and he said it now:

"The scab!" Then to the downcast and angry Rochester he said: "Do not concern yourself with this scab—he is a dying man: Sir John

Lidcote, when he visited him, made the report on him that he was very sick in his bed. It is common talk about the Tower that the man is dying. As for anything he may have written, Helwys will see to that. I

is dying. As for anything he may have written, Helwys will see to that. I have sent to him at once--who knows what this wretch has written? I will see that nothing the scab says or writes gets beyond the Tower

Northampton House, the old Earl said to himself: "Those foolish women bungle with their sauces." Then he shut up his book with a sigh, took his cap and his staff, and attended by no one but his secretary set out from Northampton House to St. Martin's Lane. where Dr. Maverne had his town residence. The Earl was admitted at once to the doctor's consulting-room. where he found him with his brother-in-law. Labelle. The three talked together genially for half an hour, then the Earl returned to Northampton House, and went slowly up the shallow stairs to his great-niece's apartment. He found the girl very distracted for Rochester had shown her the letter that had come from the Tower. The old man, with a sigh of fatigue, took the chair by the empty hearth. "Come to me, Frances," he said. "It was never intended." said my lord slowly. "when this affair began that you should fall headlong in love with Robin Carr." The girl did not reply; she was sobbing into her hands. The old man

walls. He shall have no other visitors. What are Helwys and Weston

But when Rochester, comforted by these assurances, had left

for, if not for this?"

tenderly touched the golden hair.

"But Overbury--that black villain, that wretch in the Tower..."

"Oh, do not be concerned for him," smiled Northampton. "Do not

"Eh, well, why do you cry? You have your heart's desire, your divorce

will go through and you and Robin will be wedded."

consider him, my darling. He is as good as a dead man."

"Mrs. Turner does not know how to flavour these dainties that she sends. Frances." "It is Franklin--he is so ignorant--if only the sweet master..."

"But he does not die." and the two Howards, young woman and old

man, exchanged a keen glance.

"Hush! leave all that. We are so deep in this. Frances, that one must get out or sink. Leave all to me--one cleverer than the guack Franklin has the case in charge, and I tell you, darling, that Sir Thomas

Overbury is as good as dead." On a bright September morning, the cosy, paunchy French apothecary, M. Labelle, in his fine clothes and fresh linen garments. set out from St. Martin's Lane for the Tower to bathe and anoint Sir

Thomas, while Dr. Mayerne, in a painted coach, rocked along the road to Bath, where he was to attend Her Majesty, who had dropsical symptoms. M. Labelle found the prisoner very low. He had made his will, a fact which he told the apothecary in mournful tones. Tom's illness, these September days, had taken a severe turn. The truth was that Dick Weston had suspected that Sir Gervase Helwys was fooling him and had contrived to smuggle in direct to the prisoner some scraps of the iellies prepared by Anne Turner, and these had produced on the weakened constitution of Overbury violent fits of nausea and

vomiting that had brought out his body in blisters. His increasing anguish of mind had added to his bodily distress, and the man was almost out of his mind when Labelle and his assistant, the boy John Reeve, reached his apartment.

He had insisted on rising from the bed and throwing on his clothes.

was the man whom he trusted to distribute it among those whom he considered his friends, but the truth was he still did not know what to do with his precious papers.

So it was in a very agitated frame of mind that M. Labelle found his patient. He soothed him as best he could and suggested that he gave him a bathing and an anointing as was his custom. But Tom

refused, he was weary of doctoring, but, always greedy, found some

pleasure in eating sweets and cakes.

and was sitting at his desk fingering the packet of which he had spoken in his last letter to Rochester. He feebly struck his hands on the table, then pressed his knuckles into his forehead, and his cry always was: "Let me out! Let me out of this place, for I rot! Let me out!" He had boasted in his furious letter to his friend that he would be able to get his manuscript into the hands of Sir John Lidcote, who

"It is not such treatment I want, but liberty," he complained, and started to cry helplessly.

The Frenchman spoke to him very gently and persuaded him to get on to the bed, which he did with the help of the apothecary's boy.

Between them they laid Tom on his pillow and bathed his wretched diseased body, covered with blisters and scars. M. Labelle nodded across to his assistant and the boy took out of the case he had brought with him some ointment, with which they bound up the shrunken limbs, smearing the unquent on strips of linen.

Then M. Labelle tucked his patient up in bed, washed his face and combed his hair as tenderly as any woman and told him to look at the autumn sunshine that was streaming through the high-set window.

"Think of that and how soon you will be out enjoying it. Nay, be of

this prison within a few hours." At that Tom peered at him sharply and eagerly. "Have you heard some news then? Does Rochester work for me at last?" "It is not Rochester that works for you, but I think there is one who will

soon sign the order for your release. Now keep up your heart and

look at the sunshine and think on what is without."

good heart. Sir Thomas, for I dare swear that you will be free from

was a free man I did not notice the air and the trees and the river. Now I think on them all with the most bitter longing. The foulest slum in London seems to me a paradise compared to this place." "Do not fret." replied M. Labelle, still comfortably, "We have made

"I'm sick of thinking on what is without." sighed Sir Thomas. "When I

you easy of your body and soon someone shall come who shall make you easy of your soul. But I do not like your breathing. Sir Thomas. Doctor Mayerne tells me that you often wake at night as if your chest were loaded and your heart weighed down."

"My breath is better." replied the prisoner. He felt drowsy after the bathing and anointing and wanted to sleep. He put his hand under the pillow and felt the precious manuscript. Yes, it was safe, but he must sleep a little, and when he awoke he could consider again how

he might get it delivered to Sir John. "I've brought a medicine for your breathing," said the Frenchman, "I will make an injection up your nostril."

Sir Thomas objected, but had not the strength to resist long, and presently allowed his pillows to be taken away. While he lay flat on

his mattress. John Reeve injected a medicine up his nostrils, which

he felt trickling down his dry throat.

"Why do you say 'good night'? It is but high afternoon."

The Frenchman went away, and reported himself to Sir Gervase that the prisoner seemed to be very low. "And it is my opinion," said M. Labelle. "that he is dving of consumption, and any minute may be

carried away. I take him, indeed, to be a man past all recovery."

This statement caused Sir Gervase to wonder uneasily if Weston had indeed smuggled in poisoned sweetmeats to the prisoner. This thought troubled him: he did not want the death of any man on his

The two then packed up their belongings, and M. Labelle gave a

cheerful good night to Sir Thomas, who replied feebly:

conscience. He thought that he would go at once to see how Sir Thomas was and find out from Weston what his master had been eating of late, but in fact other business prevented him and it was several hours before the Governor of the Tower could find the time. Daylight had gone; the Tower stood in dark, irregular outlines against a violet sky when Sir Gervase Helwys went up the narrow stairs to the apartment where Thomas Overbury was imprisoned. The guards

were in their usual places in the corridor, but Dick Weston was not there; he had gone out, the guards said, for his daily exercise. There

was no sound from the prisoner's apartment.

Sir Gervase Helwys took the keys from the case that hung at his waist and went into the rooms. In the first one there was nothing but the prisoner's clothes and such of his personal possessions as he had been allowed to bring with him, and which Richard Weston kept neatly enough.

had been allowed to bring with him, and which Richard Weston kept neatly enough.

Sir Gervase Helwys, thinking the man might be asleep, tiptoed into the inner room. There was Tom Overbury lying upon his bed, without pillows as Labelle had left him, his head tipped back, his hands

clutching the sheets on either side of him. He must have died, alone.

for his own gain had been taken from him. He searched the room to see what papers the dead man might have left behind, and only by chance found, under Sir Thomas's head, the packet with eight seals. This he opened cautiously, and a glance at the contents of the manuscript was sufficient to tell him that it was an indictment of Robin Carr and Frances Howard. He tore it across swiftly, and thrust

it on to the last embers of the fire, then stood back and watched it burn. He then returned to his own room and sent for Richard Weston. and told him to prepare his master for the grave. He also sent a messenger to Lord Northampton, and in return received two letters; one that all the world might see, in which Henry Howard said that Lord Rochester desired to do the last honour to his former friend, that the body of Sir Thomas was to be delivered to any friend who

The Governor of the Tower was at first startled and sorry, then enormously relieved, for he felt that the temptation to commit a crime

"I fear no impediment to this honourable desire of my lord but the unsweetness of the body, for it is reported he had some issues, and in that case the keeping of him above must needs give more offence than it can do honour. My fear is also that his body is already buried upon that cause even as I write, which being so it, is too late to set

The private letter that was for Sir Gervase alone, read: "WORTHY MR. LIFUTENANT.

out solemnly."

might desire it, but adding that:

hours before.

"Let me entreat you to call Lidcote and three or four of his friends, if

in the body of the Chapel within the Tower instantly. Let no man's

so many come, to view the body, and so soon as it is viewed, without staving the coming of a messenger from the Court, see it is interred when I next see you. Fail not a jot, even as you love your friends, nor after Lidcote and his friends have viewed stay one moment, but let the priest be ready and if Lidcote be not there send for him speedily, pretending that the body will not tarry.

instance move you to make any case and bring me these letters

"H. NORTHAMPTON."

"In post haste at twelve."

"Yours ever.

Sir Gervase did not destroy this letter, but put it in the casket with

Overbury family and viewed the body, which lay covered up with a sheet, showing only the face, in the prisoner's bedroom. Then Mr. Bright, the coroner of Middlesex, was sent for and a jury called. M. Labelle came and gave evidence that Sir Thomas Overbury had died of consumption, and the coroner and his men looked at the body, which they saw covered with blisters and ulcers and was

those of Frances Howard relating to the case of Thomas Overbury. But he sent for Sir John Lidcote, who came with other friends of the

beginning to corrupt. Sir John Lidcote was not satisfied and went away in a fury, refusing to pay for his brother-in-law's coffin and winding sheets and muttering that those who had done away with him might pay for his interment. So on the back of Northampton's letter Sir Gervase wrote:

"The coffin I bestowed, but who winded him I know not."

It was Richard Weston who had dressed the body for the grave in

It was Richard Weston who had dressed the body for the grave in two of his master's finest shirts: they had been made by Overbury's mother long ago in the Cotswold Manor and he had kept them for

special occasions. One shirt Weston put on the body and the other he wound round the legs, and so in the coffin that Sir Gervase paid

A report of these proceedings was sent to Henry Howard waiting in Northampton House, and he wrote off at once to Rochester, who was in attendance on the King at Theobalds.

"God is gracious in cutting off all ill instruments from that fractious crew, my sweet lord. If he had come forth they would have made use of him. Thus, sweet lord, wishing you all increase of honour and happiness, I end your lordship's more than any man."

"HENRY NORTHAMPTON"

for. Tom Overbury was buried hastily in the Chapel of St. Peter-in-

Chains in the Tower at four o'clock in the afternoon.

"And now," said the little dress-designer gaily, "we can begin to plan the gown for your wedding, madam--and surely that will not be long delayed."

She was right. Less than two months after the death of Sir Thomas

When Frances Howard and Anne Turner heard this news they fell into each other's arms and kissed each other in eager triumph.

Overbury, judgment of nullity, despite the Archbishop of Canterbury, was given by the Divorce Commission, and Frances Essex was free to become Frances Rochester.

This business had not been put through without my Lord of Canterbury's greatly displeasing His Majesty, and the two men, though appearing outwardly friendly, were from that moment bitter

enemies. The King resolved to set down His Grace and His Grace resolved to find a way to thwart the King.

But what did the anger of His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, matter to the Howards, who had triumphed, and so completely, at last?

Chapel Tower; she had even forgotten her 'sweet master' and those ugly days when she had been forced to visit him and accept from him drugs and charms to rouse the hate of Lord Essex and the love of Robin Carr. But now she cried, throwing her arms round Anne Turner: "He is mine! Robin is mine!"

The two women had little leisure in the midst of the busy preparations

Frances was in a rapture of delight. She was to be married on St. Stephen's Day and her Robin had been created Earl of Somerset. Frances had guite forgotten Sir Thomas Overbury rotting in the

for this great occasion. Though the King was so short of money that some of his servants had not been paid their wages, yet he had promised ten thousand pounds to buy jewels for pretty Frances and to hold a special pageant at Whitehall.

"Nor is that all. sweet Anne. Mr. Attorney-General. Sir Francis Bacon.

who is under an obligation to my lord, is to give a masque in the

Temple--and Sir Ralph Winwood, whom I thought my enemy"--and the girl laughed in happy triumph--"has offered me his black horses that he brought newly from Flanders, which are the finest in the Court."

"And the plate that the City Merchant Adventurers, the East Indian Company have sent is very handsome," simpered Mrs. Anne, who was cosy and content, for she had done well out of this business.

"And they say Sir Thomas Lake's candlesticks are worth a thousand marks."

"The Bishop of Bristol's lady is sending me a bride's cake that has cost five pounds to come by wagon." Frances laughed again, so excited she hardly knew what she was saying. "And the great hall is full of pots, plates, crystal, silver, and, oh, I know not what. And oh,

sweet Anne. am I still beautiful?"

beauty to Robin Carr. She was twenty-one now. Her features were small and precise, her skin was perfect, and her eyes, blue-grey touched with green like sea-water, were of an extraordinary radiance.

"There is to be a masque on the Thames and fireworks. I am to be married in the Chapel of Whitehall, and the Duke of Savoy will act as one of my bridesmen. Is it not something to have a prince as a bridesman?"

"And everybody is pleased," said demure Anne Turner with the satisfied air of a neat little bird preening its feathers. "My lady, your

The girl gave a deep sigh, and looked at herself in a little square mirror hanging on the silk tapestry of the walls. She was beautiful, and knew it. It was only her vanity that she wished to satisfy--only the pride she had in knowing that she was beautiful and in giving all this

mother, is pleased, and your father, and your great-uncle--and all the noble House of Howard. And maybe my Lord of Essex is pleased too, though they say he will have to cut down his timber to pay back the downy."

Frances frowned, she did not wish to remember Chartley or Robin.

Frances frowned, she did not wish to remember Chartley or Robin Devereux.

"Well, well, they are all gone, sweet madam, and how pleasant it is to sit here, by your great hearth and talk of all the troubles we have

been through and have so bravely overcome!"

"That was because of you and your cleverness," cried Frances, patting bor friend's know with a loving gosture. "I shall power nower.

patting her friend's knee with a loving gesture. "I shall never, never forget, sweet Anne, that you helped me to my Robin. You enabled me, you and the sweet master, to keep myself for him when I was

shut away in Chartley. There, I have spoken the word, and I would not

do so. I would remember nothing evil tonight." "There is nothing to be afraid of." smiled Mrs. Turner. "there is no one to frighten us now."

The women were silent. Both thought of Sir Thomas Overbury, who had written those ugly and menacing letters from the Tower and who

had known all their secrets, now lying dead. "You must tell me everything you want, sweet Alice, indeed you must. My lord gives me all the money that I ask for, and I shall have my

dowry, which is five thousand pounds--and so you must never go short of anything you need, sweet, dear Anne."

These words were very pleasant to Anne Turner, whose little establishment in Paternoster Row was expensive to run and whose own extravagances increased daily. So she warmly hugged her voung patroness and replied:

"Indeed, I was put to great expense over that affair." "Yes. ves." said Frances hurriedly, not wishing to hear this spoken of

now in the moment of her happiness. "I know there is Doctor

Franklin, Weston, the servant--you have him in your employ again?" "Yes, indeed, and well paid. Never fear that he will say anything." "That he will say anything," repeated Frances, frowning, "What do

you mean? What should he say?" Anne Turner shrugged her shoulders, laughed and repeated that

Dick Weston had received a handsome fee, no less than sixty

pounds, for his services in waiting on poor Tom while he was in the

Tower, And Dr. Franklin had had more than that: for the flavourings he had supplied, for the dainty tarts and cakes, he had received Turner wisely. "He will think himself entitled to a pension." And she added slyly: "Resalgar is a very costly drug."

Frances laughed, unable to think of anything but her present joy, and said lightly: "This same resalgar was a long time doing its business. It should have eased the poor fellow's pain long before it did."

"Ah, those are secrets that we must leave, with the doctor!" said Mrs. Turner wisely.

"Well, well," cried Frances, "I shall not forget my friends—your Sir Arthur shall have a place about the Court, and all your children be

more than two hundred pounds. "That is not the end of it." said Mrs.

hands to the blaze on the hearth.

Mrs. Turner regarded her in sly silence for a moment, then said:
"Madam, how will you wear your hair for this ceremony? Though you

have been wed before, the Commission held that that was no

well provided for." She sank back into her furs and held out her small

marriage, so you should have your hair down as befits a virgin brideor else there will surely be much gossip and scandal."

"There will be that in either case," replied Frances Howard contemptuously. "Do you not suppose my Lord Essex has his friends, and my Lord Rochester—Somerset I should save-his

friends, and my Lord Rochester—Somerset, I should say—his enemies? Our House is too great to escape calumny. I shall wear my hair flowing like a maiden and they may say what they will."

The splendour of the Howard—Carr marriage was helieved by the

The splendour of the Howard-Carr marriage was believed by the spectators, the citizens of London, to surpass even the magnificence of that of Princess Elizabeth and the Palsgrave. The King spared

neither money nor labour nor talent in making everything gorgeous for the wedding of his favourite to the girl on whom he had so long set his heart. The City of London tried to ingratiate itself with the

him fall. So there was hardly a man who did not make some present to the Earl and Countess of Somerset on the occasion of their resplendent marriage on St. Stephen's Day. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had tried to block the divorce, was present at the ceremony, which was performed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, and there was a flattering sermon given by the Dean of Westminster that the priest turned into a eulogy of the beautiful pair and the virtues of the noble King. Afterwards there were masques, festivals and banquets, and the Council Chamber was done as a bridal chamber for Robin Carr, who had come to Court a penniless gentleman a few years before, and Frances, so recently the wife of another man. Among the crowds who had stood for hours patiently to watch the

powerful favourite by offering him a banquet and sending him handsome presents--and so did everyone whom he had favoured or helped, and even those who disliked him and secretly waited to see

comings and goings from the palace was Simon Forman's widow. who lived alone, at Chelsea. When she had seen her fill, and by craning her neck had had a good view of Lady Somerset in her cloth of gold tissue and pearl, the woman returned to Chelsea through the flakes of falling snow. When she reached her home she took some keys from a pocket at her side, and, opening a great chest, looked at

the contents--waxen figures and embroidered scarves and parchments traced with strange signs and packets of letters addressed to 'sweet master' and 'sweet father' and 'sweet Anne

Turner'--and signed--Frances Essex. When she had glutted her fierce feelings by gazing at these, Simon

women have.

Forman's widow locked them up again and returned to her solitary hearth, where she sat brooding. She was thinking of the luck some except neglect and loneliness and hard work. She had been a faithful wife to Simon Forman, whom she had loved although he was so much older than she was and had made her into something no better than a servant, making her fetch and carry, and being unfaithful to her, almost under her eyes, with any silly woman that came along-like Mistress Turner, for instance. Even when, with his spells and enchantments and his medicines, he had made a great deal of money, what of it had been spent on her? She had never had anything but two dresses for summer and two for winter and a silk for Sundays. How he had laughed at her when she had spoken of her jealousy of Anne Turner! She had been revenged for that. As she remembered the bottle of purple glass her lips curled into a smile. When Simon Forman had rowed himself into the middle Her smile deepened as she remembered her own cleverness in talking about the prophecy that her husband had foretold the day of caused by the suddenness of the notable magician's decease and

She thought of her own fate and how nothing had ever come her way

of the Thames underneath those, gathering storm-clouds, he had realised who had discovered his secret and had flavoured his wine! his own death. By this means she had taken the edge off the surprise But now there were others whom she would like to punish, as she had punished her husband. There was Anne Turner above all, and that little wanton, Frances Carr. Mrs. Forman stirred the fire; the logs

prevented an enquiry into the manner of it. fell beneath the poker. It seemed to her that at the moment she was helpless against all these people, but she was not without hope for the future. "I'll wait my time." she said, nodding to herself, "I'll wait my

time."

Four - St. Stephen And The Archbishop's **Syndicate**

his beloved great-niece to the King's favourite and the passing of all the power in the country into his hands, he had achieved the summit of his great ambition. He was not eager to leave these things, not willing. It was with as much reluctance as if he had been a man in the prime of his days that he thought upon all he had done and all that he must leave undone and of the great tangle of statecraft that he had kept so carefully under his eye. But his courage was not in the least shaken.

