Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

LUCY FOSTER MADISON

TREDITION CLASSICS

In Doublet and Hose A Story for Girls

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

The Project Gutenberg eBook of In Doublet and Hose: A Story for Girls

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: In Doublet and Hose: A Story for Girls

Author: Lucy Foster Madison

Illustrator: Clyde O. DeLand

Release date: February 9, 2009 [eBook #28037]

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/28037

Credits: Produced by D Alexander, Darleen Dove and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK

IN DOUBLET AND HOSE: A STORY FOR GIRLS ***

Transcriber's Notes:

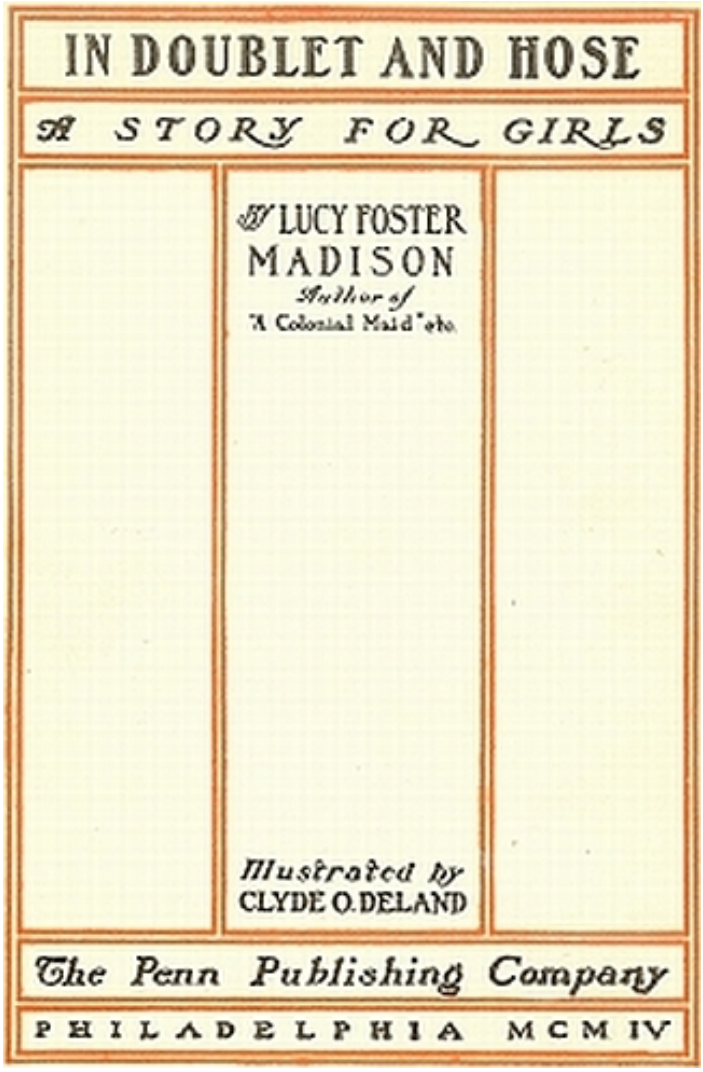
Archaic and variable spelling, as well as punctuation, has been prese
indicated in the text by a dotted line under the change. Hover the m
the original text will appear. A list of these changes can be found he

The following words were found in both hyphenated and unhyphena
text and both forms have been retained: hunting party (hunting-part
also, the obsolete spelling of Shakespeare (Shakspeare) was retained

Illustrations have been moved where necessary so that they are not i
paragraph.

