

**Two Scenes in the Life of
Anne Boleyn**

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TWO SCENES IN THE LIFE OF ANNA BOLEYN.

BY MISS L. E. LANDON.

It was a small gothic room, panelled with dark wood, while the heavy curtains of green tapestry swept the ground. Yet it was not gloomy, for feminine taste gave its own lightness to the various arrangements of the little chamber. A wood fire burned upon the hearth, and two waxen tapers flung their light on a mirror, set in richly chased silver. A casket stood open on the table, and the fair occupant of the arm-chair beside, was employed in turning over its glittering contents. "I have seen them so often that they are not worth looking at. How I should like a massive gold chain, like that the duchess of Norfolk has just had from Italy!" exclaimed the maiden, turning away. "Ah! I may yet have one. If I had staid at court, I feel sure my royal conquest would have been completed; but shut up here, I am losing my chance—some new beauty will soon take my place. *Les absens ont toujours tort.*" While she spoke, her eye fell upon a little ring, quaintly worked in a true-lover's-knot, with the single word "Fidelity" traced in golden characters. The colour came into Anna's face;—that ring had been given to her by Lord Percy, and she started to think how little her heart replied to the vows that had once made it beat with such

sweet quickness on the banks of the Seine. Strange how soon her thoughts wandered from the lonely meeting by moonlight, to the gayer scenes where the young English couple were allowed to be the most graceful in the saraband. Were I a lover, I would not have *la dame de mes pensées* delight in those associations with myself where I contributed to her amusement, or flattered her vanity; I would ask her saddest thoughts—I would have her recall the stars that we had watched, and the flowers that we had gathered. I would fain connect my image with all that makes the poetry of woman's nature. The city and the crowd unidealise love; and love, in the young warm heart of a girl, should be a dream apart from all commoner emotions—as sweet and as ethereal as the blush with which it is born and dies. Beauty gives its own gracefulness to love—there must be romance blended with the passion inspired by the very lovely face which the mirror reflected. The lady was fair,—of that peculiar and rosy fairness which belongs to auburn hair. The cheek seemed almost transparent, so various was the crimson that ebbed and flowed on its rounded surface. Her figure was carelessly wrapped in a loose gown, trimmed with fur; but its grace indicated its symmetry. The hood was put aside, and her long hair, without any restraint, fell on her shoulders. It had that sunny shade which changes in every light;—by day it was a soft warm chestnut, which at night looked like threads of gold. She raised its rich mass in her slender hands, and began twisting it into fantastic braids. Suddenly she let it fall. “What does it matter how I look?—there is no one here to see!” exclaimed she, with a pretty petulance which suited well with her mignon features. “Do not be so sure of that!” said a voice behind her. She started from her seat, as a cavalier advanced;—she at once recognised him, and dropped on her knee to greet her royal visitor.

“Nay,” whispered Henry, softly, “it is I who should kneel, to pray pardon for my bold intrusion.” “Your majesty cannot doubt your welcome,” replied Anna, blushing with the rich flush of gratified vanity. Ah! even a blush does not always wear its true meaning: the king, of course, gave it the meaning the most pleasant to himself. “A lover always doubts—it is not the king, but Henry Tudor, who

‘Hopes the grace which yet he fears to win.’”

“Ah!” replied she, “fear is no word for your grace to use.” “I never knew it before,” replied he. “How grateful, my liege,” cried Anna, smiling, “you ought to be to me—think of the value of a new sensation.” “I can think of nothing but yourself,” was the answer; “but know you not, sweetheart, that it is St. Valentine’s day? Will you be mine, and wear the token that I bring?” Anna made no reply; but her small fingers remained clasped in the king’s, who stood watching the downcast face that had never seemed more lovely. “How did your grace come here?” asked Anna, putting the question for want of something to say. “There is a subterranean passage into the room below;—like a true knight, I passed through darkness, to sun myself in my lady’s eyes. But, tell me, sweet, will you wear my token, and be my true and faithful Valentine?” Again Anna remained silent; but the silence was sufficient assent, and Henry sealed the promise on her lip. He then produced a red velvet casket; from whence he took a carcanet of precious stones, fastened by rubies, in the shape of a true-lover’s-knot, which formed their united ciphers. The maiden’s eyes flashed with pleasure, as she gazed on the splendid offering; but the genius of flattery, which is the element of a court, did not desert her. “They are magnificent,” whispered she; “but I cannot prize them more than I should do a simple flower