He gathered up his strength and rose from the bed and told his steward to prepare for him his favourite house in the Strand, for he wished to die there among, his books and his statues, looking out on

to the beautiful gardens that sloped to the river. He drove in full state from Greenwich to Northampton House, but when he reached it his strength, and not his courage, failed him; he could no longer sit

Henry Howard lay dying in his country-house at Greenwich. It was midsummer, and he was seventy-five years old. With the marriage of

upright, but had to lie in his bed. Being the height of summer, most people were out of town; the old man knew that he would not be able to say good-bye to the beautiful Frances and her golden Robin.

He rested a little and then courteously asked his body-servant to bring him writing materials. When these came he was propped up in bed. It was then late in the evening and warm; the casement was set wide open and soft air blew in from the Thames. The old man could hear the leaves of the ilex, laurel and cypress rustling gently...

He had ordered his faithful servant, who was in his confidence, to send for a priest, for my lord was a Roman Catholic. Before he made his peace with God, Henry Howard wished to settle his worldly affairs. He was not afraid of the future of his party; he believed that Suffolk, his nephew, and Somerset, his great-niece's husband, would

be able to divide between them, through the King's favour, all his

Yet he was afraid of the Protestant faction, of men like the Archbishop of Canterbury and Winwood and Lake, for he said to himself: "They loathe me, hate me, they will plague my people and those whom I love." But the King! Northampton relied upon the King.

with his imbecile infatuation for Carr. Of late Robin had somewhat neglected His Majesty, being absorbed in the joy of being with his lovely young wife, and often for days together he had left the King alone at Theobalds while he remained with Frances at Kensington or Isleworth. The King had protested and sobbed, even sometimes threatened; but Robin had only to show his handsome face and the King forgave him all. Indeed, James Stewart seemed overawed by the magnificence of Robin Carr and cringed to him for favours—as if Robin had been the monarch and James the poor Scots nobody.

great offices.

So Henry Howard, propped on his pillows with the summer breezes on his chill face, had no fear that Robin would lose his hold on the King's affection—and that being certain, everything else was. Then, writing slowly and carefully in his beautiful scholar's hand, he penned his last directions to Robin, bidding him take heed of this and that, to see to this and that, to look out for that enemy, to reward that friend.

increase the power of the House of Howard. He paused, sighed, closed his eyes; then, gathering energy, wrote:

"If you see to these matters, it will send my spirit out of this transitory tabernacle with as much comfort and content as the bird flies to the

to enrich himself at every possible turn and always uphold and

tabernacle with as much comfort and content as the bird flies to the mountains."

Then a little doubt and dread came over him, for Robin after all was only a fool...that had been very apparent since Overbury had been in the Tower.

King."

So the great Earl dipped his quill again in the ink-horn and wrote in courtly, seductive language.

"DEAR LORD,

"My spirit is spent and my strength decays and all that remains is with my dying hand to witness what my loving heart did vow when it gave itself to your Lordship as to a choice friend whom I did love for his virtues and not court for his fortune. Farewell, noble Lord, and the last farewell in the last letter I look to write to any man. I presume

confidently of your favour in these poor suits and will be both living

and dving.

"H NORTHAMPTON"

"Your affectionate friend and servant.

"Without the scab." murmured Henry Howard to himself, "I doubt if Robin could have climbed so high. And when I am gone there will be no one to advise him. He is arrogant, wilful, ignorant, and it is possible he will go too far in his confidence, even with the imbecile

Henry Howard was solitary in his great brick house, for most of his servants were either at Greenwich or in the country, and even those who had accompanied him in his last drive through the city he had sent away on one excuse or another, for he did not wish them to see the priest, who came disquised as an apothecary up the back stairs

and into my Lord's bedroom, while the steward kept watch in the antechamber.

It was a brilliant pight, though moonless. The stars sparkled in chill

It was a brilliant night, though moonless. The stars sparkled in chill magnificence above the Italian gardens, the statues and the temples where Frances Howard, arrayed as the moon goddess, had fled

none was allowed in my lord's room, where he confessed his sins to the priest and prepared his soul to meet his God.

At midnight Henry Howard died. His wish was that, as Warden of the Cinque Ports, he should be buried in the chapel of Dover Castle. His great offices were divided among his relations: Suffolk the Lord Treasurer and Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, while Somerset himself was made Lord Chamberlain.

"I give you this office," said the King, "that you may be near me and because I love you better than all men living."

But Robin was weary of his royal master—a tyrant, as he called him

before the impetuous ardour of Robin Carr. The great hall and chamber, hung with silken and golden tapestry and dark portraits, were empty and unlit; the gold and silver plate was locked away in cupboards and chests. A few servants were in the great kitchen, but

weather with Frances at Chesterford Park.

The Protestant party were much heartened by the death of Henry Howard. He had been a great man and they had feared him, in a way they would never fear Suffolk or Somerset, and it seemed to men like Lake and Winwood and His Grace of Canterbury that now Robin Carr was without any keen, subtle brain to advise him he would make grievous mistakes.

secretly--and scarcely offered any thanks for the brilliant gift, but laughed and jested lightly and went away to spend the splendid

Winwood had now become one of Somerset's most powerful enemies, despite his gift of the famous black horses to the Countess on her wedding day, for Robin, who mistrusted him, had not backed him for the Secretaryship. He had nevertheless obtained it, and though he went his way civilly and quietly, he was eager enough to do

an ill turn to Somerset. Nor was he the only one; there were many

Council, though Northampton had got out of the trouble by declaring them to be forgeries. But now, when he was dead, there was still some hope that the cry "no Popery" might be directed against Robin Carr; and in particular His Grace of Canterbury, who was an exceedingly able if slow and cautious man, tried to find some means of setting down Somerset and the Howard faction.

To this end he had many long and secret consultations with men like Winwood and Lake and the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, and even with Mr. Attorney-General. At one of these meetings Sir Ralph Winwood, who was an upright and honest man though worldly and prepared to use the weapons that came to his hands whether they were clean or not, said:

powerful people who loathed the favourite and would willingly have dislodged him. The Protestant party had believed that they had had a powerful weapon against the favourite in the concealed Catholicism of Henry Howard, for their spies had brought them letters from Northampton to the Italian prelates. These had been shown in

was elevated. If the King were to cast his eyes upon another pleasant youth, who would haply be even more gracious and courteous than this rough Scot, why then—"

The Archbishop nodded; he knew well enough Winwood's meaning. The favourite could be jostled out only by another favourite. It was useless for them to discuss matters of serious statecraft or to set elaborate traps or to plan involved intriques when the root of the

matter was the King's need of someone young, brilliant, robust and kind on whom to lean, some bright creature who was all that poor

"Somerset will be displaced only by the same means whereby he

James Stewart was not.

Then Lake said smoothly: "When I was at Newmarket I noticed a pretty youth very poorly dressed in a black suit. He was modest and

his disposition. But his mother is ambitious-she is Mary Villiers, who was Mary Bowman, the widow of Sir George Villiers. Their place is at Grimsby and he was sheriff of Lincolnshire." "The mother is ambitious, you say?" asked the Archbishop cautiously. "Ay, Your Grace. She is a woman of great vigour and spirit also.

silent, and, though I had him presented to me. I could find out little of

page's place. She swore that he was a good cup-bearer." "They have no money?" asked the Archbishop.

"No. my lord, not even enough to buy the lad a suit of fine clothes."

When I noticed her boy she came crying to me begging for a place at Court. It seems she had had him sent to France and trained for a

"That," smiled the Archbishop with a glance round the serious faces of the other gentlemen, "could soon be remedied." "I spoke kindly to him," said Lord Pembroke, "and he seemed grateful. He seemed of a sweeter, more kindly and docile disposition

than Robert Carr." Sir Ralph Winwood then put forward carefully and delicately the plan he had made. It was one that required a certain amount of money. but he did not think that it would be at all difficult for the gentlemen present, and perhaps for some others who were not present-like Mr.

Attorney-General--to raise among them the sum necessary. The King was soon going with the Howard faction on a progress to Cambridge. Lady Somerset and her mother would be there for the

"And I," remarked Lord Pembroke, "like many of my friends have not been invited. But," he added simply, "I shall have my spies there."

occasion, but the Queen, Her Maiestv, would not go.

"The King," interrupted the Archbishop, "will care for none of that. He is a weary, discontented man. He thinks that Somerset neglects him, he is becoming jealous of his young wife."

"This, Your Grace, is known and taken into account," replied

thousand pounds a day on the pageantries and the food--"

"The King," resumed Sir Ralph with a businesslike air, "is to lie at Trinity College with Prince Charles. Everything is to be very splendidly done. The Chancellor thinks to spend no less than a

poor youth like this George Villiers should not be given his chance of obtaining some favours from His Majesty--he is an orphan, a penniless lad, a gentleman, and it were a charity to support him."

Winwood smoothly. "What I thought was, that it is a shame that a

"What is suggested?" asked Lake.

"That he should be supplied with sufficient means to purchase a good suit of clothes, that he should have bought for him a few jewels,

that he should be coached in courtly manners, that he should be put before the King's notice in one of the pageants or masques at Cambridge, in some part that will single him out from the crowd, and that, if this is successful, the office of cupbearer to His Maiesty

The Archbishop was silent for a while and the other gentlemen looked down at their hands, wondering whether this project was one in which they might, with some hope of return, sink their money, for they were all careful businessmen.

should be purchased for him."

Then the Archbishop asked: "Is this truly a gentle, manageable youth, and not a rough, hard, obstinate fellow like Robin Carr?"

The Earl of Somerset, having neither Henry Howard nor Thomas Overbury to watch and spy for him, and refusing to listen to gossip. was quite ignorant of this plot to undermine him and the Howard faction. The Cambridge visit was to him a time of great triumph, for he dangled the King before the eyes of the people, as a man who would say: "See this Majesty of Great Britain--it is only a puppet, the strings of which I pull." Among the plays given at Cambridge was a satire on the man of the law that was entitled 'lgnoramus.' There was much in it to anger the lawyers, and at some of the pointed jests the King laughed heartily enough. But for most of the time he was weary and sat lolling, a solitary figure, in his padded chair, his dirty hands folded on his quilted coat, his head hanging forward in boredom. Now and then his melancholy glance fell sideways at Robin, who had treated him lately with a neglect amounting almost to disdain. As he thought of his hard fate, tears of self-pity welled into the King's eyes. He was so alone,

Sir Ralph Winwood replied: "My lord, he will be like warm wax in our

hands "

with a neglect amounting almost to disdain. As he thought of his hard fate, tears of self-pity welled into the King's eyes. He was so alone, he never could obtain that affection, that loving care which he so desired; he was always yearning for the company of youth, beauty, brilliancy and high spirits, and for a while he could buy these, but never for long. Although he petted, flattered his favourites and heaped them with gold and honours, the time always came when they grew impatient of his company and scarcely troubled to thank him for his favours. The King actually trembled as he thought of his loneliness, of his unhappiness, and he shook his head with a sigh and turned his gaze away from Frances and Robin, who, seated on golden stools close to him, had their downhung fingers tightly

A low murmur of surprise and admiration broke from the audience, and the King in curiosity glanced towards the stage. A young man of

interlaced and glanced now and then into each other's eyes.

been curled and dressed until it shone like polished gold; one long curl hung over his right shoulder and in his right ear was a pearl drop. He spoke his lines with self-assurance and in a pleasant voice. Then he went and the play continued. Somerset had not noticed him, but when the play was over, the King asked that the youth in the white satin might be presented to him. and when the boy knelt before him. James patted his silken head kindly. "Who is this young popinjay," demanded Lady Somerset of her husband. "who has been made the King's Ganymede?" She spoke contemptuously to her husband as they rode side by side through the autumn woods. "Oh. darling." replied Somerset, smiling, "it is a young fool that need

about twenty-two stood there alone. He only had a small part, a speech of perhaps two minutes' duration to recite: but for the moment he held the stage alone. He was well-built and graceful, with an almost feminine beauty of feature and remarkable delicacy of hands and feet: He was dressed in well-cut white satin: his hair had

"Because he is the King's cupbearer--the King is interested in him," replied Frances quickly, "Sometimes I think, Robin, that you need my great-uncle's counsel. You are too reckless and obstinate, you take no notice of what is going on about you. You do not employ spies or agents."

not concern us. Why do you consider him more than any other page

about the Court?"

"I have no need to," replied Somerset with a touch of sullenness. He

stared at his wife in some surprise; she was usually so gay and thoughtless, so impatient with any intrique or statecraft. What had put

her into this serious mood?
"I hear things," she continued gravely, frowning beneath the shade of her wide hat. "Mrs. Turner tells me--"
"Bah! Women's gossip--backstairs scandal!" sneered Somerset.

Frances was neither impressed nor offended by this rebuke. "The boy takes His Majesty's fancy."

"Is he the first or the last?" asked Somerset. "I hope, Frances, you

fancy."

"Prince Charles likes Villiers too--he seems to find in him a perfect playmate--whereas you, Robin, were never friendly with either of the Princes."

think better of me than to class me with 'boys who take the King's

Somerset shrugged his shoulders and smiled; he was so sure of the King and of himself.

"You know that when young George Villiers the other day," continued Frances gravely, "knelt to give the King the ewer in which to wash his

hands, he stroked his curls and told him he had a face like St. Stephen in the painting that hangs in the dining-room, and that hereafter he would call him Steevie, as he had always called you Caro. He leans on the boy's shoulders when he comes into the hall, and here given him they care come involve."

and has given him, they say, some jewels."

"None of that is of any matter to me," replied Robin harshly. "The fellow is a nobody."

"He is a gentleman," replied Lady Somerset softly, patting the arched neck of her bay horse. "He is what you were, Robin, when

you came to Court, what Philip Herbert was or any other young man

who by grace and kindness found his way into His Majesty's liking."

Somerset did not like these words at all. He looked so dark and sulky that the Countess added impatiently:

"Do not you see that it is because I care for you so that I try to warn you? I hear things."

"I hear them too," replied Somerset. "Do you think, madam, that I require a lady's fingers to meddle in my affairs?"

"Where does this young Villiers," asked Frances, "obtain his clothes, so expensive, so well made? Someone is giving him money."

"Backing him for the royal stakes, eh?" laughed Somerset grimly.

"Well, I do not know who would or dare. I'm not friendless. Frances."

and he went on to boast that he had no enemy about the Court, but held them all in the hollow of his hand, either by goodwill, obligation

or bribery.

Frances was silent, but not satisfied. She was herself light and shallow in everything except her passion for her husband. She could not formulate her fears, nor was she clever in Court intrigue or well-informed in Court manoeuvres. But her woman's wit and her memory of her great-uncle's advice did tell her that there was danger in this young upstart whom the King called Steevie and on whom he smiled

so graciously when the beautiful young man offered him the wine or a napkin.

Frances had, too, her own misgivings that she could never disclose to her husband. She recalled with a flicker of uneasiness the chest of

to her husband. She recalled with a flicker of uneasiness the chest of papers that was in the possession of Simon Forman's widow, the secrets that Anne Turner knew, the work that Franklin and Weston had done, the letters that she had written to Sir Gervase Helwys, and,

when Robin helped her from her horse and for a moment held her to him and she saw in his bright eyes his love and worship, Frances Howard also forgot these possible dangers.

The syndicate that was exploiting young George Villiers gradually increased in number as the clever place hunters saw that the young man was rising in royal favour. They usually met either at the Archbishop's palace or in the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery's residence, Barnard Castle, and there, behind closed doors and in

reckless as she was, it did occur to her that there was dangerous material lying about for enemies of hers or Robin's to be used as they wanted. But she dare not warn her husband of this, and when they returned to the house and found their quests waiting for them.

Their hopes were high and they considered the outlook for the future very satisfactory; but they knew that they could not succeed in putting up Villiers and displacing Carr without a considerable struggle, which would take not only all their skill but a good deal of their money, for Villiers was extravagant and was continually making demands upon his backers for his expenses. Then there were

great secrecy, the syndicate made and discussed their proposals, added up their accounts and reported the progress of George

Villiers

fortunes with him, and could not, however much they wished to do so, leave him for another favourite. Against this the Archbishop and his colleagues were able to put what was to them a considerable advantage—the foolish behaviour of Somerset himself. Although the young Earl had refused to accept his lady's warnings, he had soon

Somerset's adherents, men who had backed him, cast in their

after his return to Whitehall seen for himself how the case lay. Villiers was certainly creeping into favour. Instead of meeting this situation with grace and tact, Carr had done what was, in the circumstances, the most harmful thing to his own interests that he could have done.

He had guarrelled violently with the King, complained to him of the

"And since." said His Grace of Canterbury smoothly, "violence is the thing of all others most disliked by His Majesty and he will do anything to save himself from quarrels or disputes, my Lord Somerset is carefully digging a pit into which he will fall himself." "He is so stupid." said Pembroke with a thin smile. "that he ran to the King saving a servant of mine had thrown dirt at a picture of his that was in a shop in Fleet Street, and when the King would have pushed

treatment he was receiving from his enemies, as he called them. and made noisy scenes, slamming doors and uttering oaths in His Majesty's presence, then striding away and sulking in his own house for days together, leaving the King melancholy and distracted.

"How long will the King endure it?" asked Sir Ralph Winwood guietly. "That is the trouble." said Sir Thomas Lake. "His Maiesty, you know. detests a scandal. Maybe he is already tired of Somerset, maybe he

the matter aside merrily as a mere act of a fool, Somerset forced the point like the raw Scot he is--and every page and servant in the

palace heard his shouts and curses."

would keep him if he would behave himself--but in any case he will

do nothing without a good excuse."

"And I believe," said Sir Ralph with a small triumphant smile, "that I have found this good excuse. But first we have the matter of young Villiers's disgrace to go into."

This was an unfortunate incident that had taken place in Whitehall when one of Robin Carr's servants, carrying a bowl of soup to his

master's place, had spilt it over a suit of ovster-coloured satin worn by young Villiers, who was standing at the gentlemen waiters' table.

At this mischance, which Villiers refused to believe was accidental. he had turned and given the servant a blow on the side of the face. tactlessness for the infliction of this dreadful penalty. No doubt the passionate boy had made a grave mistake. The King detested violence: he had refused Villiers the presence and had listened sympathetically to the clamours of Somerset for the punishment of the new cupbearer... "But I," said His Grace, "ran to His Majesty and pleaded for mercy for the poor youth, and he listened patiently, for indeed my advice"--and George Abbot smiled grimly--"was only what His Maiesty had intended to follow from the first. Do you think he intended any harm to his pretty Steevie? I flattered him until one of even his coarse palate would have been cloved. But no, he listened, and it was I that was weary first."

The punishment for such an offence was the loss of the right hand. and Somerset, whose duty as Lord Chamberlain it was to see to the punishment of the offender, pressed eagerly with his usual

"Then the matter is cleared up?" asked Pembroke. "Ay, the boy was pardoned even while I was there, and sent for--and he went on his knees in tears and kissed His Majesty's hands. The King means to advance him whatever Somerset may say or do. And.

gentlemen. I followed up my advantage. I went to the Queen and asked her to influence the King for a knighthood for Villiers. I told her that the young man was but as warm wax in our hands, that he might

be ours if we could mould him from the first."

"And Her Majesty agreed?" asked Pembroke. "She loathes Somerset."

"She did not agree over willingly," said the Archbishop thoughtfully. "She said he might be grateful at first, and that he had, she thought, good points, but when he was set high enough he would kick down

the ladder by which he had risen. But she consented at last, and it is

"He has put in for a new suit of blue and silver velvet tissue," said Pembroke, looking at some notes that lay under his hand. "I hope, sir"—and he nodded at Sir Thomas Lake—"you are keeping an account of all that this youth is costing us."

"Well," said Winwood, "the affair goes well enough. But to return to the other point, gentlemen. Does His Majesty intend to set down

Nobody could answer these two questions. The Archbishop thought that the King would want to remain friendly with Somerset, but that Somerset was too obstinate to share his favours with anyone else

Somerset? Does he wish to be rid of Robin Carr?"

and would fall headlong because of his own pride.

the table that was covered by a rich Persian cloth.

to be on the day of his patron saint. St. George's Day, that he is to be

knighted."

a packet from his pocket and laid it on the table. "Now here is a matter that may, at our discretion, be either hushed up or blown abroad, according to how the King acts or wishes."

"Let us know what it is." said the other gentlemen, leaning forward on

"He may fall headlong because of this," said Winwood, and he took

"Remembering always," put in Pembroke, "that I think the King has a sincere love for Robin Carr, and also remembering that Carr knows all the King's secrets."