There is one footnote and it has been placed at the end of the chapte



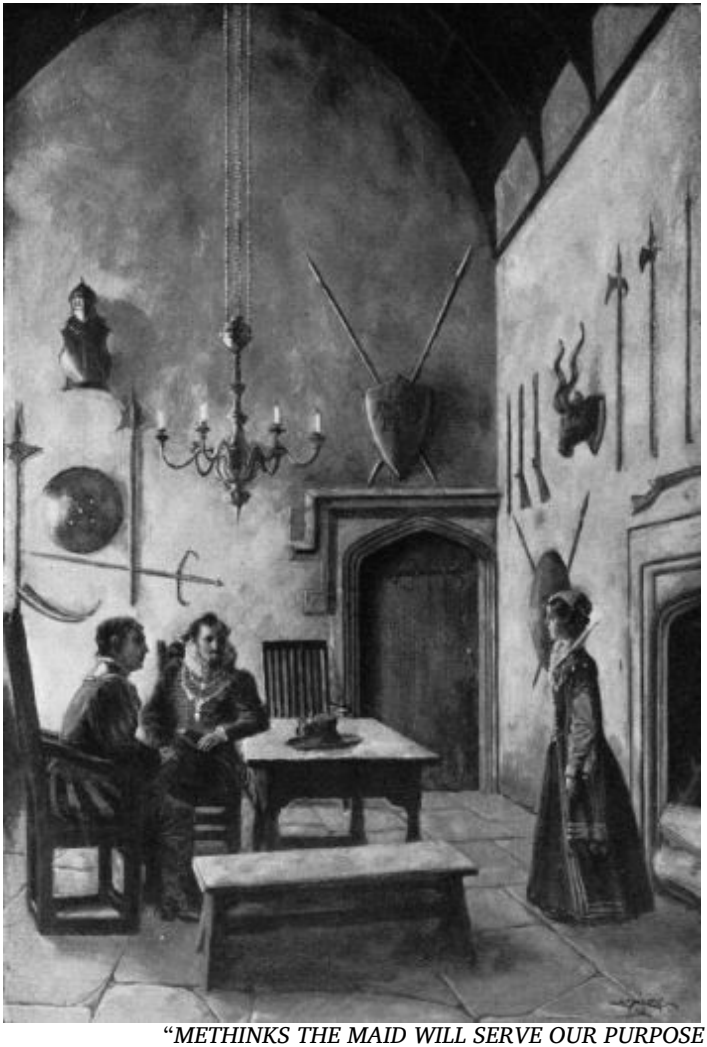


COPYRIGHT 1904 BY THE PENN PUBLISHING

Company

In Doublet and Hose





“METHINKS THE MAID WILL SERVE OUR PURPOSE WELL”

Contents

CHAPTER

I A Question of Skill
II The Soldier Guest
III The Page's Dress
IV Anthony Babington
V On the Road to Stafford
VI A Glimpse of Mary
VII Francis to the Front
VIII The Delivery of the Letters
IX The Coming of Elizabeth
X The Queen Takes Offense
XI At the Queen's Command
XII The Favor of Princes
XIII A Familiar Face and a Challenge
XIV A Strange Duel
XV The Strange Weakness of Francis Stafford
XVI What Came of an Offer of Friendship
XVII What Francis Overheard
XVIII An Adventure 4
XIX A Shelter from the Storm
XX Francis Finds a Helper
XXI An Unlooked for Reception
XXII As It Fell Out
XXIII In the Tower of London
XXIV A Friend in Need
XXV A Great Sorrow Befalls Francis
XXVI A Fellow Prisoner
XXVII The Escape
XXVIII The Three Volunteers
XXIX A Britomarte of the Armada
XXX Pardon And Happiness

Illustrations

"Methinks the Maid will Serve our Purpose Well!"
Queen Mary's Wit Grasped the Situation
Elizabeth Extended her Hand Graciously
The Two were Deep in the Mysteries of Fencing
She Gave a Faint Gasp
"I Will Not Tell, Sir Francis"
"Pull, Pull for Your Life!"

7

IN DOUBLET AND HOSE

CHAPTER I

A QUESTION OF SKILL

It was June, and the peaceful stillness of a summer's day hung over an ancient wood which lay in the heart of the New Forest near the village of Lyndhurst. The wood was a part of a large demesne which had at one time been bordered by hedges of yew and holly, but these, having been untrimmed for years, had grown into great bushes which in many places were choked up by underwood and brambles.

The forest stretched in every direction. Wood after wood rose before the eye, masses of color, the birches hung with softest green, the oak boughs breaking into amber and olive made doubly bright by the dark gloom of the firs. Wide-branched oaks were intermingled with beeches and copsewood of various 8 descriptions so closely in some places as to intercept the sunshine. In others the trees receded from each other, forming wide vistas that gave glimpses of other recesses of sylvan solitude.