coming from you." "I believe it, my beauty!" exclaimed the king; "wait but a little while, and all England shall attest the love I bear to her who will then be its mistress. But I will not go hence without a token in return. Will you give me this little ring?" and he took up the one which Lord Percy had once placed on the hand that now lay passive in another's. "That ring!" exclaimed Anna, vainly struggling with her confusion, "it is not worth your grace's acceptance." Henry's brow darkened, and he examined the ring closely. "Oh! I see," said he, in one of those cold, harsh tones he could sometimes assume, "it is a love token;—I should be sorry to interfere with any tender recollections;"—and he allowed her hand to drop from his own. Anna saw it was dangerous ground; but she had now recovered her self-possession. "The ring," said she, "was my mother's—I would not part with it, but to your grace—my whole heart goes with it;" and taking his hand, she placed the ring upon it. "I take the gift, sweet one!" replied the king,—all trace of displeasure utterly past away; "I shall never look upon it, but to think how truly and tenderly I am beloved. But it is late—good night, my fair Valentine! I shall see you tomorrow." Anna remained, for some minutes, standing where he left her, leaning against the oak table. The wildest dream of her ambition was on the eve of being realised;—her faith was plighted to the king of England—yet it was not of him she thought. A low pleading voice was in her ear, and Lord Percy's dark sad eyes seemed to reproach her falsehood. Mechanically she looked to the place where she had last seen his ring;—it was gone, and in its place lay the glittering carcanet. It was flecked with drops of blood; as she had leant on the table, its bright sharp points had cut her arm. Anna was insensible to the pain; she thought only of the omen!

PART II.

It was again evening ;—and Anna was again seated in a lonely chamber,—but far different to her former apartment in the turret. A few, very few, years had past since then—and her face was still lovely as ever ; but the character of its loveliness was changed. The eyes were restless, and the lashes had the brightness of unshed tears. A hectic colour seemed to burn the cheek on which it rested, and the once full lip was pale and thin. She was leaning back in a cumbrous arm-chair ; and her black dress gave a gloom to her whole appearance, which ill accorded with her slender and airy figure, and a face whose native vivacity neither sorrow nor suffering could quite subdue. It had been but a brief reign for the young and lovely queen, and a short step from the throne to the Tower ; for in the Tower was that gloomy chamber where she was keeping her solitary vigil. A few logs burned dimly on the hearth ; and the red glare of the smoky lamp which swung above, fell on the dreary looking walls. The panels had no carvings, but those which are the work of listless wretchedness seeking a refuge from itself—and seeking in vain ;—all the graven records were of the prisoner and the doomed. Some had cut grotesque faces, which seemed to mock the misery they witnessed—others had contented themselves with initials — while others again had graven short sad sentences, all bearing on the mutability of fortune. The young queen read them not—she was lost in a deep reverie. Her gay and careless girlhood, at the French court, passed vividly before her. Again she triumphed in being the chosen of so accomplished a cavalier as Lord Percy. The Seine seemed to spread far away in the silver moonlight, as bright as her then unbroken spirits.

“I have paid dearly, Percy,” muttered she, “for the vanity that broke faith with love.” Never till in that moment of its utter want, had Anna Boleyn felt the full value of affection. Her fancy conjured up a happy home, where she was cherished—far from the world—but with the dearer world of love within her and around her. She started from her dream, to know that she was a prisoner,—tried, condemned,—on whom even now rested the shadow of the scaffold. “It is not possible,” exclaimed she, starting from her seat, and wringing her hands in a paroxysm of anguish; “he is fierce—he is cruel—but he cannot see that head go down in blood to the dust, which has so often lain upon his own heart! He used to twist my long fair hair round his fingers, and call it beautiful:—he cannot let the coarse hands of the executioner sever the locks that have so often mingled with his own! I bound one round the letter which I sent him this morning.” Again she sank into silence—but, this time, her musing took a sadder tone. “I am innocent to him,” murmured she, “but not so, my God, before thee. Untrue to Percy—false to my royal mistress—how does the sad patience of Katharine of Arragon upbraid me now! Vain, frivolous—I have lived for the pomps and pleasures of this world—and I have now my bitter requital.” The evening passed on; but every moment added to the restlessness of the unfortunate captive. Hope deferred is sickness to the heart—and she was now suffering that sickness, at its worst. She had, that day, written to Henry that touching letter which history has preserved, and every moment she expected an answer. The suspense was dreadful. The least noise sent the colour to her temples, which then receding, left her pale as death. At last the governor of the Tower came, as he did every evening; and the sight of a human face, the sound

of a human step, were a positive relief. "Well, Sir John!" exclaimed she, in the strange mood whose hysterical excitement so often takes the semblance of mirth, "the executioner won't have much trouble with my neck,"—and she spanned with her fingers her slender and snowy throat. The governor was silent;—he lacked the heart to tell her that he was the bearer of her death-warrant. At that moment, a packet was given in for the queen. She snatched it eagerly; but her hand trembled so that she could scarcely break the seal.—A hope so dreadful, so desperate, that it was almost fear, yet lingered with her. She opened the scroll, and out rolled the ring, with the true-lover's-knot, which she had given to her royal suitor. She read the lines, with the calmness of despair;—they were as follow:—

"Henry Tudor returns to Anna Boleyn the ring which Lord Percy gave her."

"My fate is sealed!" said the queen, with a shudder. It *was* sealed indeed—for the next morning saw Anna Boleyn beheaded!

Note. The above sketch was suggested by a visit to Sir Charles Farnaby's beautiful gothic place. It is in excellent preservation; and the romance of the past is only heightened by the refinement of the present. The variogated flower garden of the nineteenth century contrasts the straight turf avenue, with its wall of closely cut yew-trees on each side. It is called Anna Boleyn's walk, as it used to be the promenade of herself and Henry the Eighth. There is also the little gothic tower, with the trap-door covering the subterranean passage through which the royal lover passed.