"But the King does not know all the secrets of Carr," smiled Winwood. He opened a letter, taken from among the papers, and said: "This is from Mr. Thrumball, the King's agent at Brussels."

said: "This is from Mr. Thrumball, the King's agent at Brussels."

The other gentlemen glanced at him in surprise,

Sir Ralph proceeded to explain. "A boy named John Reeve has recently died in Brussels. When he was on his death-bed, he asked Mr. Thrumball to attend him. Mr. Thrumball sent his chaplain, who saw the boy and heard such a strange tale that he begged the Resident to go himself. This he did, and the matter that he heard was

"What has Mr. Thrumball, the King's agent at Brussels, to do with the

matter in hand?"

Tower.

asked him to come over to London and tell us by word of mouth. And gentlemen." finished Sir Ralph, putting his hands on the paper and looking round the room with a little satisfied smile. "Mr. Thrumball is in attendance in the next room. If it is your pleasure I will ask him to come in "

so serious that he did not wish to commit it to paper, but he wrote to me--as I know him well--and hinted at the business, upon which I

Full of surprise and curiosity they agreed, and as soon as he had entered the room Sir Ralph Winwood said: "Mr. Thrumball, you see here gathered together some of the

Canterbury. In such a company as this you may speak freely and be assured that all you say will be used for His Maiesty's service." Mr. Thrumball, who was carefully dressed in his best suit for this

foremost men of the country, including His Grace, the Archbishop of

important occasion, took his seat at the table, and in the concise terms of a trained diplomat, told his story.

The boy, Reeve, was in the employment of an apothecary in Brussels. The story that he told on his death-bed, first to the chaplain

and then to Mr. Thrumball, was this. Reeve said that he had once been in the employ of M. Labelle, who was the brother-in-law of Dr.

Mayerne, and that he had attended Sir Thomas Overbury in the

"The youth," said Mr. Thrumball carefully, "was very wretched in his last hours and most fearful of hell-fire, and he wished to confess to a sin that he had on his conscience; and he selected me, the British Resident, because he thought that by my means the criminals who had employed him--so, gentlemen, he called them--might be brought to justice. He said that in company with his master and Doctor Mayerne he had frequently visited Sir Thomas in the Tower and given him baths and treated him with unguents and lotions. He had discovered since he had been in Monsieur Labelle's employment that both he and Doctor Mayerne had a shrewd knowledge of poisons, but he had kept this to himself, for he thought it was dangerous to allow the two physicians to know that he had discovered their secrets. But it became necessary for Monsieur Labelle to trust him, for he had to have his assistance in the

At the mention of this name the Archbishop glanced at Lord Pembroke, and Lord Pembroke at Thomas Lake, while Winwood, with the air of a man who had prepared a dynamic surprise, nodded pleasantly, as much as to say: "This is nothing. Listen to what

follows."

poisoned by an injection of this into his nostrils, done under the excuse of relieving his breathing."

There was a silence. The Villiers syndicate looked down at the

preparation of the poisons. This boy, John Reeve, would not tell me the name of the poison employed--indeed, when I saw him he was dying and it was difficult to understand what he said--but he said that it was very strong, and, in brief, that Sir Thomas Overbury was

Persian cloth. Then the Archbishop glanced up and said:

"And who was behind this crime, Mr. Thrumball? Did the boy, Reeve, tell you that?"

then, helped by Mrs. Turner, by Franklin, a quack who was a friend of Simon Forman, and by Richard Weston, who was once in the employ of this same Forman and set in the Tower as a body-servant to Overbury."

Lord Pembroke remarked at once:

"There is a flaw there. Why did not the man, Weston, if he were acting for Lady Essex, poison Overbury? Why bring in Labelle and this boy. Reeve?"

"Quite boldly and openly. He said it was the Lady Essex, as she was

"As I understand the lad's story," replied Mr. Thrumball, "they were unskilful. Lady Essex had made, by means of poison in tarts and jellies, many attempts on the life of Thomas Overbury, but though he became grievously ill, he did not die. One may suppose that neither Franklin, nor Weston, nor Anne Turner, nor my lady herself, knew

where to obtain a powerful poison, for after all that is knowledge

given only to a few."

"But who," asked the Archbishop of Canterbury shrewdly, "would bring in Labelle and Mayerne?"

"I cannot answer Your Grace," said Mr. Thrumball, lifting his shoulders in a discreet shrug.

"Somerset," said Lake, "working with his lady, may have brought in Mayerne and Labelle."

The Archbishop remarked dryly: "Both Somerset and his lady had every reason to be rid of Sir Thomas Overbury."

every reason to be rid of Sir Thomas Overbury."

"But remember," said Sir Thomas Lake cautiously, "that if you bring in Doctor Mayerne, you bring in the King. Would His Majesty like

these old tales opened up? Remember the story at the time of the

Henry backed Essex."

"Hush," said the Archbishop. He put his finger on his lips. "I would not have such dreadful things put into words, even in the quietest closet of my lord's castle. We can dismiss all such fantasies." He smiled.

and glancing round the expectant faces, added: "But, gentlemen, this may not be true. The apothecary's boy may have been confused in

death of Prince Henry of the bunch of poisoned grapes--doctored by Mayerne and sent from His Maiesty after the guarrel when Prince

the delirium of his last sickness--nay, of his remorse."

"What does Your Grace conceive to be the truth?" asked Pembroke shrewdly.

"This. That Weston, led on by Somerset and his woman, poisoned Tom Overbury in the Tower—with these same cakes and jellies that he obtained from Mrs. Turner and that she flavoured with Franklin's

sauces."

The syndicate saw at once His Grace's cleverness. This twisted the whole matter so that it did not touch the King or the King's physician, but put the crime on to the shoulders of Somerset and Frances

but put the crime on to the shoulders of Somerset and Frances Howard.

Sir Ralph Winwood, pleased at the turn the affair was taking, begged

Sir Ralph Winwood, pleased at the turn the affair was taking, begged Mr. Thrumball not to breathe a word to anyone else, but to return to Brussels pretending he had come to London on family business only. All the papers relating to the death of the boy, Reeve, in Flanders, and his dying deposition taken down by the chaplain, were sealed up

and his dying deposition taken down by the chaplain, were sealed up and locked into Lord Pembroke's cabinet. "What," asked Lake, "is to be the next move?"

to be the next move?"

Sir Ralph Winwood, who had been thinking out this affair for a long time, replied: "I shall have an interview with Sir Gervase Helwys. He

time, you remember. Overbury was entirely in his charge. He must have known what went into him. I shall sound him. He is a foolish fellow, and I think I shall soon get from him all that he knows--" "But," interrupted the Archbishop, "we must be careful how we move. As I said, the King has a true affection for Somerset and would not lightly let him go. Maybe there will be no occasion for us to rake over these old matters." Then His Grace proceeded to detail a plan he had, which was that he should induce young Villiers to wait on Somerset and offer him his affection. This would please the King, save a scandal, and allow, without any upsets about the Court, the gradual displacement of the Howard faction "Better to work peacefully, my lords," said the Archbishop, rising, "but if Somerset will not go, if he proves to be the fool I think him. why, then we can put this strange matter before the King and ask him if it is his pleasure that we investigate the death of Sir Thomas Overbury." The new knight, Sir George Villiers, was very willing to take the advice of the good Archbishop, who had been kinder to him than a

was Northampton's man and made Governor of the Tower just at this

The new knight, Sir George Villiers, was very willing to take the advice of the good Archbishop, who had been kinder to him than a father, who had supplied him with money for his needs and been his mentor and patron in the difficult life at Whitehall.

Villiers was an amiable young man who had no great gifts besides his remarkable beauty, but he was vain and light, and began, by reason of the favour of the King and Prince Charles--and even that of

Her Majesty, for Queen Anna looked more kindly on this youth than she had ever looked on Robin Carr--to be very self-assured. Therefore he agreed readily with the Archbishop that it would be quite easy for him to win round the great Earl of Somerset and for

them to share between them His Maiesty's favours, honours and aifts. When the King went southwards on a progress to stay at Lady Villiers's house at Goltv. Sir Humphrey May, the groom of the King's Privy Chamber, took young Sir George with him to London to seek

out the Earl of Somerset and offer him service and friendship. Sir Humphrey was a man of great delicacy and discretion, which was

why he had been selected by Abbot for this exceedingly difficult task. At first Sir George was all submission, and with a lot of laughter repeated on the road the words that the Archbishop had taught him. "I have been commanded by His Majesty to wait upon your lordship and humbly desire to be your servant and creature. His Majesty

expects that you will embrace me and take me into favour."

When the young man, humbly kneeling, had said these words with all his winning grace, Sir Humphrey May was most tactfully to give a message from the King, which was that His Majesty desired these two dear friends of his to live in affection together, and that Somerset might still remain one of the great men of the land if he was prepared to share that greatness with George Villiers.

The young man was still in a good mood when he reached Somerset House and willing to be friendly not only with the Earl of Somerset but with the entire world, and Sir Humphrey May congratulated himself upon the docility of the new favourite who had taken to heart so

readily the lessons of my lord the Archbishop. The two waited at the bottom of the great staircase after sending

their names up to the Earl. Robin Carr was sulking in his room with

shadowed him with loving care.

his wife, who never left him when he was in a bad mood, and

When Somerset heard who was downstairs, his sullenness took on a darker tinge, and he was about to explode with rage when he restrained himself and said:

"If I anger this youth it may be my ruin."

This sounded like weakness to Frances Howard. She sprang up

from the gilt stool on which she had been sitting, threw her arms

"Will you be set down by this silly upstart? I at least will not submit. Come with me and see him, and if you cannot answer him roundly. I

round her lord, kissed him and said:

will."

"My love, my darling," replied Robin, "take care how you advise me, for maybe the way we behave to-day will ruin us both."

But Frances laughed; anger gave her great self-confidence. The two

of them went down into the audience chamber that was hung with a great silken tapestry showing the Judgment of Solomon. Frances were a taffeta dress of sea-green with falling bands and cuffs of the

primrose-yellow starch that Mrs. Turner had invented, and her golden hair in a little coif of silver; her beauty was dazzling, and when she entered the room Sir George Villiers, who had never seen her so close before, was startled, and gazed at her with ingenuous admiration, forgetting for a second the words he had to say to Somerset.

Frances Howard returned Villiers's look of simple pleasure in her beauty with such a glance of scorn that the young man flushed darkly and stood silent.

Sir Humphrey May was deeply angered that the haughty caprice of an evil woman-which was how he thought of Frances Howard--

towards Frances and his face towards Somerset, and he measured Robin Carr with the same kind of glance that my lady had measured him, and in a loud quick insolent voice, said the words in which Archbishop Abbot had so often rehearsed him:

"My lord, I desire to be your servant and your creature, and so desire you to take my person under your favour, and your lordship shall find me as faithful a servant unto you as ever did serve you--"

should have interfered with His Majesty's plans for peace about his Court. He touched Sir George on the shoulder, reminding him of what he had to say, but the youth turned sharply so that his back was

Frances Howard broke the speech with a laugh. Villiers stopped suddenly. The woman went over to her husband, slipped her hand through his arm, and, smiling lovingly into his face, said: "Answer him, Robin."

Encouraged by Frances and furious at the insolence of his rival.

Robin Carr answered fiercely:

"I want none of your service, nor shall you have any of my favour. I will, if I can, break your neck, and of that be confident."

With that he turned about and with the magnificent Countess clinging lightly to his arm swept out of the room. leaving the youth and the

With that he turned about and with the magnificent Countess clinging lightly to his arm swept out of the room, leaving the youth and the man standing foolishly in the centre of the great shining floor.

"Come away," said young George. "There is no courtesy to be had

here."

Sir Humphrey had no answer ready; he saw that this was a case in

which even his diplomacy could be of no use; and the two left London immediately and returned to the King with the tale of Somerset's outrageous behaviour and how his lady applauded him in it. James

had determined to take into favour.

These letters only impressed Robin Carr with the weakness of his master. He laughed at them with his young wife.

"Am I to go creeping to such a man as this? No. I will hold my place

was much disturbed and began to write earnest and piteous letters to Somerset, calling him ungrateful, dishonest, and asking him not to absent himself from the Court but to return to his place beside his master and behave civilly towards George Villiers, whom the King

And he replied to me King's letters in haughty, overbearing tones that made James unhappy and discontented and cast him more and more into the company of George Villiers, who amused the King by his taste in clothes, the skill he showed in learning horsemanship and

games, and his gentle, deferential ways, so different from the blustering manners of Robin Carr, which had been fairly rough even

on my own merits without flattering the King or any of his creatures."

in the days of his greatest favour.

The Archbishop's syndicate followed all these events keenly. Sir Ralph Winwood carried out his project of visiting Sir Gervase Helwys in the Tower, which he did under cover of visiting the old Countess of

Shrewsbury, who was then in the Tower for meddling with the sad

fortunes of Arabella Stewart.

This shrewd old lady had been a great help to Winwood, for she had told him that Helwys had talked to her a good deal of the Overbury

told him that Helwys had talked to her a good deal of the Overbur affair and let fall a lot of suspicious information.

Winwood did not find the Lieutenant of the Tower difficult to deal with. When he remarked casually: "Sir Gervase, there are some evil things about the death of Sir Thomas Overbury and many suspicions about the manner of it," the other appeared very disturbed. and.

the death of his former prisoner. Sir Ralph advised that this confession should take the form of a letter to His Maiesty. So Sir Gervase, still troubled, for he did not think that this affair would have been raked up again, and unaware of the intrique against the Somersets, shut himself in his closet and in all honesty wrote his account of the death of Sir Thomas Overbury. He had been Northampton's man and bound, he believed, to act as Northampton wished, for the great Howard was one with the King. So he had saved his prisoner's life by indirect means, not denouncing the plot to destroy Overbury, and in the end he believed he had been outwitted by Reeve, the apothecary's boy, but who had bribed him to murder Overbury Helwys did not know. When he had this letter in his possession, Sir Ralph Winwood

when pressed, said he would write down everything he knew about

showed it to the syndicate, and they agreed that it should be shown to the King. Sir Ralph Winwood took this in hand and with much tact and circumspection brought up before His Maiesty the story of the death of Thomas Overbury, then told him the tale brought to England by Mr. Thrumball, and then showed him the letter written by the Governor of the Tower. The King sat sunk in his chair while this tale went on. His face was grey and tears stood in his rolling eyes; he pulled nervously at his thin beard, and glanced sideways at the floor. At first he was disturbed and loathed Winwood for telling him this sordid story, but as the clever man unfolded the scheme the King began to cheer up and even to smile. If Somerset would not bend, he must break, and this seemed a good reason for breaking him.

Carr's recent behaviour rankled with the King. He believed that the man on whom he had lavished so much affection had treated him unkindly, even brutally, and he deeply resented Somerset's refusal to

showing the sort of scoundrels, such as Weston and Franklin, he had mingled with. An investigation into this Overbury matter might, too, bring up several incidents by no means to the credit of Frances Howard. The King still disliked her for taking Robin away from him and would be pleased to see her humbled.

So at the end of the interview with Sir Ralph Winwood, James spread out his white dirty hands on his knees and said:

"The matter must be gone into, and you are the man to do it."

share his favours with George Villiers. That Robin had anything to do with the murder of his friend, the King did not believe, but he thought he might bend Somerset's arrogance by bringing up the matter and

Chief Justice, and whose daughter, Frances, was betrothed to John, brother of Sir George Villiers. Sir Edward, too, belonged to the Pembroke faction, and by reason of his approaching connexion with the Villiers family was very pleased to lend his hand to anything that might pull down Robin Carr and his lady. Besides, the Lord Chief Justice had long been out of favour, and eagerly took up this case thinking that if he served the King's ends by ridding him of Somerset he might be restored to the royal grace and even become a successor to Thomas Egerton, Lord Ellesmere, who, by reason of his great age, would soon be leaving the Great Seal without a keeper.

Sir Ralph Winwood left the King's presence very contented, and took his story and his papers to Sir Edward Coke, who was the Lord

Sir Edward Coke, who was working in his chambers in the Temple, was much surprised, and indeed angered, when his secretary, with some timidity--for the great judge was not a man who liked being interrupted--told him there was a lady outside who insisted on a few words with him, even if he could give her no more than a moment. The secretary added discreetly that though she would not give her

expression of satisfaction. He said at once that he would see her.

Frances Howard entered immediately and paused inside the narrow door, holding her great travelling mantle about her, and staring at the Lord Chief Justice with an expression at which even the severe lawyer was a little moved. He rose and motioned her to a stool beneath the bookshelves, but she shook her head and broke out at once with her business.

name, he had recognised her as the Countess of Somerset. The Lord Chief Justice sat back and his grim face relaxed into an

search. I have written letters, which have not been answered—and I have heard a great many rumours."

"These three," replied Sir Edward Coke at once, "are lodged, madam, in the Tower, and I am at present investigating reports of their various examinations."

"I am come to you on a strange affair, my lord. Is it true that Mrs. Turner, Doctor Franklin and the servant, Weston, have been arrested? I can find none of them, though my people have made

"They have been examined!" exclaimed Frances Carr, clutching her mantle closer to her bosom.

"Ay, madam, what do you suppose? I am in charge of the case."

"Of what are they accused?"

"No doubt, madam, you know the nature of their supposed crime and I scarcely need use the word supposed, for indeed the matter seems true enough. We have a foul business here," replied Sir Edward with zest, placing his hands on the pile of papers in front of him. "one that

may involve many people before it is finished."

"It never must be finished, it must go no further. Do you understand?

behind my lord." "Do not be too sure of that, madam," returned the old judge harshly. "It is by His Maiesty's command that I and the Committee that has been appointed investigate this dreadful affair." "What do they say? What do they think?" demanded the Countess. advancing across the dusty floor, and her urgency, the power of her spirit was so great that the old judge, shrewd and cold as he was, was moved into saving more than he meant and it was with a touch of passion that he replied: "Madam, these wretches are accused of poisoning Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower." "How did they come on that?" came Frances Howard's faint voice.

My lord is behind me in everything I say and do, and the King is

She would not sit down, but leant against the door and gazed down at the floor with that habit she had of staring below as if she saw down through the boards into some seething hell.

Sir Edward Coke thought that this pretty butterfly had flown very foolishly into his net, making the whole thing very easy for him. He did not tell her anything about Reeve, the apothecary's boy, who had died in Brussels, or about Sir Gervase Helwys's story. It was not his

intention to fasten the guilt on to Paul Labelle and Dr. Mayerne, who had been sent by the King, for, if it was proved that Labelle's boy had poisoned Overbury, then the guilt of the crime could not be brought home to Somerset and his lady, but might unpleasantly reflect on His Majesty, or at least His Majesty's famous physician. Sir Edward Coke was not concerned with investigating into the truth of this strange matter; his business was to see that the arrogant Somerset

and his difficult wife and all the House of Howard were humiliated and perhaps disgraced. He knew that Sir Gervase would not have

iudge said: "Madam, the charge is that Sir Thomas Overbury was poisoned by some jellies and cakes that were made by Mrs. Anne Turner. The poison, which is believed to be resalgar and arsenic, was supplied to her by one Franklin, the man under arrest, and administered by Weston, who is also a prisoner." Frances Howard did not break into the frantic protestations of innocence that the watchful judge had expected. He respected her for her silence, but her face paled and sharpened till all its beauty vanished. "This Mrs. Turner." continued Sir Edward Coke. "was a friend of your ladyship's. I am sorry for any discomfort you may have in the matter. But it can be." he added sneering, "of no great concern to you.

told Lady Frances that he had thrown away her dainties and substituted others, and he had under his hand damning evidence against the lovely woman who stood so frightened before him-the letters she had written to the Lieutenant of the Tower warning him what was in the confections that she sent to his prisoner. So the old

protect her. My lord will not wish her touched." "Perhaps," suggested Sir Edward, "it will not greatly matter what my lord wishes "

"The woman is my friend." said Frances Howard quietly. "and I must

madam."

"He has gone to the King, even now, to make a protest, Oh, I know--I warned him long since that his enemies work against him. There's a

plot to bring him down, and this, for all I know, may be part of it."

"A plot," cried the Lord Chief Justice haughtily. "This is but a crime and the law, madam. There is no plot, I have His Maiesty's orders to investigate what I truly believe to have been a foul murder."

Overbury died of consumption. You will take his evidence? And what does Doctor Maverne say?" "Perhaps I shall not ask for the evidence of either Monsieur Labelle or Doctor Maverne." replied the Lord Chief Justice. "Skilful as they are, how should they know if Sir Thomas Overbury died of some subtle poison administered by the man. Weston? They had no suspicion and made no investigation."

