ſulted by the purpoſe propoſed to them; and in the re­turn they made to Walſingham, they aſſured him, that the queen might command their lives and their proper­ty, but that they would never conſent to part with their honour, and to ſtain themſelves and their poſterity with the guilt of an aſſaſſination. When Davidſon car­ried their diſpatch to her, ſhe broke out into anger. Their ſcrupulous delicacy, ſhe ſaid, was a dainty in­fringement of their oath of aſſociation; and they were nice, preciſe, and perjured traitors, who could give great promiſes in words, and atchieve nothing. She told him, that the buſineſs could be performed without them; and recommended one Wingfield to his notice, who would not heſitate to ſtrike the blow. The aſtoniſhed ſecretary exclaimed with warmth againſt a mode of proceed­ing ſo dangerous and unwarrantable. He proteſted, that if ſhe ſhould take upon herſelf the blame of this deed, it would pollute her with the blackeſt diſhonour; and that, if ſhe ſhould diſavow it, ſhe would overthrow ſor ever the reputation, the eſtates, and the children, of the perſons who ſhould aſſiſt in it. She heard him with pain, and withdrew from him with precipitation.

The warrant, after having been communicated to Walſingham, was carried to the chancellor, who put the great ſeal to it. This formality was hardly con­cluded, when a meſſage from Elizabeth prohibited Davidſon from waiting upon the chancellor till he ſhould receive farther inſtructions. Within an hour af­ter, he received a ſecond meſſage to the ſame purpoſe. He haſtened to court; and Elizabeth aſked eagerly, if he had ſeen the chancellor. He anſwered in the affir­mative; and ſhe exclaimed with bitterneſs againſt his haſte. He ſaid, that he had acted exactly as ſhe had directed him. She continued to expreſs warmly her diſpleaſure; but gave no command to ſtop the opera­tion of the warrant. In a ſtate of uneaſineſs and apprehenſion, he communicated her behaviour to the chancel­lor and the privy-council. Theſe courtiers, however, who were well acquainted with the arts of their miſtreſs, and who knew how to flatter her, paid no attention to him. They perceived, or were ſecretly informed, that ſhe deſired to have a pretence upon which to complain of the ſecretary, and to deny that he had obeyed her inſtructions. They obſerved to him, that by ſubſcribing the warrant, ſhe had performed whatever the law required of her ; and that it was not proper to delay the execution any longer. While they were anxious to pleaſe Elizabeth, they were conſcious of their own cruelty to Mary, and did not imagine they could be in perfect ſecurſty while ſhe lived. They diſpatched the warrant to the earls of Shrewſhury and Kent, with inſtructions to them to fulfil its purpoſe.

When the two earls and their retinue reached Fotheringay-caſtle, they found that Mary was ſick, and repoſing upon her bed. They inſiſted, notwithſtanding, to be introduced to her. Being informed by her ſervants that the meſſage they brought was important and preſſing, ſhe prepared to receive them. They were conducted into her preſence by Sir Amias Paulet and Sir Drue Drury; and with little formality they told her, that Elizabeth had conſented to her death, and that ſhe was to ſuffer the next morning at eight o’clock. Then Beale, one of the clerks of the privy-council, who accompanied them, read over the warrant, which ſhe heard with pious compoſure and unſhaken fortitude.

They then affected to juſtify their miſtreſs by entering into details concerning the conſpiracy of Babington. She put her hand upon the Scriptures, which lay upon a table near her, and ſwore in the molt ſolemn manner, that ſhe never deviſed, conſented to, or purſued the death of Elizabeth in any ſhape whatſoever. The earl of Kent, unwiſely zealous for the Proteſtant religion, excepted againſt her oath, as being made upon a Popiſh Bible. She replied to him mildly, “It is for this ve­ry reaſon, my lord, to be relied upon with the greater ſecurity; for I eſteem the Popiſh verſion of the Scrip­tures to be the moſt authentic.” Indulging his puri­tanical fervour, he declaimed againſt popery, counſelled her to renounce its errors, and recommended to her at­tention Dr Fletcher dean of Peterborough. She heard him with ſome impatience; and diſcovered no anxiety to be converted by this eccleſiaſtic, whom he repreſented as a moſt learned divine. Riling into paſſion, he ex­claimed, that “her life would be the death of their re­ligion, and that her death would be its life.” After informing him that ſhe was unalterably fixed in her re­ligious ſentiments, ſhe deſired that her confeſſor might have the liberty to repair to her. The two earls con­curred in obſerving, that their conſciences did not al­low them to grant this requeſt. She intimated to them the favours for which ſhe had applied by her letter to Elizabeth, and expreſſed a wiſh to know if her ſiſter had attended to them. They anſwered, that theſe were points upon wſhich they had received no inſtructions.

She made inquiries concerning her ſecretaries Naw and Curl; and aſked, whether it had ever been heard of, in the wickedeſt times of the moſt unprincipled nation, that the ſervants of a ſovereign prineeſs had been ſuborned for the purpoſe of deſtroying her. They looked to one another, and were ſilent. Bourgoin her phyſician, who with her other domeſtics was preſent at this interview, feeing the two earls ready to depart, beſought them with an emphatic earneſtneſs to reflect up­on the ſhort and inadequate portion of time that they had allotted to his miſtreſs to prepare herſelf for death. He inſiſted, that a reſpect for her high rank, and the multiplicity and importance of her concerns, required at leaſt a period of ſome days. They pretended, however, not to underſtand the propriety of his petition, and refuſed it.

Upon the departure of the two earls, her domeſtics gave a full vent to their afflictions; and while ſhe experienced a melancholy pleaſure in their tears, lamen­tations, and kindneſs, ſhe endeavoured to conſole them. Their grief, ſhe ſaid, was altogether unavailing, and could neither better her condition nor their own. Her cauſe had every thing about it that was moſt honour­able; and the miſeries from which ſhe was to be re­lieved were the moſt hopeleſs and the moſt afflicting. Inſtead of dejection and ſadneſs, ſhe therefore enjoined them to be contented and happy. That ſhe might have the more leiſure to ſettle her affairs, ſhe ſupped early, and, according to her uſual cuſtom, ſhe eat little. While at table, ſhe remarked to Bourgoin her phyſician, that the force of truth was inſurmountable; for that the earl of Kent, notwithſtanding the pretence of her having conſpired againſt Elizabeth, had plainly inform­ed her, that her death would be the ſecurity of their religion. When ſupper was over, ſhe ordered all her ſervants to appear before her, and treated them with