"Monsieur Labelle." said Frances quickly. "said that Sir Thomas

The old man's keen eves saw the young woman wince at this, her hands tighten on the tassels of her mantle. With great courage she said:

"Have they, these unfortunate wretches, confessed to anything?" "That," replied the judge with an air of cold satisfaction, "will soon appear: Weston, Franklin, Sir Gervase Helwys, Anne Turner and Sir

Thomas Manson are to be brought to trial for the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury: And we hope that the prisoners' business will be done," he added simply, "before the middle of the month of November."

Frances Howard still held herself upright and still made no protestation. In a low voice she asked: "Has my name been brought into this? Mrs. Turner is only a woman--I think a foolish woman--if she

were frightened she might--" "All this shall be heard at the trial." interrupted Sir Edward. "Does

vour ladyship fear anything that Anne Turner might say?"

Frances Howard looked earnestly at the grim old face of the Lord Chief Justice. She knew more about the Court than she had known even when she married Robin Carr, something of the intrigues and husband's enemy and belonged to the Villiers faction. She answered with a still pride: "What should I fear? But women have their secrets, harmless matters--my name has been already rudely handled because of my divorce and my quick marriage to my Lord Somerset and I would not have it dragged into this case."

"It is not in my power to keep it out," replied Sir Edward Coke. "If the prisoners talk, if there are letters--"

"Letters!" interrupted Frances Howard. "Ay, it is easy to forge letters, with any name to them!"

The old lawyer admired her quickness. "Sometimes it is not so easy to convince a jury that damning evidence has been forged."

the factions, the corruption beneath the golden glitter on the surface of Court life. She knew that this harsh-looking old man was her

too well born..." She caught back her plea as she saw the stony face before her smiling with grim pleasure. "I have nothing further to say, my lord," she added, "the King will save the Earl and myself from all annoyance. I only came to see if I could be of some service to Mrs. Turner, who was a good friend to me. But I warn you, sir," she added, "that this woman is light and easily terrified, and whatever she says against me and my lord must not be believed. Her words will be the healthlings of one who is grazed with foor."

"Damning evidence," repeated Frances Howard. A quick appeal broke from her stiff lips. "My lord, if you could save me from this--I am

against me and my lord must not be believed. Her words will be the babblings of one who is crazed with fear."

Frances Howard left the Lord Chief Justice's room in the Temple, and proudly, with her head high and a smile, she stepped into the

rances roward left the Edd Chief Statice's footh in the leftiple, and proudly, with her head high and a smile, she stepped into the coach that was waiting to take her back to her house at Isleworth, from which she had travelled for this interview. But as soon as she was inside the coach she pulled down the leathers and fastened

them firmly, then fell on her knees, with her elbows on the seat and

By the time she met him, she was calm again. She spoke to him reassuringly, pretending that she had only been to the Exchange to buy some stuffs and feathers. But he answered her sullenly. "You should not go out alone. Frances--there are too many curious people wanting to gape and stare at you." "I had the leathers down," she replied, "Besides, I am indifferent to what the vulgar may say or think of me."

her face in her hands and cried in terror and rage as the cumbersome vehicle jolted over cobbles and ruts towards the riverside house where Robin waited in a fury of apprehension.

She went up to her husband and rested her head against his arm, saving with a deep yet tranquil passion:

"Love me always, Robin, whatever happens. Our enemies are gathering against the sun. Have you not seen that, even on a bright May day? They are raking up all manner of vileness against us..."

"This Overbury affair," broke out Lord Somerset. He turned and took his wife by the shoulders and looked down into her face. "What do

you know of it? How does it concern you? Mrs. Turner was your close friend--they tell me you were sending cakes and jellies to Sir Thomas in the Tower--I remember now that you did so."

"Av. and what of it?" she replied bravely. "Are you going to be shaken by the first lie they can think of? Mrs. Turner will say anything. Perhaps they are threatening her with the rack or the pincers. That

Franklin is a villain, and the fellow Weston a knave."

"Why were they put about poor Tom?" asked Robin impetuously. "What do you know of it?"

She caught that word quickly: "Yes, some folly I will confess to. I went to Doctor Forman with Mrs. Turner for charms--you know, I told youto keep Robin Devereux from me when we were shut up at Chartley together."

"I know that, and there is no harm in it-but if it were to come out..."

"Yes, if it were to come out now; I would not have anybody know that I used to go to Doctor Forman's house. I find that he had a bad reputation-but how was I to know that? I was a girl, and in love! In love with you, Robin--everything was for your sake." She snatched at her self-control and added:

Frances Howard could not speak; she shook her head and kept her lips set firmly and did not lower her eves from her husband's intense

"Confide in me, Frances," he said hoarsely. "It seems to me that we shall stand alone, you and I. If you have committed any folly..."

blue gaze.

"You can help me, Robin. William Weston, who is the son of Richard Weston now in the Tower, has some papers of mine that concern me. Mrs. Weston told me that Mrs. Turner had placed them in his charge."

"What has he got? Something that can ruin us for our enemies?"

"What has he got? Something that can ruin us for our enemies?"

"What cannot ruin us for our enemies now?" demanded Frances half under her breath. "Trust me, Robin, believe me. There is matter

there, just a woman's foolishness--I tell you--the charms I made for Lord Essex, some other matter of perfumes and philtres that I would not have exposed to mockery."

"I can at least save you that humiliation," cried Robin impetuously. "I am still free, still Somerset, and the King's friend--but you, Frances..."

yet I had cause, I was deeply hurt, but I forgave you."

"Why do you remind me of that wretched matter? I suppose poor Tom's sonnets did not win you?"

"A pretty jest if they did!" replied Frances wildly. "I wonder--but as I forgave you, you must forgive me..."

"What must I forgive you?"

"Those visits to Simon Forman's house, the potions I made for Lord

She checked the reproaches she saw rising to his lips. Shallow, foolish and reckless Frances had been, but danger had sharpened her wits, roused her pride and brought into play her developing

"Caro, when I found out that--" she could not speak the name..."your creature--had written the letters that I prized so--I did not blame you--

intelligence. Courage she had never lacked.

Essex."

"There is no more than that?"

weariness. "For I am going to bear your child."

He did not speak at once and she bit her fingers to keep a sob choked back.

"And if there were, still you must forgive me." she replied with sudden

"Poor Frances," he said at length, "I am sorry that you have these vexations now."

vexations now."

"You will have your heir," she smiled bravely. "Your glories will not be barren."

"You did not call her that when you met me in her secret room," said Frances, bitter because of his coldness; "perhaps you have Anne to thank that I did not bear a bastard, to shame us all..."

"That too!"

"Ay, that too! There is little humiliation I have not tasted because of you, Robin. Did you think what might have happened when you took me-then let me go to Chartley to keep myself for you, in another man's house and me his wife?"

"Before God I did not know that you would suffer. I trusted in the drugs."

He pressed her hand nervously, but seemed more disturbed than happy. He broke out: "If only you had not had dealings with that vile

He moved a little away from her and she began laughing wildly. "The wits would have had their jest of the virgin wife if I had borne a child at Chartley! Where then would have been our chance of divorce?"

"Hush, Frances, you must not vex yourself."

"Do you not suppose that I sometimes think of these things? How I languished there--galled by your placeman's verses and letters--

"So did I--Alice had them from Mrs. Turner, for me--for him. I had to

"Hush, again, I do not deny my fault."

strumpet. Anne Turner..."

think, if you would not."

frightened--alone."

"But you remember mine. Perhaps the best of it is over for both of us, Robin."

now his daily bread instead of his stolen fruit, and often her raptures had found him unresponsive.

"Do this for me," she said; "save Mrs. Turner, for she saved me. Let me have my child with a quiet mind--"

He came to her, kissed her tenderly on her forehead and she cried out: "Ah, you have never guessed how I love you!"

Lord Somerset acted promptly. Stupid and arrogant as he was, he was now alarmed and fully aware of the machinations against him. Though he was innocent of the death of Thomas Overbury, he was not innocent of the charge of sending him to the Tower on a foolish pretext, and of keeping him there, and he knew that this could be worked into some charge against him, that his enemies were powerful enough. He dreaded the cunning and cleverness of Sir

She had for some time believed that she had, as his wife, lost much of the radiance that she had had for him as his mistress. She was

powerful enough. He dreaded the cunning and cleverness of Sir Edward Coke and of Mr. Attorney-General, and men like Lake and Winwood and the power of the Pembroke-Montgomery faction backing young Villiers. He also wished, out of care for his frightened young wife, to spare her all suffering and terror, and so he did a dangerous thing, he sent a pursuivant with a warrant in his hand to seize the trunk from Mrs. Turner's house that was in the possession of William Weston. But the young man, not wishing to share his father's imprisonment in the Tower, refused to deliver the box, saving

opened the trunk and found inside it letters and papers that touched very nearly the question of the guilt of Frances Howard. Meanwhile Somerset had tried to seize another casket, of which his wife had told him, that was in the possession of a wine merchant, with whom it had been deposited by Lord Northampton for safe keeping; but

he would give it to no one but the Chief Justice; and when Somerset insisted, the young man went to Sir Edward Coke, whose agents

to the certainty of his guilt. An account of his favourite's act was sent to His Majesty, then at Royston, by Sir Ralph Winwood, and when the King had read this report he decided that he was tired of Robin Carr, his temper, his arrogance and his bad manners, so he sent a messenger to Sir Edward Coke, ordering him to make out a warrant for the arrest of the Earl and Countess of Somerset.

This messenger arrived at Royston at the same time as Somerset himself, who when he had failed to get the trunks that his wife had told him to obtain, had ridden, fast and in a furious temper to seek out the King and complain about plots against him. The King had listened with what seemed sympathy, now and then wiping the tears

from his eyes and pressing the young man's hand with convulsive grasps of what appeared to be affection. But Somerset was not moved. He stormed and raved and wrenched his hand from the King's and strode up and down the room and cursed all his enemies who were so envious of him and his friendship with the King, of his beautiful wife and his good fortune, and while he complained his Scots accent became thicker and thicker until it was as rough as the

again he was unsuccessful and the two boxes ended up in Sir

This bold interference on the part of the Earl with the course of justice, as the Commissioners sitting on the Overbury case considered it, aroused everyone's indignation and seemed to point

Edward Coke's house in the Temple.

King's own.

The messenger with the warrant from Sir Edward Coke refused to wait in the antechamber, but insisted on coming into the royal presence, and there, dropping on his knee, handed the package with the dangling seals to the King, who tore it open while Robin peered over his shoulder.

"This was what I expected!" he exclaimed furiously. "See, sir, how

they treat you!--for I think that when they put this insult on me, they put it even upon your Maiesty! Shall I not tear this up, sir, and fling it aside?" The King, half-smiling, protested, and mumbled, "Pray be calm. Caro--vou must be patient and obedient to the law, for we must all obey the law--and you must ride to London, for indeed if Coke sends for me. I must go too." Robin hesitated. It was in his nature, bluff and honest and stupid, to wish to face his enemies, and he thought that with the King behind him he had little to fear. So he said, in a softer voice than he had used vet during this interview: "Does your Maiesty wish me to go to London to face these rats?" James nodded: then, with a burst of affection, began to weep and said:

"For God's sake, when shall I see you again? On my soul I shall neither eat nor sleep till you come again to old Dad."

"This is Friday," said my lord, "and on Monday I shall return and the

matter will be over."

"Then," snuffled King James, "I am a happy man again." He embraced his favourite, slobbering on his cheek, whimpered, "For

embraced his favourite, slobbering on his cheek, whimpered, "For God's sake, let me see you on Monday. Shall I, then, shall I?"—and he followed Robin out of the room to the head of the stairs, kissing him again, saying: "For God's sake, give the lady this gift from me." And he stood watching the splendid upright figure of Somerset, superbly dressed in purple taffeta and gold lace, stride down the stairs, across the hall, through the open door into the fine October day and stand there whistling and calling up his pages and men.

King's eyes and he dribbled into his beard, sighing. Then, turning and seeing Villiers, he lolled on the young man's shoulder and began to laugh, saving: "There goes Caro--and may the devil go with him, for I never wish to see his face again." Not many hours after Somerset, confident in his innocence and the King's friendship and love, had ridden to London to face his enemies. Sir Edward Coke arrived at Rovston and was received by His Maiesty, to whom he gave a chilling account of the Overbury plot.

Villiers came up behind the King and stood, as if uncertain of his master's good, a little away from the stair-head. Tears were in the

face of the terrified King, charged Frances Howard with dealing with the Devil, with employing witchcraft, both to ensnare her lover and to be rid of her husband "Sire, if you could know the truth of this foul matter, you would see that you have been most bitterly abused--for all has been done under

charging Robin and Frances with murder. And worse than murder. The stern old man, leaning across the desk and gazing into the weak

the cloak of your love and friendship, and the attitude of these two has tainted the very maiesty of Great Britain itself."

At this the King began to shudder and sob, for he had a very real fear of black magic and of the Devil and of all that was ugly, disturbing and evil. He felt a surge of passionate rage against Robin Carr, who

had seemed so bright, fresh and honest, and who had; by his boyish

graces and feats of arms, wormed himself into the royal favour, only to be lured away by this evil woman and seduced into practising the

black arts and committing murder. The strength and power of the Lord Chief Justice deeply impressed and affected the weak King, and by the time Sir Edward Coke had finished his indictment James business." And he added passionately: "God's curse be upon you and yours if you spare any of them...and God's curse be upon me and mine if I pardon any one of them!"

As soon as the news of the Earl of Somerset's arrest got abroad, a neat, black-haired woman, followed by a manservant carrying a large clasped and clamped box, took a pair of oars at Chelsea for the Temple stairs, and proceeded through the courts and passages where the lawvers lived until she came to the chambers of Sir

Edward Coke. On whispering a certain name to the clerk, she was instantly admitted into the closet where the great judge sat, getting up the cases against Sir Gervase Helwys, Mrs. Turner, and the

"I charge you." he sobbed: "to see to the bottom of this bitter

was weeping in anger.

coniurer and quack, Franklin.

"You are Simon Forman's widow?" he asked sharply. "You are well rid of an evil man."

"I know," replied the curtseying woman, "and maybe there are some others that I could get out of the world with your help, sir."

"That is an honest way to talk, Madam Forman. Because of such evil-doers the wrath of God hangs perpetually over the City of

London. Your own husband was swept very speedily to judgment."

"Even as he predicted," she answered steadily. "There were those who said the Devil descended out of a great cloud that was on the Thames."

"Very likely. But humanly speaking, madam, how do you think Doctor Forman died?"

"Perhaps he dipped his fingers in some of his own sauces, sir, he

"It was one of his recipes that Franklin made up and Weston used to give Overbury his guietus. I meant to have you called as a witness." "I'll witness to some pretty business, sir, add joyfully. I have some papers..." "Papers!" cried the fierce old man. "Av. can my man bring them up?" Sir Edward touched a bell, the servant carried in a hair trunk and set it before the judge. Mrs. Forman opened it and taking out one neatly corded packet of letters after another, put them on the floor in front of the gloating eyes of the old man. "They are to my late husband--may Hell burn hot about him--and they are all signed--'Frances Essex."" "Mrs. Forman, you are an angel sent from Heaven to preserve us against error!" "Let your lordship consider these and I have more at home." The widow took out wax figures, wooden dolls, embroidered scarves, images, masks and wands and set them on my lord's table. Sir Edward Coke gazed with disgust at all these objects. "Anne Turner," said Mrs. Forman viciously, "was the prime mover in this--

was always searching for death...and one day he found it."

Frances Howard--and this naked man is Robin Carr."

The judge picked up the wax woman and looked at it curiously. He smiled slowly to himself, and the widow, seeing his mood, clapped a great brass-bound book in front of him, and opened it at a lewd

see this naked woman with the tinsel stars about the waist, that is

Dean of Westminster's house, and no one came near his Countess, who was looked upon by everyone in London as a doomed woman. Every woman who could excuse herself from the service of the Countess Somerset, even the retainers of the House of Howard, made up some reason for leaving the house in the Strand, where the Countess awaited her fate, and those who were forced to remain in her service were so cold and sullen that she proudly told them to

picture, at which Sir Edward peered keenly, exclaiming that never

Frances Howard was alone. Robin was under open arrest in the

was such choice matter put before a jury.

would suffer her, was Alice, who had remained faithful to Frances Howard, when even her own parents had forsaken her. Alice had gone down every day to the Guildhall and mingled in the great crowd that gathered to witness the trials of Weston and Sir Gervase Helwys. At midday, and again in the evening, Alice would come home to the great mansion standing by the Thames and go up the darkened stairs into the room where Frances Howard sat alone and tell her what had happened during the day.

keep out of her sight. The only one that she would suffer, and that

It was always bad news. It was clear from the first that Sir Edward Coke meant to twist the law so that nobody should escape from his net. No mention was made either of Reeve, the apothecary's boy, or of M. Labelle or of Dr. Mayerne, all the guilt was fastened on Weston, as the instrument of Mrs. Turner and the Countess. At first the fellow stood silent and refused to plead, and it seemed as if the Lord Chief Justice would be disappointed of his prey, but afterwards he pleaded "Not Guilty" and his case was tried and the murder fastened on him. Then he confessed that he had had large sums of money, as

much as one hundred and eighty pounds, from Mrs. Turner, and that he had known that the sweet jellies and cakes sent from Paternoster Row were poisoned and so he was condemned and hanged at Tyburn. Sir Thomas Overbury's friends and his brother-in-law, Sir

and then he died. Frances Howard could neither eat nor sleep. She kept herself alive with drinks of milk and wine, and the fiery energy of her spirit, that had never lacked a certain greatness. All day she remained enclosed in her room, not even able to distract

herself by embroidering, for her stiff fingers could not hold a needle. Then in the evening she would light one or two candles and, keeping all the servants away, have Alice in and listen to her reports of these

John Lidcote, clamoured round the gallows and begged him to tell more of the truth, but he admitted that he was being fully punished.

trials. She wrote many passionate letters to her husband in his imprisonment at Westminster, but Robin did not reply. She did not know if his letters were intercepted, but it was clear that he had lost the favour of the King and that the whole Howard faction were going to be ruined by this affair of the death of Sir Thomas Overbury.

Frances had not been threatened with arrest, but she had been told by Sir Lawrence Hyde, the Queen's Attorney and leading counsel for the Crown, who had waited on her in Essex House, that she must not try to escape from the country, or even to stir from London, for though the King would not have her molested until her child was born, neither

would be have her escape the consequences of her crime. Even the lawyer, whose one object was to destroy the Somersets and who had arranged with Coke the conduct of their trials, was

stirred at the sight of the young woman, forlorn in the great House, awaiting birth and maybe death through lonely days of awful suspense, for there was something ineffaceably appealing in

Frances Howard. Lawrence Hyde had seen her set very high, alittering on a pinnacle, and now she kept her pride and made no

admissions of guilt. She was, as the lawyer knew, fumbling in the dark and was not aware of what had been confessed or what Weston had been hanged.

She asked after her husband--"Does my lord speak of me, what has he heard of me? With what lies do they fill his ears?"

Sir Lawrence had no news of Somerset, who was kept closely guarded and would no doubt be brought to a trial before his peers.

"What had he to do with it?" she whispered. "He is innocent," and she repeated that word "innocent, innocent, innocent" while the lawyer crept away. It was by his advice that some responsible matrons were sent to Somerset House, in case Frances should try to

discovered or if she had been implicated in the murder for which

Alice. "They need not fear that I shall lay hands on myself before my lord's child is born, for I would not harm anything of his."

Anne Turner was quite comfortable in the Tower. She was allowed a chest of clothes and soon made friends with the jailer's wife by giving her a pair of brocade sleeves, only a little worn, and by casting her fortune from a set of playing cards. She was allowed visitors. Sir Arthur came with a basket of wine, and her children were brought by their governess. while older cronies came along with presents and

words of cheer, so that she was comforted and she wrote a petition to Sir Edward Coke, begging for a quick trial that she might be

kill herself, for he had seen that her suffering was almost intolerable. But she refused to see them, and remained shut in her rooms with

returned to her work and her children. She knew nothing of what was happening outside her prison, for her friends were not allowed to tell her anything and never saw her alone. She had no lawyer and was ignorant of the precise charges against her; but she was confident that nothing could be proved as to her part in the death of Thomas Overbury. She had acted on the instructions of Frances Howard and Lord Northampton, and very likely Lord Somerset had hidden behind

his wife. What had she done, but put some flavourings sent by Dr.

and the jailer's wife and looked forward to a speedy release.

When she heard that the Lord Chief Justice had granted her request for a speedy trial, she was all excitement as to her dress for this great occasion, for she was to be tried in Westminster Hall, before a jury of gentlemen of Middlesex and that was an honour for one of her quality, so she hustled with scissors and pins, and with the help of the other women made herself a dainty outfit. But her greatest success was her hat, which she made herself, of ruby velvet over a buckram shape, in the upturned brim which was lined with yellow satin a great tuft of heron feathers was fastened at the side with a diamond

Franklin into some dainties sent by order of Lady Somerset to the prisoner? So, secure in the protection of these great ones, Anne sand and stitched in her Tower room, and gossiped with the maid

The little woman was very pleased with herself, when she looked into the mirror provided by the jailer's wife, and when she had washed her face in milk, jasmine and elderflower water, painted her lips and rolled her hair up in tight curls under the coquettish little hat, she looked so charming that she smiled with satisfaction, and looked

brooch that had been a present from Frances Howard.

forward to her appearance in Westminster Hall as she had once looked forward to a masque at Whitehall.

She enjoyed the progress in an alderman's coach to her trial, and preened herself at the window, insisting on the leathers being up, though it was a cold, raw day. She came eagerly into the vast Hall

and glanced about from the dock, where she stood between the halberdiers, at the court assembled in majesty, at the pressing crowd, at the jury and the lawyers with their array of inkpots and papers. She bowed charmingly and smiled at Sir Edward, perched up above them all, but a frown was her return as the Lord Chief Justice replied to her courtesy, "You are not in church, madam, pray

be uncovered."

At first she did not understand, and there was a whisper and a snigger in the court, then Sir Lawrence jumped up and cried harshly: "Take off your hat, madam!"

She looked startled, then removed it quickly and threw her cambric.

handkerchief over her hair so that she would not be bareheaded in public, and stood to hear the charge against her read by Sir

Horrible as the trial and death of Richard Weston were to Frances, they were as nothing compared to the agonies that she endured before the trial of Mrs. Anne Turner. The little dress-designer,

Lawrence Hvde.

know?"

Frances knew, had trusted so firmly in the protection of the House of Howard that she could not believe that any harm would befall her, and she had thought that she would be released very shortly. Alice went to the trial, paying five pounds for a ticket, and at midday returned and reported to Lady Frances that Mrs. Turner had dressed herself charmingly with a coquettish hat and had seemed so gay on

coming into court. But the dimpling smiles and pretty glances had soon vanished as she faced the jury of knights, esquires and freeholders of Middlesex, but then she had recovered as Alice reported to the Countess, and seemed to enjoy herself before this distinguished audience, and she gave her plea of 'Not Guilty' with

bright self-confidence.

"She had heard nothing of the case against her while she was in prison, and she had no lawyer for her defence. But, oh, madam," breathed Alice, crouching down by the fire and warming her hands, chilled by the hitter November weather. "when she heard what those

breathed Alice, crouching down by the fire and warming her hands, chilled by the bitter November weather, "when she heard what those lawyers knew--"

"What the lawyers knew?" interrupted Frances. "What do they

master's house, and of the charms and bewitchments of the two Earls--and they know that Anne Turner lived with Sir Arthur and was not married to him, and all the meetings you had with the doctor--your letters, madam, they were produced in court, and as they were read I saw Mrs. Anne's face becoming like that of a dead woman."

"My letters," breathed Frances Howard staring down at the floor. "My letters--they were read. My lord will hear of this."

"Yes, they were read," said poor Alice in an awed tone. "They found them--those which you had written to sweet Turner and sweet father--and they were signed 'Your affectionate. loving daughter. Frances

"Oh, madam, they know everything--of you, and my Lord Rochester as he was then. But, oh, my head swims, and I hardly know what to say. But indeed, they know everything--of your visits to the sweet

"Nay, madam--there was no one at all to speak for you. And then Sir Lawrence Hyde put out on the table all those matters that the sweet father used to employ..." Alice's voice faltered as she looked into the flames.

"You mean those figures and charms?"

"Did no one put in that they were forgeries?"

Essex "

"Ay, there was one of a naked wax woman with a girdle of stars onand one of a naked man-and other matters that Sir Lawrence called foul and obscene and devil's work."

"How did they come to get these things?"

"It was Mrs. Forman--she was there to-day, she was one of the chief witnesses--and she was full of spite and fury. She said how Mrs.

blasphemies and other things that I have seen but never care to speak of--and everyone there shrank away from Mrs. Turner and gave her looks of hatred and disgust." "So they would have looked at me if I had stood there." said Frances Howard, "Yet I could have stood there to have saved her."

Turner used to be shut up with her husband for hours together, and how she thought they were lovers. And oh! madam, Mrs. Forman brought out some foul matters--parchments on which were written

"Mrs. Forman." whispered Alice, "gave up the books her husband kept in which were all the names of her customers--and so in my Lord Chief Justice's hands are the secrets of all the ladies of the Court, and he sat reading it, and throwing up his eyes-then some of the seats fell down--and there was an outcry that the Devil was in

court." "Never mind that--Anne--what happened to Anne?" "Mrs. Turner said she did not know there was poison in the things

that were sent to the Tower for Sir Thomas Overbury, that she had always been your servant and done as you had bid her. Then my Lord Coke began to talk to the prisoner--and he mentioned you.

madam, and your lord. He said that all the evidence went against you, that you were guilty of this foul murder! And he told Mrs. Turner that she had the Seven Deadly Sins--she was a wanton, a bawd, a

sorceress, a witch, a papist, a felon and a murderess, the daughter of the devil Forman--and he told her to repent and to become a

servant of Jesus Christ and to pray to Him to cast out of her these

seven devils--poor Mrs. Turner was then weeping and sobbing and

all the paint was streaked on her face. The jury went out, and when

they came back they found she was guilty, and she was given to the sheriff for execution, and they say that Doctor Whiting is to be set on her in order that she may make a full confession-so she is respited till Monday or Tuesday." "She will be hanged," whispered Frances Carr. "Hanged at Tyburn...Anne Turner! with whom I so often laughed and played, and I cannot save her. She is a Roman Catholic--will they let her have a priest?" "I don't know, madam," shuddered Alice. She did not dare to utter another weighty matter that she had on her mind, and this was that she knew the Countess would be arrested soon after her child was born. The girl sat close to her mistress on a low stool, and so the two women, holding each other's cold hands, remained there. They did not notice when the fire fell out and the candles gutted away, and presently the evening was old. Frances Howard went into her room, while Alice ran to call up the women and the apothecary's wife. Before morning the child was born, a girl, and the exhausted mother said that its name was to be Anne. The King was not satisfied with the result of these two trials and wanted full and complete confessions, which would inculpate the Earl

and Countess of Somerset, and neither Weston, who was now safely hanged, nor Anne Turner, had given these. Franklin had indeed spoken, but he accused wildly and was a known rogue. The evidence was strong against Robin and Frances, but not, the King thought, strong enough. So Dr. Whiting, who was renowned for his great success in obtaining confessions from condemned prisoners, was sent to Mrs. Turner where she remained, swooning between life and death, in a little house in Westminster to which she had been sent. She lay alone in an upper chamber, still in her finery of rose and yellow, with her velvet hat on a chair.

She raised her head from the pillow and begged to see a priest but the Protestant clergyman told her that she might not have that favour, but that he, upon her repentance, could save her soul as well as the

the unhappy woman was in a state of nervous collapse, and though she gave out broken sentences such as "I knew of the poisoning, but kept it secret and denied it," and "I would not hurt that lady who formed the plot, she is as dear to me as my own soul," and mentioned Lord Northampton's name, nothing was really clarified, for Anne so feared the gallows that she was incoherent with dread.

At the end of an exhausting interview the clergyman left her with only poor results. She had said nothing to implicate Somerset, and the man she most bitterly accused, Northampton, was dead and out of the reach of his enemies. She admitted that she had seen and spoken to Robin Carr, but she said: "The Earl of Somerset spoke so broad Scottish that I did not understand him." Then she had

Dr. Whiting tried everything to get a confession from Mrs. Turner, but

Pope himself.

of that...

All these remarks Dr. Whiting carefully noted down. "For the rest," he said to the disappointed Coke, "she made nothing but lamentations: 'Lord, that so many should have so hard a fortune. Oh, my Lady Somerset, oh, woe the time that I ever knew her. My love for them and their greatness has brought me to a dog's death. Oh, the Court, the Court! God bless the King and send him better servants about him. There's no religion in the most of them, but malice, pride, wantonness, swearing and rejoicing in the fall of others. It is so

exclaimed that she had heard that the Prince was poisoned with a bunch of grapes and that Dr. Mayerne and the King knew something

the rogue Franklin will. There is nothing that he will not say against those who are accused."

"He tells too many lies." said Coke gloomily. "He goes too far. he

wicked a place that I wonder the earth does not open and swallow it up. But," added Dr. Whiting, "though this woman will not speak, yet

man's character is bad and his appearance evil, and he will always be taken for a follower of the Devil. Let Anne Turner speak, for she was Lady Somerset's friend."

Nothing being obtainable from Anne Turner in the way of a direct

confession, she was taken out on a mid-November day to Newgate in a mourning coach. She was dressed in penitential black, which had been sent her by Dr. Whiting, and put into a cart of the sort used for common criminals and taken to Tyburn. Dr. Whiting sat on the straw beside her and a great concourse of the fashionable men and women with whom she had laughed and gossiped, for whom she had designed dresses and finery, pressed behind on horseback and

makes extravagant charges that no jury would believe. Besides, the

in carriages to see the last pageant in which Anne Turner would take part.

As, amazed and crying, she was helped from the carriage, Alice fought through the crowd and spoke quickly, clinging to the rail of the cart. "Oh, Madam Turner, my lady weeps for you--her child is born and she will call it Anne--"

"No. no. that is a cursed name. Oh, Alice, how is my lady--"

for the young women and allowed a little delay for their frantic goodbyes, so the two clung together regardless of the staring crowd.

"My children, Alice, Sir Arthur will never manage them--tell him to take another woman o' God's name. Jackie has a cough, needs

"She looks for nothing but death-they are taking her to the Cockpit."

The guards wanted to get rid of Alice, but Dr. Whiting had some pity

to be a prisoner in the charge of Sir William Smythe."

doctoring, and my clothes--you may have if you will and shall I go to Hell. oh. to burn for ever and ever--I scalded my fingers once! And to

did I do the others did not?"

Alice kissed her stiff white face on which she had rubbed some red and white. "Have you said anything against my lady or my lord?"

"Tell her to confess," put in Dr. Whiting eagerly. "Tell her to save her soul by confession." But Anne only clung to her friend, babbling about the gay old days and her children and Hell to come and the awful knowledge these cunning lawyers had of everything.

have a rope round my neck! What has this city done to me--and what

Alice tried to make herself heard above this clamour. "My lady wanted you to know that she would have died for you--she is a prisoner, helpless, could you but see her--she is as haggard as you and looks for no peace..."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Anne. "Would that I had never met her. though she

was a sweet lady to me--Alice, I made a dainty hat to wear and they made me take it off--and it was left in my lodging and someone has

"Even that I was Doctor Forman's daughter, and God hear me, that I did not know myself! Oh, Alice, the Court is a sty, a cesspool, a trap

for innocents!"

stolen it..." But now the patience of the guards was run out—Alice was pushed back into the crowd and the procession from Newgate to Tyburn began through heavy November weather and foul streets.

The woman grovelled in the straw and cried and called out against lies, lust, malice, powdered hair, yellow bands and the rest of the wardrobe of Court vanities, and when she reached the gallows everyone saw that the hangman, in mockery, had arrayed himself in the starched collar and cuffs of saffron hue that she had made so fashionable at Court and he showed them to her, jeering, as he helped her to stand up in the cart.

then at the paper, and mumbled a few words that might have been prayers and said something about her children and that she hoped she might have Christian burial. Then she wrung her hands and asked for a priest to absolve her of her crime. A little rain began to fall and the jostling, swearing crowd pressed closer to hear what she might say. But since she would not read her speech and there was no sense to be got from her, the rope was put round her neck and the cart was driven on, while she screamed and struggled. Her small dainty body, dressed in black, writhed a little while in the November mist and then hung stiff and broken from the arm of the gallows.

Dr. Whiting had written one of his best dying speeches and confessions for Mrs. Turner, and he put it into her hand as she stood up in the cart; but she did not understand him, and stared at him and

sack-like, with feet pointed, downwards, and the yellow hair scattered over her face.

It was the King's express wish that she should not be allowed Christian burial, but Doctor Whiting said that she had made a penitent end and he must see that she was interred decently. That

penitent end and he must see that she was interred decently. That evening she was taken down, after hundreds had gaped at her, and put in a plain coffin and buried in the churchyard of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

Fields.

The trial was that of Sir Gervase Helwys, and the chief evidence against him was the confession of the quack Franklin, who declared that the Lieutenant of the Tower had known that Weston was

that the Lieutenant of the Tower had known that Weston was poisoning Overbury with aqua-fortis, white arsenic, mercury, lapis costitus, powder of diamonds, great spiders, cantharides and resalgar--and that the Lieutenant had written many times on the

resalgar--and that the Lieutenant had written many times on the matter to the Countess of Essex, who had passed these letters to Franklin to read to her. In one of these letters Helwys had expressed

surprise that Overbury had lived so long and had written: "Madam, the scab is like the fox, the more he is cursed, the better he fares."

had had two hundred guineas from her for bewitching Robin Carr to her love. All these stories prejudiced the jury against Sir Gervase, whose plea that he had intercepted the tarts was not believed. On the 20th November, the former Lieutenant of the Tower was hanged in the Tower after expressing his gratitude to the King for not sending him to Tyburn.

Sir Gervase took a touching farewell of the old friends who had come to see him die in this shameful manner, and he admitted his fault, which had been that of timidity and subservience, for instead of denouncing Weston he had tried to gloss the matter over and so keep the favour of the King and Northampton.

"Let none, however honourable so ever he be, or the King himself

Franklin had brought forward many ugly charges against the Countess and her servants. He had said, among other things, that he

He called all his friends there assembled to pray for him, and then was hanged; and the gossips wondered if the ghost of Sir Thomas Overbury was satisfied with three victims or if there were to be others beyond the quack Franklin, who was a manifest rogue and certain to be hanged. He soon was, for all his wild confessions and his stories of the poisoning of Prince Henry and all the other matters with which he tried to please Sir Edward Coke.

Sir Thomas Manson, who was the King's falconer, was acquitted by special favour of His Majesty; and so the stage was cleared of all the lesser villains and the underlings, and there remained only the principal actors in this tragedy—Robin Carr and Frances Howard.

move you to anything not agreeable to God's word, but reject it, for this was my fault, that I had not at the first opened the plot to His Maiesty who would no doubt have most justly and righteously

punished all."

against either of these. He was angered, too, by Coke's mentioning the story of the poisoning of Prince Henry, so he took the case out of his hands and put it into those of Mr. Attorney-General, Sir Francis Bacon, who was an ambitious man of great wit and unlikely to make such an error as Coke had done.

Indeed, Mr. Attorney, when he turned over the papers relative to the case, saw with brilliant clarity that Sir Edward had mishandled things so that it would be difficult to convict Somerset of the murder, and Somerset was the victim aimed at. There was only one clever thing that Coke had done and that was to get Weston convicted and hanged, for he was linked with the Somersets.

Still the King was not satisfied that the evidence was good enough

and cried out against the injustice of Coke, who had obviously determined to hang the prisoners whatever was brought against them.

Even the King, who in his pedantic way had nosed into the case, had pointed out that there was nothing to connect Somerset with the

For the rest, the evidence had been twisted and many people saw it.

poisoning, since it took place before he married Frances Howard and while she was under the influence of Northampton. No witnesses had been called as to Sir Gervase's assertions that he had thrown Mrs. Turner's dainties away, though he had declared that he had; and what of M. Labelle and Dr. Mayerne? People asked why they had not

been examined. Mr. Attorney saw the essential weakness of the case for the prosecution, which was, that if what Reeve had confessed on his death-bed was true, so was the story of Sir Gervase, and Frances Howard was only in intention a murderess.

Three people had been hanged, who, however sinful, had not murdered Sir Thomas Overbury, who had been taken off by a whisper from Northampton to Mayerne.

letters of hers seized at young Weston's house, those found in the Tower and those in Simon Forman's chest--but what was there against Somerset? Mr. Attorney-General enjoyed the prospect of working out the problem, of dressing up and glossing over the matter to please the King and young Villiers, of so presenting the indictment that it would convince a jury of peers, and that was not so easy as convincing the ordinary citizens who had tried the other prisoners. So he sat long hours over his brief, with wisdom, skill and patience building up his case. Five - A Fan Of White Feathers

Nor had Anne Turner confessed as it had been hoped she would. Certainly there was evidence enough against Frances Carr in the

Frances Howard watched the lights in her room go out, but for her the room was not dark; it was filled with images, rapidly dissolved into flame or into the grey waters of the river that she had known well, had loved, and now had come to hate. It was on the banks of the Thames that Robin had first held her in his arms. It was on the Thames that she had rowed with the now dead Prince, and with

Robin too. It was on the Thames that she had looked when she was waiting for the news of the illness of her husband, dreading his recovery and her going to Chartley. Always the Thames! The grey river with its interchangeable colours of blue and green. It was on the Thames that they had taken her to the Tower three months after her child was born. She had not seen the water, as she had sat with

Alice enclosed in her cabin with the curtains drawn tight to spare her from the gaze of scorn and curiosity; but she had heard the river lapping at the sides of the barge, and the dip of the oars, and felt that familiar gliding motion hitherto associated with pleasure.

liking the look of the plain stone room, had stepped back on the threshold and asked: "Who lodged here last?" When they had said "Sir Thomas Overbury," she had cried out and begged for another lodging. Sir George Moore, the Governor of the Tower, who had replaced poor Helwys, granted her request.

"It is my death that is looked for, and my death that they shall have."

There was some difficulty about her lodging. At last they cleared out all the baggage and curious paraphernalia belonging to Sir Walter

she said. "But not in those rooms."

She had never lost the outward semblance of courage save when they had brought her to her apartments in the Tower, and she, not

Raleigh, who had been allowed to leave his prison on a voyage to Orinoco in order that he might make his peace with the King by bringing back the gold that was so sorely needed. Here Frances Howard now lay watching these images, of Robin and of Tom Overbury, who for so long had been behind him like a

shadow--Tom, who had written those love-letters and sonnets that

she had cherished so ardently; images of Mrs. Turner and Weston and Franklin, the hunchbacked quack, all of whom had dangled now from Tyburn gallows. Frances now and then put her hands to her neck as if she felt the rope there.

She had not seen her husband since his arrest, many months before; her constant entreaty was that she might have an interview with him, even if it was only for half-an-hour. She had written, but there had

been no answer, and even when their child was born he had neither come nor sent a message; she hoped that he had been prevented.

She was pretty much in the dark as to her fate. She had often been examined by the clever lawyers for the Crown, but she herself had no counsel nor anyone to help her in her defence; nor did she know what

her accomplices had disclosed. This troubled her very little: all that concerned her was Robin and what he might think of her now and what they might be going to do to him for her crime. Frances Howard was not ill treated, and Alice, the evil girl who was so faithful to her, was allowed to remain to wait on her; she had been shown consideration and courtesy. Sir William Smythe at the Cockpit had done all in his power to allay her anguish, and afterwards she had been lodged like a gentlewoman at a house in Blackfriars. The King had allowed her to have nurses, doctors and attendants, and she had been permitted to remain with her child from December to March: but now it was taken from her. Alone with Alice. she remained in Sir Walter Raleigh's lodgings in the Tower. When she could free herself, which was not often, from the constant obsession of her love, the wonder of her fate held her in amazement. The thing was hardly to be believed: even with the evidence of these prison walls around her and the jailer with his keys and the spare meals sent in from Sir George Moore's kitchen and all the other

meals sent in from Sir George Moore's kitchen and all the other evidences of her imprisonment, her disaster was scarcely to be credited. She had been so blessed, she had played so high, she had been so sure; even the powers of Hell as harnessed by Simon Forman had helped her to secure her beauty and her love; she had been dazzled by her own self-confidence. Her distress had been very acute when she had thought that she would have to go to Chartley

and submit to Robin Devereux, but the sweet master had helped her, and after all it had not been so difficult. For two years she had kept the man, with drugs and enchantments, away from her; she had wanted Robin for her only love, and again it had not been difficult. They had helped her—Anne Turner and Simon Forman, Weston and Franklin, with their drugs and potions; and Robin had loved her...Her second marriage had been a great triumph; everyone had seemed

to be at her feet. She had rid herself of Overbury with the same ease that she obtained Robin Carr and discarded Robin Devereux; the

All this she had accomplished without pain and without difficulty. merely by paying away the gold that her lover gave her out of the public Treasury, so easily, without question or rebuke or comment. How happy they had been! She had lived for Robin, and Robin for her! He had neglected the King for her sake! He had laughed at all the glories and splendours he might have had--for her sake! How happy they had been in their country houses, riding through the woods, sitting in the gardens or in the halls where she played and sang to him. Then, so suddenly-ruin, disgrace, and, she supposed. a shameful death, not only for her, but for him. She knew he was innocent; she knew also that the King wished to be rid of him, that the Villiers faction had triumphed, that Sir Edward Coke and Mr. Attorney-General were both of the Villiers faction. She had the exquisite agony of knowing that through her love, her love would be destroyed.

wretch Tom had threatened, menaced, tried to ruin her happiness.

and he had gone.

Yet Frances Howard had to endure a deeper pain even than this—her fear that she had lost Robin's love, that had gilded her own life, taken her out of herself and made her feel as if she were immortal. She had wished to die as soon as her lord was arrested; she had resolved to die when she heard that they were going to hang Anne Turner, but she had been persuaded to live for the sake of the child, and when she was rid of that burden she had decided to live in the hope of saving Robin. She intended to confess, to take the crime upon her own shoulders, to declare to them all that her husband was innocent.

None of all her former flatterers came to comfort her now; from no one was there a message of hope or comfort. Some of those who had been most forward in proffered friendship and admiration were among those who prosecuted her. Sir Ralph Winwood, who had

her--in fact, as far as she could discover, the man who had first set them afoot. She saw now the value of her own beauty, graces and charms: she was worth no more than one of those poor tinsel ornaments that had alittered so brightly in the light of a hundred candles during one of those pageants where she had been a queen of beauty and that afterwards she had seen trampled underfoot, soiled, broken, discarded. She knew now that she had never been truly loved or admired or respected, only tolerated because she was gay, pretty and of the House of Howard, Prince Henry, perhaps, had truly loved her; he had tried to save her, to warn her, to teach her what honour was, but too late: she had learnt other lessons too well. Old Northampton--had he loved her? She understood now how he had used her. He had sent Anne Turner. to her, he had told her to doctor Overbury's food, and now he was dead: safe in his high-set grave, and she had to face the consequences of his evil teaching. If she could have gone to him for advice perhaps this would never have happened. Of what use to think of that? The hooded chair was empty, the library at the eastern end of the gallery closed. Her parents kept away from her, they had cast her off in her disgrace, they had married her when she was thirteen years of age to a boy who went away and then they had used her to lure the King's favourite to her alliance, and then had forced her to go away with the stranger who was her husband. Even now she writhed when she thought of those two years at Chartley.

The hanging of Anne Turner was a source to her of constant anguish; she remembered the gay spirits, the dainty ways of the merry little woman, her soft prettiness, her good humour, her skill in everything

cringed to her with the offer of the black horses to take her to the City, was one of those who most eagerly pressed charges against

jeering mob. Sometimes Frances would wake from a fevered sleep to see the face of pretty Anne swing forward between the bed-curtains, and it was not pretty any more, but had a lolling tongue and staring eyes. Frances never flinched from this vision; she would turn to it and whisper: "It was my fault, sweet Anne, I bid you do it—if I could not take your punishment on earth. I will take the blame in Hell."

that was light and pleasant. It seemed impossible to realise that they had taken the delicate creature, put her into ugly coarse garments, carted her from Newgate to Tyburn and there hanged her in front of a

pain that made her cry out, and in shame, fear and anguish had given birth to that other Anne.

She had seen no likeness to Robin in the infant, and she had overheard two of the hired women whispering together by the cradle, wondering if the baby were not a succubus—a child of the Devil. or

Frances did not often think of her child, who was clouded from her by the horrid delirium of that night of suffering when she had suffered

one of his captains. Everyone about her had thought she was a witch, lost and damned and forsaken by her evil guides.

She was baffled herself by her utter downfall. What of the power of the sweet master? What of those enchantments that had seemed so brilliantly successful? The nutmeg that she had given to Robin, the

philtres that had dosed his drink? If all her luck had been of the Devil, why had he forsaken her? If she were to be damned for all eternity, surely her pleasures on earth had been very short, seeing she was only twenty-three years old.

only twenty-three years old.

Almost daily she wrote to her husband and gave her letters to the Lieutenant of the Tower, and no answer ever came. She had news of

her child; since none of the Howards would concern themselves with little Anne Carr, the King had directed that she should be given to Dr. Mayerne, and the great physician had taken her to his country house.

In April Frances lay ill in the bed shaded by the serge curtains and hardly spoke even to Alice, who served her with solicitude. But when Sir George Moore waited on her, bringing a message that her husband was to be allowed at last to see her, she put aside her weakness and fever as if it had been an old cloak discarded hastily, and rose for the first time in many days and asked Alice to open the box of clothes that she had been allowed to bring with her from Somerset House; at the bottom of the chest lay a mirror. Frances Howard had not looked at her reflection since she had been first

Frances wept a little when she heard this, for the disposal of her child seemed to emphasise her shame and desolation, to put the seal on her dishonour; she wondered why God had allowed her body to be racked that another woman might come into a world that was so full

of snares and punishment for women.

"Is that Frances?" she asked, and laid the mirror down again.

arrested; she picked up now the square of glass that was wreathed on all sides with gilt snakes and stared down into its greenish depths, where her face appeared as if under Thames water.

She was in much doubt over what she should wear. Would he wish to see her beautiful or penitent? She did not even know whether her beauty remained or not.

gowns and coifs and mantles in the chest, "it is surely now past a matter of fine clothes and adornment between you and your lord."

"Suppose that that was all he cared for in me?"

"Madam," said Alice, who had taken out and put in again all the

"Well, then, madam, if that were so, it were but a trivial thing and nothing much to grieve over."

She took no further interest in her clothes, and yet she could not bear him to see her in the plain black dress that she had worn in prison. So she indifferently chose one of watchet silk that was interchangeable blue and green like the Thames on a fine day. something like that dress she had worn when first Robin had held her in his arms on the landing-stage above the sleeping swans and the straight dark reeds, and she had been decked out as a moon aoddess. She wore her fine yellow hair combed into a knot at the back of her neck, and not puffed and powdered or sprinkled with sparkling gold dust as was her custom, and at her wrists and neck plain lawn ruffles. For a while she played with a pomander that she had brought with her to the Tower, where there were many foul smells, then she told Alice to fetch from the chest a fan of white feathers, which she had had mounted round a circlet of crystals and diamonds; the cold sparkle of the gems and the whiteness of the plumes might set off the purity of her pale face and white bosom that showed between her silver laces. She took the fan and waved it slowly to and fro as she seated herself in the window place waiting for Robin. When he came he stood on the threshold and did not say a word; Alice crept away through the inner door into the bedroom with a sidelong look at her mistress. Frances had expected to see her husband much changed, but he was the same Robin, handsome and tall; he was attired splendidly

too, and wore his George. She saw him with detachment and, as it were, from a distance, and as she had said when she looked in the mirror, "Is this Frances?" so she said looking at him, "Is this Robin?" Her tired eves stared at him over her fan of white feathers: she

"A trivial thing that love, perhaps, but everything to me--seeing I am

damned for it--"

But he stood rigid, gazing at her, the still open door behind him. His face was flushed, his mouth drooled. She dropped the fan of white feathers and looked at him without smiling. At last he spoke.

"Why did you want to see me? I have said no a thousand times, but at last they persuaded me."

Frances rose and supported herself against the wall.

"Should not you and I stand together now, Robin?"

"You and I will never be together again."

"What have they told you of me?"

"Do you deny any of it?"

trembled, waiting for his embrace, for some sign of his love. Perhaps he would go on his knees beside her and weep silently into her lap.

That would be enough.

are? You confessed," he added angrily, "did you not? You confessed? They told me so."

"It was impossible for me to deny it. Weston and Anne Turner and

"How can a man be innocent who is married to such a woman as you

"I do not know what they have said, Robin. I have heard very little. Only believe that I have never confessed anything that could hurt you.

I have told them again and again that you are innocent."

Franklin, besides Simon Forman's widow, knew."

"Then you did poison--my friend?"

"Robin, you say--your friend! Was he that? But believe me," said

"They have no interest in finding a dead man guilty," replied Somerset with ferocious bitterness. "I am the prey they hunt—I am down in the mire and all the pack is on me, tearing me to pieces. But I will never give way—I will never confess to this terrible murder in which I had no hand."

"Do they," asked Frances quickly, "try to make you confess?"

"Ay, by every means in their power. The King sends men daily to speak with me. The Lieutenant of the Tower is always at my elbow. 'Confess, confess, and the King will grant you mercy.' But I will have

Frances, her voice low and steady, "believe that I had no hand in fastening any blame on you. I referred in my letters to one whose orders I was obeying, and I made it very clear to those who examined me that this one was my great-uncle. Lord Northampton.

and never vou."

none of it. I'll not be overborne."

"Why should you, Robin? You are not guilty of anything but of marrying me."

The young man began to walk up and down the room, almost as if he had forgotten the presence of the woman. "They want me to confess-to justify them—and be rid of me. But I'll not do it. The King and I exchange letters almost every day—he is afraid of me, afraid of what I

exchange letters almost every day—he is afraid of me, afraid of what I might say. And he is rightly afraid, too."

"You know too much?" asked Frances, picking up the fan of white

"You know too much?" asked Frances, picking up the fan of white feathers. "Have you not got them there, Robin?"

"Ay, I know too much. I know how the King meddled in Spanish politics, I know how much money he had and the places that were sold at Court. I know the story of Prince Henry's death. Coke

"Is that true?" asked Frances. "Did that young man die like that?" She spoke with more curiosity than emotion, for her heart and soul and mind were full of love for her husband, and fear of losing him.

believes the Prince was poisoned by a bunch of grapes sent by the

King and Doctor Mayerne."

"I do not believe it," said Somerset harshly. "The young man died of the plague, and Mayerne knows it. Coke is in disgrace for hinting that he was poisoned--but I could make a case as good against the King as the King can make against me. I was there when he said

that he would rejoice to see his son in his grave--and rolled his eyes at Mayerne and asked him if he had a subtle medicine that would

ease the world of a vexatious fool!"

"Why don't you do that?" asked Frances, stepping forward, with a return of her old pride animating her slim body. "Why not bring them down as they try to bring you? It is the Villiers and Pembroke faction behind all this. What do they care whether you are innocent or quilty?

What do they care how Overbury died? It is to bring you down."

"Ay, and they'll do it, too," replied Somerset, as if suddenly realising to whom he spoke; "and through you, you evil woman. You have delivered me into their hands."

"For love of you--always for love of you."

"Love! I am tired of the sound of the word. It has been my disgrace, my shame, my ruin-and still I scarcely know its meaning, though lust and fornication I know very well."

"But you loved me, Robin--a little?"

"Never. I did not want you, or any other woman. I was happy in the place I had--power and the sport and the gay times, with old Dad

"Not you! But you went to Simon Forman's house in Lambeth! I've heard what the lawyers put on the Court table when Anne Turner was tried--foul and lewd obscenities, enough to bring a judgment on this country. You trafficked with the Devil."

"For your sake," she repeated, "always for your sake. You knew that I was giving Lord Essex potions to keep him away from me."

whom I liked and left for you, with Tom who was my friend after all. It was your wretched kinsman, Northampton, who hooked me, and you were the bait. Ah, you tempered my drink that night of the masque.

"Not I, not I," she whispered, raising her head.

no doubt."

"I thought they were harmless drugs to dull his senses. I did not know there was witchcraft, black magic in it, I never thought of that abomination. I did not know you were dosing me—but now I see that the whole business was just a terrible deception and that I never cared for you. I now see you as you are, now that my brain is cleared

from the fumes of your medicines."

He folded his arms on his broad chest and looked her up and down and laughed with the arrogance of a stupid man.

"Perhaps you are a succuba--a fiend in woman's form--sent to

"Perhaps you are a succuba--a fiend in woman's form--sent to plague and ruin me, to drag me down to Hell."

She whispered. "I am a woman--I have borne your child. Do you think

if I was a fiend I should be here now?"

He turned his head aside from this appeal and said awkwardly:

"I have begged this favour of the King--that you may not be brought to

trial openly, that you may be allowed to live privately in some quiet

"Of your child." she repeated. "of your child. Robin. I have never belonged to any other. And all my thoughts were always for that, to keep myself for you--and I obeyed what the master, what Doctor

corner of the country--because you are the mother of a child."

Forman told me, and Anne Turner. I was so young," she added with a slight lift of her upper lip, "and they all used me. But I do not make excuses " "Nay, nor show any penitence either," he replied, turning on her

angrily. "It was a most foul, unnatural murder. You went straight from it

to your wedding festivities, and laughed with me." "I do not repent." she replied. "of putting a scoundrel out of the way. The man would have ruined me. He tried to steal my fame and make a mock of me. he called me a base woman -- "

"And so you proved yourself to be! Mock!" cried the young man violently. "All of you have combined to make a mock of me--Tom himself, whose puppet I was--you, Northampton's bait--the King, who put me up and set me down as it suited him as if I had been a dog or

a horse or a jester." "I loved you," said Frances Howard. "I never thought of anything but that--neither of my great-uncle's politics nor of my parents' designs,

nor of anything, except that I loved you, Robin, I would go with you now, anywhere. Oh, that we could be alone together, even on a rock

"That is fine play-acting talk," replied Somerset. "They tell me now

in the middle of the ocean!"

that you would have employed Sir David Wood to kill Tom in the

street. Come. I am here only for one purpose--to hear the truth. I have

been told many lies, by many people. I want from you now the truth,"

"Did you poison Tom when he was in the Tower?"

"You think that what Weston, Franklin and poor Anne Turner confessed was true? But I know not what they confessed. This only I know—that I did employ Anne Turner to obtain powder of diamonds, resalgar and arsenic to put in the cakes and jellies that she sent to the Tower for Sir Thomas Overbury to eat. And I sent a letter warning Sir Gervase Helwys not to take any of this food himself nor to give it to his family or servants. I used the word letters for poison. All this you surely know."

"I wanted to hear you condemn yourself from your own mouth. So that is how Tom died!"

"My great-uncle was behind me in all I did. It was under his

instructions I acted. I do not repent. The man was a scoundrel and a villain—he wished to ruin me, he wished to prevent my marriage."

"I was a false friend to Tom. I betrayed him because I was under your enchantment. He had served me well, even to writing the letters that won you—or as I thought won you," he added, bitterly correcting himself, "for it seemed that you required no winning, madam, but

"Ask, and I shall answer," she said, moving to the window-seat and sitting where her warm, fine profile, still so beautiful in line, was

"Did you go to Simon Forman's, and there work spells and incantations to obtain my love and Robin Devereux's hate?"

turned towards the grey light of the day.

were ready to tumble into my arms."

"Yes "

"Yes, that's true, Robin-but though so many thought of me, I thought of you only."

"It is enough." he said. "it is enough. What do you think is before us? We shall be brought to open trial as the others were, for everyone to point their fingers at. The King maybe will pardon us, but for me. I would rather have the scaffold. What is life here in prison? What do you think is before us but years and years of this, shut away from everything for which we were meant, everything for which God made us, before the Devil tempted us."

"Devil's work. Devil's work always!" cried the young man passionately. "Would that I had never come to London, would that I had remained with Lord Hay in Paris! There I was gay and free, though I had no money in my pocket and no iewels round my neck! Would that the King had never singled me out at the tournament. But I shall make him pay, the Judas! The last time I saw him he kissed me--he knew that I was going to my fate, and he took me by the shoulders and kissed me, begging me to return by the Monday

"The King, the King," cried Frances, "Who cares for the King? I know

morning."

only my own part in this."

"If we could be together," said Frances, clasping her hands, "if we could forget all this and be together. Robin!" He took a step backwards from her. "That would be my meanest punishment, to be shut up with you. This last mercy I shall beg for-that if we are imprisoned here it is far apart, one from the other, so that, madam, while I rot from day to day I do not see the cause of my ruin always before my eyes." "We have a child, Robin."

"If she really is my child and not got by the Devil. How do I know how

-powerful, evil, base woman. No doubt Essex had you those two vears and laughed at me and my virgin bride." "Always true to you. Robin--there was never any other but you." He strode up to her, his eyes narrowed in an expression of hate, and she drew back into the window-place as sharply as if a snake had hissed at her from a crevice

"It is not possible," she murmured. "Do you remember what passed between us only a few months, only a year before? Did you not love

many lovers you have had? There is no end to the stories told of you-

me when we lay close together, dreaming together?" His lip guivered as he turned aside, filled with no compassion for her but with furious self-pity. He had been so tricked, so deceived, and by a woman whom he now felt sure he had never cared about: she had blinded him, bewitched him, drugged him, Because of her he

was utterly ruined, and made a sport for his enemies and a joke for a young upstart like Villiers. He thought of that and how they would all smile when his name was mentioned, all of them--Mr. Attorney-General. Sir Edward Coke. men like Winwood and Lake. the Archbishop Abbot. He was mocked by all of them because of the Howards and the wanton who had tempted him.

He turned aside, overwhelmed by the anguish of his fate, and put his hands over his eyes. Into his mind, not given to seeing anything of what was really there, came memories of the old days in Scotland when he and Tom had walked together beside the lakes. How he

had admired the spruce, shrewd scholar, and how he had dreamt of the future, of good times and fine clothes, good horses, dogs and

sport and the admiration of everyone! And then his fortune had

come, and he had not, he believed, abused it--he had been kind. generous and everyone had liked him. He and Tom could have done he had snapped at the lure of a cunning old man, had been made, by the Devil's help, to see this woman as a golden goddess. In the agony of his disillusion the young man bent his head against the wall and sobbed Frances Howard knew at once the reason for his distress. He had always been crystal clear to her, though she was herself foolish in so many ways. "Poor Robin, you never wanted anything but toys, and now these have been taken away from vou."

it very well between them: they would have been faithful friends, but

say something--a kind word or a look. Take my hand--we were lovers, we have a child. I had no thought of gain, nothing for myself--it was all that I might belong to you." He turned and stared at her as if he had not heard what she said; his

face was distorted and flushed. With a clumsy gesture he passed the back of his hand over his eyes. The door opened and the small face

There were three scratches on the door that had an air of urgency.

"This is an end--they will not let us talk any longer. That is the signal that Sir George Moore is returning to take you away. Speak to me-

and Frances's calm was broken into quick distress.

of Alice looked in "It is the Lieutenant of the Tower returning, sweet madam."

Frances Howard dropped her fan; the hard stones in it rattled on the

floor. She flung herself on her knees with a movement almost clumsy as she tripped in her long skirt and caught hold of her lord's hand, and he, turning, pulled her across the floor.

may have my head struck off in a public place! Robin, do not leave me without one word. Have you still the amulet, the nutmeg?"

He still tried to shake her off. He made a blind, awkward movement for the door, she clinging with both hands to his struggling fingers...

"Look at me! Touch me!--if only to abuse me, if only to strike me! Have you the charm?"

At sight of this Alice put her hand to her mouth and gave a sound that

"Robin, do not go like this--we may never meet again! Think of what I have to face! They will put me on trial, they will make a show of me! I

was half a laugh and half a scream.

"No," replied the young man harshly. "I threw that into the filth of the Tower ditch with everything else I had of you! I'll not be damned by proxy! You've dragged me to the outposts of Hell-how can I make amends to Tom? He warned me, he said you were a wicked woman-

Somerset called to the little girl standing in the doorway.

"Help up your mistress. Tell her to make her prayers to the Devil for aid, for she'll get none from me!"

aid, for she'll get none from me!"

"It was for you, sir, she did it," replied Alice hotty. "Come away, madam! What man is worth this trouble! Ay; I tell you that," she repeated, thrusting her small pinched face in front of Somerset and

holding the door against him, "all of it, all her tricks and prayers, incantations and poisonings were for you. She might have made a fine match and had a dozen lovers and lived safe and happy had she

not seen your face, my good lord."
"Speak to me, Robin," pleaded Frances, still on her knees. "Speak

to me. There is no humiliation that I will not undergo to save you--I will

anything you say will be believed? They have proof enough against you, and what is proof against you is also proof against me. As for me, I will stand on my innocence, and defy them all."

With that he pushed Alice rudely aside and left the room, meeting in the antechamber Sir George Moore, who had arrived to take him to

tell them all publicly that you are innocent. I will say I bewitched you-

He spoke to her sharply over his shoulder. "Do you suppose that

all, anything,"

his own apartment.

"She is guilty," cried Robin Carr. "She has confessed as much. I do

not wish ever to see her again. But I shall continue," he added fiercely, "to demand of the King this grace--that she is shamed no more, but allowed to go away quietly, for she is punished enough. The Devil has forsaken her, and God never knew her. Let her wither away, the sorceress, privately!"

Frances Howard, lying face down on the floor of her prison, heard these words that came to her through the open door. Alice raised her up, and they clung together for a while, one supporting the other, trapped and broken.

"Why should I live? There must be means of destroying oneself, even here."

"That would be to go to Hell, sweet madam."

"But it would set Robin free from me. If I were in Hell I should no longer torment Robin."

Alice reached out her hand and picked up the fan of white feathers and laid it across the knees of her mistress, who stared down at the

"But I will live, Alice, for I might be able yet to do him a service--and because it is the most difficult thing to do."

Dr. Maverne secretly visited the Countess of Somerset in her prison.

alittering stones in the handle.

pillows, her small body making hardly an outline beneath the coverlet; a net caul hid all her bright hair.

The good physician knew how to deal even with the most

At first she refused to speak. She lay like one already dead on the

troublesome patient. He lowered his fat body carefully into the chair by the bed, drew aside the curtains and looked in a fatherly manner at the sick woman. Then he said, very quietly and in a gentle tone:

"Madam, for my Lord Somerset's sake you must take some

courage."
"Is it possible," sighed Frances, moving her head slightly on the pillows, "that I can help my husband?"

"It is," replied Dr. Mayerne comfortably. "All that you have to do is to plead guilty to the crime of which you are accused and accept the King's clemency—that I have His Majesty's own assurance shall be extended to you."

"The King's clemency. Even God's clemency could not ease me. I am past any human pardon."

"We will talk then of my lord, and not of yourself." And Dr. Mayerne,

clever, easy, told her how her lord's situation was then. He was still in the Tower and still declared that he would stand upon his innocence.

The King sent his friends to argue with him and wrote letters to him in his own hand declaring that he was convinced of his part in the murder of Overbury.

physician on a sterner note, "that if my lord does not give way the King will tire of these gentle methods. There is enough evidence against your husband, madam, to send him to the scaffold. Sir Edward Coke and Mr. Attorney-General can speak for that."

"So I understand. All these trials and sittings have not been to find the truth, but to discover a means of destroying myself and my

"But your lord, madam, thinks differently. He believes that the King is by no means convinced of his guilt and is only using this excuse to be rid of him. That is as it may be. Neither you nor he must try to look into the mind of the King. But one thing is certain." added the

husband."

The physician nodded pleasantly and thoughtfully stroked his fat chin.
"You are becoming a clever woman, madam. It is a pity you did not learn some of these lessons earlier. Now my Lord Somerset has it in

intimacy and knows some of his secrets."

"About the poisoning of Prince Henry?" asked Frances Howard, suddenly sitting up in bed.

his power to be vexatious to His Maiestv. He was long in the King's

Even the suave, worldly physician was startled out of his usual calm by these sudden words and this sudden movement.

"Prince Henry died of the plague--of some foul water drunk during the feeting!" he said firmly "But it may be that these were initializing."

"Prince Henry died of the plague--of some foul water drunk during the festival," he said firmly. "But it may be that there were injudicious words spoken and a story got round about a bunch of grapes--and His Majesty does not wish it revived. Sir Edward Coke has been disgraced because he mentioned it, because he spoke as if he

believed it."

The young woman's interest had waned. She dropped again on her

"What do I care how Henry Stewart died? Those days are so far away. What do you want me to do?"

"You are going to be put on your trial. His Majesty hopes that you will make a decent appearance, as befits one of your House, so as not

pillows and put her hands under her face.

to disgrace your family further."

"That I can do," said the young woman simply.

"Then you are to plead guilty. The lawyers will come to you and teach

you what you are to say and how you are to say it. And in return for this complacence--for His Majesty recognises that you might protest

your innocence, put yourself on your defence and have a long and scandalous trial--you will be pardoned. Though you will be sentenced to death, that will be commuted immediately to imprisonment."

"Imprisonment. I am to remain here? I am not to see Robin?"

all things--it may even heal the King's rancour against you and your lord, and the rancour between yourself and your lord. But we can look no further than that--the King's immediate mercy."

"The King's immediate mercy! I think that it is the King, and my Lord."

The physician shrugged his fat shoulders. "Time, madam, time heals

Northampton-ay, even my own parents--that used me as it suited them, and their various lusts and ambitions that need mercy."

"Madam," said the physician firmly as he rose, "that is the way you

must not talk. You must be humble and contrite."

"I am neither. I hold myself to be as innocent as any in this case. Did

not my Lord Northampton and my parents use me as bait—and, as I think, drug Robin's wine that he might feel a desire for me? Then,

languidly in the bed and her eyes were brilliant. "So I was taught, so I was, used--I was a child when I was married to Robin Devereux, and I loathed him. I worshipped Doctor Forman because he saved me from my husband--he gave my lover to me--" "So you must not talk, madam, so you must not talk. This deep passion of yours has been an inconvenience from the first." "Why should my passion bear the blame more than the lusts, greeds and ambitions of the others?--what they did for place and for money. I did for pure loving." "Then." said the doctor carefully, holding back the curtains of plain serge and looking keenly into the young woman's haggard face. "complete your act of loving by doing as I bid you--and so you shall, despite his obstinacy, save perhaps my lord." "So," she said, "I am to make no attempt to clear myself, I am not to try and justify myself. I am not to tell the people why I did what I did. nor how this scoundrel Overbury harassed me." "You are to tell them nothing, madam. You are to plead guilty and

when I fell in love, they had no pity, but used me still. It was my Lord Northampton that sent Mrs. Turner to me. I was sixteen years old, Doctor Mayerne--I believed in God and the Devil." She moved

"Ay, madam. I understand your amazement, but my lord does desire to live."

Frances was silent a second: then she asked wistfully:

accept the King's mercy."

"Does Robin wish to live?"

"But what is before Robin? What is before me? If he had loved me,"

"I think, madam, my lord's passion is spent." "Then." said Frances Howard. "I will do as you instruct me."

she added reflectively. "he would not have wished to live, but rather

that we should die together."

When Dr. Mayerne left the Tower and walked through the bright May morning to the steps where his barge waited, he looked around him at the budding hawthorn trees in the Tower vard, and the butterflies.

the first he had seen that year, that hovered above a bed of early pinks in the Governor's garden. The river was bright and clear, the ripples lapped one over another as if a chain of gold had been laid above the water. On the Surrey bank the trees bloomed with a russet-pink flush of young leaves, faded into the misty heat of the horizon

The physician thought of the woman whom he had just left and of the wax image with the girdle of tinsel stars round her waist that had been shown in Court during the trial of Anne Turner. He smiled to himself as he settled himself among the rich velvet cushions in his

barge, thinking of the story of Frances Howard.

Dr. Mayerne knew that her poisoned pastries had been thrown by Sir Gervase Helwys into the Tower ditch and that it was Lord Northampton who had silenced Tom for ever with a dose administered by John Reeve, the apothecary's boy. The lawyers had

hushed up all that part of the business, and by hanging Weston, Sir Gervase, Franklin and Mrs. Turner had fixed the guilt very cleverly

and for ever on the Somersets. What was Frances after all but a wax

woman in the hands of all men whose fingers were hot with violence and ambition? In everything except her quality of loving, thought the

doctor. She really loved that stupid young Scot, she never had any motive beyond that. What the others had done for money or place,

Dr. Mayerne found everything easy to understand about the case except that disinterested passion. There was a lot of public indignation at the delay in bringing the Earl and Countess of Somerset to their trials. When Weston had been

hanged the church bells had rung a joy-peal; the Lord Mayor had been entreated by the City to send a deputation to the King to thank

she had done for love; she had never had anything out of the

business but the love of Robert Carr

dispose of them decently.

Star Chamber

him for the care he took in preserving the people against the foul machinations of the Devil. It became very necessary for the King to disassociate himself from all who were concerned in the great over of poisoning, to secure the conviction of the Somersets, and to

danger he stood, as Mr. Attornev-General testified when writing to the Kina. "Still. my lord is little moved with it and pretends carelessness of life since ignominy had made him unfit for His Majesty's service." Yet even the obstinacy of Somerset mattered little to the King and his advisers, and to the Villiers faction, now that Frances Howard had

But Robert Carr's constancy was unshaken, though he knew in what

been induced to plead guilty. As Sir Francis put it to the King: "If that fall out, which is likely as things stand, and which we expect, which is that the lady confesses, that Somerset plead not guilty and be found guilty." But Sir Francis added shrewdly that if this prediction should prove false and if my

lord should be acquitted by the peers, then it would be best to send him again to the Tower and find another charge to bring before the

imprisonment and said damaging things against the King and the King's friends. It might be that he would break out even at the Bar and hurl charges against the monarch whose intimacy he had shared. But Mr. Attorney-General had provided for this, and it was decided that if the prisoner were to start railing during his trial that he should be forcibly withdrawn and evidence given in his absence.

So the trial of the Countess of Somerset was fixed for May 15. It was to take place in Westminster Hall, and as much as fifty pounds was given for a corner of that place, for here was a show more worth seeing than the finest pageants at which the Countess had shone in the heyday of her glory. But at the last moment the trial was postponed for a few days to give the Earl another opportunity of confessing, but he remained sullen and violent, and on Friday, the 21st of May, the Countess was brought to trial from the Garden

There was another obstacle. The King feared not only the obstinacy, but the violence of Somerset, who had raged during his

21st of May, the Countess was brought to trial from the Garden House in the Tower, where Sir Walter Raleigh had lodged, by barge. She was accompanied by Sir George Moore, by halberdiers, and preceded by a man attired in black who carried the axe, the edge turned from her. This was considered a courtesy and she was allowed it by the kindness of Mr. Attorney-General, for Coke had stoutly argued that the case being felony and not treason, she had no right to the privilege of the axe. When she had seen it she had been startled and had stumbled in her walk.

Another matter had been arranged by Mr. Attorney, and that was that if she should attempt to say anything that would free her lord from implication in her crime, Lord Ellesmere would rise and silence her, and before she could say any more she would be removed.

Frances Howard was calm. She had risen early on that day and put

on a dress that Alice had been sewing for her for a week past. It was

Alice herself was clothed in black with a white coif over her dark hair. She kept close to her mistress; her demeanour was sombre, but also alert. She could not hide the curiosity she felt, for this to her was a show, though she was faithful to Frances Howard and in a way loved her.

The little company got into the barge. It was early in the morning and a brilliant day, but the black curtains were soon drawn over the two women where they sat in the cabin. The halberdiers stood in the stern, the headsman with the axe in front. During the whole time of her imprisonment Frances Howard had had no friend, lawyer or acquaintance to give her any advice or comfort: all she had to quide

made of plain black stammel, a material that was used for the dress of penitents; covering her bright hair with a hood of black crepe that fell in a peak on her forehead. Alice arranged carefully her white lawn collar and cuffs. "I appear like a widow. That. Alice, is what I am."

matter by heart?"

"I have learnt many a speech before," said Frances Howard. "I was always a good player."

"Ay," whispered Alice, "but then you were on a gaudy stage, and the

her were the words spoken to her by Dr. Mayerne, which she

"Are you rehearsing what speech you shall make?" asked Alice in the shadow of the curtained cabin. "Is it not difficult to get such a

believed came from the King.

King and nobles were there to admire and applaud you, and you were dressed beautifully."

"I shall not like the audience to day." replied the Countess. She

"I shall not like the audience to-day," replied the Countess. She picked up the fan of white feathers she had on her knees. The little diamonds and crystal knobs on the handle she had thought

and Alice were conducted to a private room in the Hall.

"That great murmur," said Alice, going to the window and trying to see out, but peering on to nothing but a blank wall, "is the people. How curious they are! I heard a fellow say as we came up that those who had tickets had been there since six in the morning. They have

inappropriate to her state, and as she could not wrench them out she

By nine o'clock they had reached Westminster, and the Countess

had tied over them a length of black veil.

been putting up seats for weeks past."

Frances Howard had an hour to wait in this little room. During that time she said nothing, but moved her fingers up and down on the table as if she were playing a spinet. Her lips moved too, the words

unspoken: "Robin, Robin."

When Lord Ellesmere, the Lord High Steward, had taken his seat under a canopy of state, and the Serjeant-Crier had demanded silence from the closely packed, eager crowd, the Commission had been read out and the indictment produced and read over. There

been read out and the indictment produced and read over. There was another demand for silence, and then the Lieutenant of the Tower was asked to bring in the prisoner to the dock that stood ready for her, with a little space railed off at the side in which stood the executioner with his axe and a seat for Sir George Moore.

This was the moment everyone was waiting for, and there was a great craning of necks and pushing forward of bodies as Frances Howard entered the Court. She was not permitted to have even Alice with her, and it was quite alone that she walked up to the wooden pen built for her as a dock, the way to which was shown her by Sir

George Moore.

She stood erect, looking very slender and small. Those who had

to her judges, and some of them turned away ashamed, and pretended to be whispering together or consulting their notes. There was no-one there who regretted the high price he had paid for his seat, or the long wait he had had, or the discomfort of the packed Hall, for when might a sight like this be seen again? A daughter of the Howards who was twice a Countess, young and beautiful. arraigned for murder before a jury of peers! The hundreds of packed spectators hoped for many hours' entertainment; surely the prisoner had wit and courage and would fight for her life, and in the duel between her and the Crown lawvers a lot of fascinating things would come to light.

never seen her before were surprised at her beauty, for she had that even though all her radiance was gone, a pure beauty of line and colour that seemed indestructible. She placed her fan of white feathers on the ledge before her and stood looking down. Then suddenly, as if remembering where she was, she turned and curtsied

beneath his chair. Mr. Attornev-General elegant at the Bar, the other lawyers in their places--all the majesty of the English law arrayed in awful splendour against Frances Howard.

It was an impressive sight, the Judges of the King's Bench, the Excheguer and Common Pleas in their vermilion robes and gold braid, the Peers in their splendid attire, the canopy of state over the Lord High Steward, the seal bearer with the great seal on the steps

Then Lord Ellesmere, the Lord High Steward, who knew his part very well, called out in his thin old voice:

"My lords, the reason why you have been called hither this day is to

The Clerk of the Crown then sprang up and read out the indictment:

sit as Peers of Frances, Countess of Somerset."

"Frances, Countess of Somerset, hold up thy hand."

The prisoner stared to right and left for a moment, then raised her small hand, which trembled in the air like a signal for help.

As the seneschal read the Latin of the indictment. Sir George Moore

bent forward and whispered that she need no longer hold up her hand. She smiled faintly at him in gratitude, and taking up the fan of white feathers, held it in front of her face. The gabble of the dead

language, to the prisoner and to most of those present incomprehensible, ended in the living English:

"Frances, Countess of Somerset, what sayest thou? Art thou guilty of this felony and murder, or not guilty?"

The girl stood rigid and silent, slightly waving to and fro the fan of white feathers. Then she dropped this, so that it hung straight from its cord at her girdle, and her thin hands clutched the bar in front of her

as she looked round at all those eager, straining, staring faces—a fog of faces with a beam of sun from the high window lighting them up. Among them she saw the placid but watchful countenance of Dr. Mayerne. She moved her lips as if to speak, but no sound came out. Many of the peers looked down at their feet.

But Lord Ellesmere turned towards her, expectantly, and Mr. Attorney-General dipped his quill expectantly in the inkhorn like a well-trained actor waiting without agitation for his cue.

In a choked voice Frances Howard said "Guilty." Her face assumed that complete pallor only seen in those in the deepest distress of

that complete pallor only seen in those in the deepest distress of mind or body, and her beauty vanished in her agony. She was trying to speak again, to take all the blame from her husband, when Mr. Attornev-General imped up, and, staying both her struggle and the

murmur of excitement that had broken out in the crowd, said in the

"I am glad to hear this lady's so free acknowledgment, for confession is noble."

The great man then proceeded with his exceedingly skilful, well

agreeable voice he knew so well how to use:

prepared oration, the point of which was that the penitence of Frances Howard was worthy of the mercy that such a great King as His Majesty was prepared to show.

Frances Howard heard nothing of this elegant, eloquent speech, or of what grim old Sir Edward Coke said when it was finished—that Weston had confessed and that Dr. Whiting, the prison chaplain, was there to say as much. She was apart from them all, in complete isolation in her wooden pen. She raised her eyes when Mr. Attorney-General began to speak again, asking for judgment; she stirred

voice.

"Frances, Countess of Somerset, hold up thy hand. Whereas thou hast been indicted, arraigned and hast pleaded guilty of accessory before the fact to the wilful poisoning and murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, what canst thou now say for thyself why judgment of death

slightly when the Clerk of the Crown addressed her in his sing-song

The Countess had been told by Sir George Moore what she was to say at this part of the proceedings, but she had forgotten; nor was it of much importance to her. She murmured something so low that not even the Lieutenant, sitting in the pen near her, could hear it. But Mr. Attorney, though farther away than Sir George Moore, was up again, and declared that she had said that she could aggravate, but not

extenuate her faults, yet she desired mercy and prayed the Lords

would intervene for her to His Maiestv.

over the pronouncement of the sentence. "Their lordships will bear in mind the grief and humility with which you confess your sin and will signify this to the King and mediate for his grace. But in the meantime, according to the law, the sentence must be this—that you shall be carried from hence to the Tower of London, and from thence to the place of execution, where you are to be hanged by the neck till you be dead. And the Lord have mercy upon your soul."

As these words were spoken the executioner turned the axe in its leathern pouch so that the edge was towards the condemned woman; the light falling from the high window glanced on the edge as it was moved.

There was silence, stillness. Sir George Moore rose, thinking the

The formalities proceeded; the white staff was given to the Lord High Steward, who turned in an uneasy manner towards the prisoner, muttered an acknowledgment of her penitence and rather blurred

the Hall, the halberdiers had risen. But still she waited, like a player who has forgotten her part. She was indifferent to what they did to her, only concerned whether or not she had saved her husband, anguished that she had not been able to protest his innocence. Her voice had failed her; they had spoken so quickly and so loudly, the place and the proceedings were so strange to her; she had not been able to control her senses.

"Madam." whispered Sir George Moore from beside her. "Madam."

prisoner would fall. The headsman stood ready to precede her from

"Madam," whispered Sir George Moore from beside her. "Madam, you may go now, you may take your leave."

Frances Howard looked again about the Hall as if she took her last look on the world; this time it was not Dr. Mayerne's face she singled

out, but that of a young man who stood leaning against the wall not far from her, looking at her gravely, and, she thought, with pity. At first, she was so confused, she did not recognise him, but she half-

She put her hand to her eyes again. Then, seeing Sir George Moore at her side she unfurled the fan of white feathers, and, holding it in front of her face, walked out of Westminster Hall leaning on the arm of the Lieutenant of the Tower. In front of her went the headsman with the edge of the axe turned towards her in deference to her rank.

Sir George conducted his prisoner to the closet where Alice waited. He did not wish to expose her to the cries of the hostile crowds who were savage because her confession had cheated them of their entertainment. He thought, also, that she was too sunk in spirits to be able to move, so he tried to reassure her, reminding her that she would soon receive the King's pardon, which was already made out.

smiled as if she accepted this compassion that had been offered her. Then the smile faded. It was Robert Devereux, the man whom she had drugged and deceived at Chartley, or so she thought of him.

But when she could speak she whispered:
"What is the King's pardon, or God's pardon to me if my husband will not forgive me?"

Alice asked the Lieutenant of the Tower:

George.

will not see him."

"Let him in, sir, whoever it is. See how she sits, like a figure in ice.

"There is someone who waits to see your mistress, and perhaps she

"Will not one of her kin come to her? Not even her mother?"

Oh, sir, she did many kindnesses when she was able--surely someone has remembered that now."

"This is someone to whom she never did a kindness." replied Sir

She looked up at that, her lips parted, but she could not speak. Robert Devereux was close to her chair. "Madam, do not speak if silence pleases you better. But if I can be of any service to you, tell me." She tried to find some words. "You know--what I did--to you at Chartley? "Yes. Poor child. I was to blame--I am a thick-headed fellow and I did not understand." "You understand--now?" she asked in utter amazement. "Yes. You were so young and they trapped you." Essex sighed and added: "I too was very young--we were both constrained against our natures." "You pity me." "Before God I pity you." "No one else pities me. My husband, even he--?" The young man did not speak and she stared at him, for a second

Frances had not heard this whispered conversation. She sat rigid, her hands folded in her lap and her gaze on the floor as if she saw

Sir George opened the door and a young man came in softly and stood close to Frances. At sight of him Alice winced and shrank

through it and down, down.

"Madam, be comforted,"

awav.

"Madam, everything is not lost. Indeed, I implore you to take courage."

"I weep," she sobbed, "because you had to cut your timber down—the trees you cherish—to repay my dowry."

They looked at each other; both so young, so lonely. She made a fluttering movement like a bird struggling in a net.

"Do you, sir, forgive me?"

"Madam," he said, "I do forgive, very freely, any wrong that you may have done me. For my part I charge you with nothing, knowing you to have been betrayed by others. I guessed at Chartley that you were set on evil ways, but I never put that in, either at the divorce or during

this oyer of poisoning. And," he added with energy, "I blame this wretched city for your misery. I think that Thomas Overbury came rightly to a dog's death for his wickedness. And I think the greatest sin they all committed was entangling you in these lewd practices, you who were my wife and a gentlewoman, fitted for better than—this

forgetting her own misery, curious. She saw him now clearly for the first time, saw the honesty in his face, sensed his strength and courage, remembered the wrong she had done him and how he had borne with her--not even while her enemies had clustered about her had he cast any accusation against her. And now when Robin, for whose love she had sinned, cursed her, and even her own mother kept away. this man whom she had thought that she hated stood

beside her. She began suddenly to weep.

disgrace."

"It was your great misfortune--for he will never understand your

"It was no one's fault that I loved Robert Carr."

time to strike against the rottenness of the age." At one time Frances Howard would have mocked at such talk, but now she found a deep comfort in it and gazed eagerly at Robert Devereux, who said:

affection. But I have done. I go far away from London and wait my

my end. For you, madam, take comfort--look up to God and beg for His mercy that can absolve the greatest sinner." With that the haggard young man bowed stiffly to Sir George Moore and then to Frances Howard, and went his way. She never saw him

again.

"My father had his head taken off for rebellion, and that too may be

"See." whispered Alice. "how the tears have comforted her." By now the crowd had begun to disperse, and Frances Howard went down to the stairs, the headsman with the axe walking before.

The day after the trial and sentence of his wife. Somerset. persuaded at last to give way with an ill grace, was brought to the Bar in Westminster Hall. The long struggle between himself and the King had ended. When he was told that his wife had confessed Somerset had broken into one of those furies that so frightened Sir

George Moore, and, when they were repeated to him, the King. But afterwards the prisoner's mood had changed. He had become less

rebellious towards His Majesty. And in great weariness, being assured that the proceedings were a mere formality, he had at length agreed to go to Westminster Hall to stand his trial before the Peers.

But the Lieutenant of the Tower did not altogether trust the prisoner. whose violent agonies of mind and body he had witnessed during so many weeks, and so he instructed two soldiers to stand one either

sign of trouble, to throw the mantles over him and carry him away by force. But Robert Carr's demeanour was quiet; he bore with dignity the gaze of the great crowd that pressed in to see him in his disgrace. The day was very hot and a lot of people fainted in their places: Somerset was uneasy too because of the weather. He wore the George, and said in a bold voice "Not Guilty" and that he would be tried by God and his country, amending himself with a smile as he turned to the lords--"By God and my Peers." It was admitted by those who were present at this trial that Somerset defended himself with ability, but the case went as the lords had arranged it should, and Mr. Attornev-General's prediction was exactly

side of Somerset, each with a cloak over his arm, and at the first

fulfilled, to the great satisfaction of His Majesty and Sir George Villiers. The prisoner, who had no counsel or legal advice, had to defend himself as best he could against the legal arguments and guibbles that left even that audience of scandalmongers weary, and towards evening the Peers found him guilty of the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, though he had said: "I cannot argue with lawyers, I can only assert my innocence, and for my part protest before God I

am neither guilty of nor privy to any wrong that Overbury suffered in his life." And in truth there was no evidence against him, and Mr. Attorney had had to use his utmost skill to get the verdict.

Robert Carr had known how the case would go against him, and late in the afternoon he had taken off the George given him by the Judas who had sent him to his doom with a kiss. When they were taking him back to the Tower he asked that he might be lodged separately from his wife, who was, he declared vehemently, the cause of his ruin. He also asked if his daughter might be brought up secretly by honest people and never know her

mother's shame.

had escaped without censure or slander or any talk of the manner of the death of Prince Henry or of dealing with the Spanish or selling of Court places.

"If we two be put together," said Somerset as he stepped from the barge on to the Tower wharf. He did not finish his threat, but his

bloodshot eves and his guivering mouth were repulsive to Sir

"Until I know His Majesty's mind you shall be lodged separate."

So Robert Carr was taken to his former apartment in the Tower: to

Sir George Moore said he thought that both these requests might be acceded to, for he knew the King's mind and how relieved he would be that this Somerset scandal was over, that the woman had confessed and the man had been found guilty, and that he himself

reach this he had to pass the Garden House where his wife lodged. He kept his eyes down in case she was at the window. As he passed the neat borders of spring flowers, wilting in the unusual heat, he saw some broken white feathers on the ground. He deliberately walked over them, knowing they were from the fan that had brushed her face and been held in her hands.

EPILOGUE

George Moore, who replied dryly:

Sir Theodore de Mayerne, in the twenty years that had passed since the trial of the Earl and Countess, had become too stout to ride on horseback and had too much money to need to run after patients. Some few he saw in his handsome house in Chelsea, and some,

some tew he saw in his handsome house in Cheisea, and some, who were old friends or connected with old friends, he went to visit. He had outlived most of his contemporaries. He had attended the last illness of Danish Anna, who had died of dropsy, leaving heavy

debts for dresses and entertainments; he had seen James Stewart

sent to his account by a surfeit of overripe fruit. Many of the lesser people who had played a part in the story of Frances Howard and Robin Carr were now dead. The Earl of Essex had married again and lived in sombre retirement at Chartley, condemning the ways of the Court: Charles, whom Sir Theodore remembered as a sickly. dwarfish, red-nosed boy, was now on the throne and having difficulties with his Parliament, Mr. Attornev-General, after rising to great heights, had died in shame and obscurity. George Villiers, the handsome boy who had won the heart of King James when he had simpered on the stage in Ignoramus, was now the Duke of Buckingham and the most powerful man in the United Kingdom, for he had an influence over King Charles as great as he had had over King James, It amused Sir Theodore to watch these changing events and to reflect on the past, but he was more interested in the books that he was writing--his Materia Medica and his treatise on the death of Prince Henry that had been caused indeed by poison, but not by any sprinkled on a bunch of grapes. The dying boy had told the physician that he had drunk some water from a stagnant pool in a fountain basin, and Dr. Mayerne believed that in that draught, handed to him by Frances Howard, had lain the doom of Henry Stewart. The girl had been innocent there, unconscious even of an evil wish, and innocent of the death of Thomas Overbury, though a murderess in intention. Dr. Mayerne knew that her doctored pastries had been thrown into the Tower ditch and that Overbury had died from the quick soothing draught of which he. Maverne, alone knew the secret and which it had been a pure mercy to give the diseased wretch who had been dying rapidly of consumption. Odd that John Reeve should have had pangs of conscience about what was little more than the administering of a sleeping draught--but the whole tale was odd. Sir Theodore often amused himself by thinking it over--Helwys had died innocent and knew it. Anne Turner, Franklin and Weston had all died innocent and had not known it--the Somersets had been ruined for a crime of which the man knew nothing and which the woman had not

might have been in Simon Forman's place, so cruel was the persecution under James Stewart, who blanched and shuddered at the name of a witch or warlock. Well, it was over now and the physician blamed himself in nothing. He had sent his notes on the case of Sir Thomas Overbury to Coke, and he had been willing to bear witness that the prisoner had died of consumption, but his notes had not been used, he had not been called and Monsieur Labelle's evidence to the effect that Overbury had died a natural death had been taken in private and never put in. Sometimes Sir Theodore believed that this was the truth: Paul Labelle had said to him: "But I never needed your mixture, the sick man was so far gone that I used a harmless injection." What did the truth matter now? Paul Labelle was prudent and not likely to compromise himself even to his brother-in-law, and what of the confession of John Reeve? What proof had they that he had ever confessed at all? Perhaps Thrumball was paid by the Villiers syndicate to invent that--there was no proof either way. Sir Theodore smiled, too, when he recalled that syndicate. Villiers had proved ungrateful, even as shrewd Queen Anna had predicted and had soon shaken off his backers. Archbishop Abbot was in retirement because of his sharp opposition to the King's arbitrary measures, the disappointed Puritan had tried to make his peace with God by writing a treatise against Sunday sports and by building a hospital at Guildford, where he had been born and educated. Sir Thomas Lake had been dismissed from his

committed; Sir Theodore often smiled to himself about the witchcraft in the case. Sir Theodore, with his chemical experiments, was acquiring the reputation of a wizard himself; a false step and he

remained powerful, with his sports, his pictures, his Colonial interests and his rebuilding of Wilton House.

Ten years after the trial of the Somersets, Mrs. Forman had come to

offices, fined and imprisoned for defamation of the Countess of Exeter. Sir Ralph Winwood was dead years ago, only Pembroke

children of Anne Turner: the unfortunate creatures having been abandoned by Sir Arthur Mainwaring, who had married a rich widow. Sir Theodore had found a lot of things in the papers of Simon Forman: he put them away with the twenty volumes of notes he had on his own cases Soon after this Mrs. Forman sent for the great doctor and out of curiosity he went. She was dving of an infection in the throat and so would never go to Virginia, but she had arranged for the passages of the three boys. "They are my husband's grandchildren, sir, and though he was a great villain I liked him." She then confessed that she had spied on Forman and poisoned him with the drops in the purple bottle--"out of a great lealousy I had for Anne Turner, then he told me that she was his daughter, and I confessed. At first I was sorry, but afterwards I still resolved to destroy Anne and did so, out of envy--but God..." Her breath failed, so Sir Theodore soothed her, saving: "No doubt God can deal with this as well as with a few other matters." That was ten years ago and sometimes the three young men wrote grateful letters to Dr. Mayerne from Virginia, for he had helped them with advice and introductions in the New World. The Somersets remained for seven years prisoners in the Tower, for Robert Carr was too obstinate and bitter to ask formally for the royal

pardon. During that time the husband and wife had not met, but when they had been at last released they had gone to live in the only residence that remained to them, Chiswick, but still they stayed apart in their ruined obscurity, Frances Howard shut in her apartments, and Robert going about his business. His one pleasure since his release

Dr. Mayerne's consulting-rooms in St. Martin's Lane and had given him a great package of papers once belonging to her husband. She was going, she told him, to Virginia, and taking with her the three his means for her education and to buy her a little country villa. Anne was not pretty, but good-natured and gentle and her father gave her more love than he had given any other human being, a fact that both amused and puzzled Dr. Mayerne.

had been his daughter, Anne Carr, who lived with Sir Theodore and his girl. Elizabeth, not knowing her mother's story. Somerset strained

Sometimes Anne was taken to see her mother shut away in Chiswick House. The excuse given for this seclusion was that Lady Somerset was ill, which Sir Theodore knew was true enough, for Frances Howard had been dying for twenty years. Sentence of death had indeed been passed on her in Westminster Hall; her heart, her

spirit were broken, she had never held up her head since and her husband had never forgiven her. Dr. Mayerne suspected that not so much as one word had passed between them since Somerset had

been brought to see her in the Garden House in the Tower.

Twenty years ago, thought Dr. Mayerne, and the old scandal forgotten by all but a few. Everyone was concerned now with the King's creation of monopolies and demand of ship money from the ports, with the rise to power of Laud, who hated the Puritans, with the favour shown by the French Queen to the Papal envoys and other topics of the day--and Frances Howard was forgotten, dying so slowly in the Thames-side House.

In the late spring of that year she sent for him, and Sir Theodore set out in his padded coach on the short journey from Chelsea to Chiswick. It was May and he kept the leathers up for the pleasure of the clear, bright sun.

Chiswick House seemed at first sight to be deserted, but he was

Chiswick House seemed at first sight to be deserted, but he was used to that desolate look about the place. The large gardens were only partly tended, almost neglected, many of the windows

uncurtained or blank, no servants at the head of the steps or in the

Sir Theodore, with the help of his secretary, heaved himself out of the carriage, and he told his servants to wait on the half-circular drive in front of the steps that he mounted painfully, knocking with his staff on the closed door.

A man in plain livery opened to him, and beyond stood a thin grey-haired woman: Alice. "Sir," she said, "my mistress is dying at last and wants to speak to you."

The woman preceded him up the plain stairway. From every window

doorway, the stables shut up, no dogs or horses to be seen; the master of this modest domain was poor and lived in dishonoured

obscurity.

they passed the Thames was visible, and Sir Theodore thought how the river, grey or blue and green, had twisted in and out of this story as a thread twists in and out of a piece of tapestry, and he wondered if the woman whose room looked on the Thames loved or hated the river with the willow-trees and the swans. She had talked to him of many things, but never of that.

He entered the bedroom softly and took, without speaking, the chair beside the bed, as he had once taken a chair beside a bed in the

beside the bed, as he had once taken a chair beside a bed in the Tower, where this same woman lay.

As no sound came from behind the curtains he moved them and looked down at his patient. She appeared to be asleep. There was no gold left in her hair, no colour in her face, not much flesh upon her bones, for a terrible wasting disease had consumed her for many months—for many years, Dr. Mayerne thought. Her imprisonment had

lasted longer than it need have done, but her lord would never ask the King for the pardon or make his confession, and so the price she had been promised for her plea of guilty had not been paid her until seven years after she had stood her trial, and while she had been in Dr. Mayerne had always been interested about the end of this marriage that had begun in such wild love, for he knew that husband and wife lived entirely separately, never spoke to one another and only saw each other by chance, when the Countess waited at her window to see a glimpse of her husband in the garden, or he caught sight of her at the end of a corridor or passing on the stairs. Her long, grave illness had been some excuse for the isolation in which they lived, but everyone knew their story—they were treated as outcasts. "And if it had been my fate," thought the stout physician, looking down on that sunken face on the pillow, "I should have left the country. I should have gone to France or to Scotland. It is true that Somerset is ruined, and I would have lived in a hut sooner than in this house." He shrugged his shoulders; he had known this story from the

prison she had had no comfort, no fresh air or exercise.

growing scanty on the temples, and a harsh, bitter manner, abrupt and uncouth.

Frances Howard opened her eyes and said:

"I should like to see Robin again, Doctor Mayerne."

"Shall I ask him to attend you?" said Sir Theodore smoothly, well

beginning and there was still much in it that he could not understand. And strangest of all was the enduring love of Frances Howard for her husband, who, in the eyes of Dr. Mayerne, was now without any attractions, stout and florid, with a face that was too ruddy, hair

knowing how hopeless any such request would be.

The dying woman knew it too, she shook her head slightly on the nillows. "It is of no use--we have lived here together thirdeen years."

pillows. "It is of no use--we have lived here together thirteen years and he has never spoken to me. Do you think that God will remember this as part of my punishment?" She smiled to herself. "I

have never considered either Heaven or Hell."

your martyrdom has come to an end."

She began to speak of her daughter, a woman now.

"She has not my beauty--she has a goodness that never was mine," she said and her lips quivered a little. "She does not know my

"Is there anything you wish to say to me, madam? I think, perhaps.

story...pray that she may never know it."

"Not from me, madam, nor, I think, from any other who can feel pity-the Ladv Anne has. I think, a noble character. You know that I have let

her live with me, with my daughter--and we neither of us can find any fault in her."

Frances Howard smiled sweetly. "One wish of mine has been

Frances Howard smiled sweetly. "One wish of mine has been fulfilled--my husband and my daughter have become affectionate one towards the other. At first, you know, he hated the child, calling her even a bastard. But now I think he loves her. Poor as he is, he will

sell this house, his plate, to provide her dowry--did you not say so? But what for me!"

"Madam, you have had a strange and a hard life, perhaps it is good

news I bring you when I tell you I think you have come to the end."
"Shall I go to-night, Doctor Mayerne?"

"To-night, or early in the morning."

"Then stay with me as a last charity."

Sir Theodore promised. He knew the fearful pain that she endured

and his opiate gave her some relief. But to-night her body did not trouble her so much-her mind was very active.

then, putting even that out of her mind, she spoke of the past. Alice and the doctor propped her up with cushions, drew the curtains of the bed and of the window and set the casement wide, and so they waited while the day faded. All night Frances Howard looked out of those windows. There was no moon, but the stars were very brilliant. She could see the hurrying river. She closed her hands and opened them on her coverlet. "You know my story." she said. "and why I did it. It was for Robin." Dr. Mayerne knew it was true, and he was deeply moved. "Is my husband"--she lingered over the words--"in the house or abroad?" "I think, madam, he is abroad--but I can send my boy to look for him." "It would be of no use--he would not come." The fat, tired man sat silent, looking at the river, grey as a pearl, at the willow-trees taking faint shape in the half-light, the swans asleep amid the tall reeds, the low pollarded trees, the river edge of alder. the weeds breaking from the banks into the water; he wondered if he should tell Frances Howard that she had not really poisoned Tom Overbury; but why trouble her now with what was only a distant memory. "I suppose I must have been the worst-hated woman in England--the most unhappily married. Let that all go. Listen to me now, Doctor Mayerne. I never belonged to Robert Devereux--I was not his wife--I

kept myself for Robin. It was for Robin I destroyed Tom Overbury--for no reason but that--everything was for that. I have not repented, for he

"I know," said the physician gently, "I know. Madam, be at ease--all

did love me once and I love him always."

She spoke again of her daughter with relieved thankfulness, and

"I asked my lord if he would come, but he made no answer. He seemed troubled-he has put on his bedgown and gone into the garden."

Alice, who had been out of the room, came in quietly, a shadow

"Lift me up," whispered Frances Howard, "and take me to the window."

They obeyed. She was very light; the cool air, blowing in across her, seemed to revive her; she had sufficient strength to sit up in their

arms and turn her head. They placed her in the window place, supported with great cushions, and raised her feet, wrapping her in the quilt. She strained away from all this, gazing out into the gardens,

dim and misty in the light before the sun.

Frances could see her husband walking slowly in his dark coat, his hands clasped behind him. He did not took up at her window, but turned towards the river; she saw him unfasten a boat and row

turned towards the river; she saw him unfasten a boat and row himself away along the Thames; her eyes followed the boat until it was lost in the half-light. Then the sun came up above the willows and bathed the garden in light, and Frances sighed and lay back in their arms.

"She has gone," whispered Alice, and pursed her lips in a grimace of grief. Dr. Mayerne looked down at the woman whom he held in his arms and said a French prayer wheezingly.

"Lay her out as fairly as you may."

vour doubts will soon be resolved."

among the shadows, for the candles were out.

They carried Frances Howard back to her bed, folded her hands and

"There will be few at her funeral," sighed Sir Theodore. "I wonder what prayer one could make for her..."

He drew the bed-curtains sharply together, so that the rings made a rattle on the pole, then turned away with a sigh and a yawn together, and went heavily out of the desolate, empty house, to where his boy slept in the porch, and, shaking him, told him to go and fetch his coach and horses from the inn where they had put up. He thought:

"If I had been loved like that, if I had been in his place, should I have forgiven her?" And it seemed to him, on that bright morning, that he would have.

FINIS

AUTHOR'S NOTE

drew the sheet over her face.

The facts of the Overbury Case and the historical background used in this novel are to be found in Professor Gardiner's History of England, 1603-1642. Collective editions in 10 vols. 1883-4.

Among the many other works dealing with the subject, one of the most skilful and brilliant is: "The Overbury Mystery" by Sir Edward Parry (His Honour Judge Parry), London 1925.

An interesting reprint of Sir Thomas Overbury's most famous literary work is: The Overburian Characters, edited by W. J. Paylor, London 1937.

None. of the characters in "The King's Favourite" is imaginary, and the story follows history closely, but the author is responsible for the interpretation of both characters and episodes.

MARJORIE BOWEN

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THE END