Down the long sunlit glades the gold belted bees sounded their humming horns through every flowery town of the weald. Gauze-winged dragon-flies darted hither and thither while butterflies of every hue sailed by on wings of sheeny bronze. In the bracken wild roses rioted in the richest profusion; the foxglove blazed like pillars of fire through the shadowy underwood and the woodbine flaunted its tall head proudly among the leaves. A gentle breeze rustled the fern, and breathed upon the quaking grass, setting its beautiful spikelets in motion until they seemed like fairy bells rung by elfin fingers. The flutter and hum of the wild things served but to intensify the stillness of the wood.

All at once the deep bass notes of a hound broke upon the air. Louder and louder grew the baying, and soon from out of the purplish shade of the trees there dashed a large 9 greyhound followed by a laughing, panting maiden.

“Content thee, Echo,” she cried flinging herself upon the sward under a wide-spreading oak. “I have breath to follow thee no more. Rest until our good cousin joins us.”

The dog obediently stretched himself by her side, and once more quiet reigned in the wold. Presently

the maiden sat up with an impatient movement.

“He tarries long,” she said throwing a mass of auburn curls from a broad, low brow. “Marry! I fear that we have done but an ill turn to the good Hugh.”

As she spoke the form of an elderly man emerged from the trees and approached her slowly. He was withered and thin and though but fifty years of age seemed much older. His doublet and hose were of some dark stuff and his short cloak was surmounted by a huge ruff, the edges of which almost joined the brim of the small, high, cone-shaped hat which partly concealed his gray hair.

“By the mass, Francis! methinks that thou dost grow more unmannerly each day. 10 Thou art as unthinking as the butterfly, else thou wouldst not have burdened my fore-wearied flesh with thy bow.”

“In sooth, it was but a poor return for thy kindness to leave thee my bow,” observed the girl as she hastened to relieve him of the crossbow that he held. “Thy pardon, Master Hugh. I was intent upon the race and thought not of it. It was a good dash, I promise you.”

“Ay! I make no doubt of it,” grumbled the old man seating himself. “But ’twere meeter for a maiden to embroider, or to play the virginals than to shoot the bow or run with the hounds as thou dost.”

“Said I not my Latin well this morning, cousin?” queried Francis. “Doth not my lady mother instruct me in the tent and cross-stitch each day? Besides doth not even the Queen’s Majesty disport herself with the bow? ’Tis the fashion, good my master.”

“Ay! ‘Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt,’”[A] spoke the old man sharply.

"Be not angry, cousin, I did but ill in running from thee." 11

"Marry! let it pass, but I mislike such sturdiness, Francis. Thou hast led me a sorry chase and we are far from the Hall. If I mistake not, we are even now in Sanborne Park and that, thou knowest, is trespass."

"Nay, cousin; not unless we kill some of the red deer with which it abounds, and that we have not done—yet," spoke the maiden demurely.

"The thought of such a thing should not be entertained by the daughter of Lord William Stafford. Thou durst not think it, Francis."

"Durst not?" laughed Francis teasingly. "Should one stray in our path I will show thee what I durst."

"Boast not, girl. It bespeaks ill for thy breeding. Thou art too prone to vaunt thy skill in shooting. Not so was that flower of womanhood, the Lady Jane Grey. Once," and the tutor spoke warmly for this was a favorite theme, "once it was my good hap to pass some time at Broadgate, her father's seat in Leicestershire, and never have I seen her like for love of learning. Greek, Latin, French and Italian spoke she as well as her 12 own tongue. Some knowledge had she also of Hebrew, Chaldee and Arabic. She loved not such idle sport as the chase. Would that thou wert like her."

"Out upon thee for so evil a wish," chided Francis, but there was a merry twinkle in her eye that softened the harshness of her tone. "Wouldst have me beheaded? Yet it may be that I am such a dullard that thou dost wish that I should meet with a like fate."

"Nay, child! Thou knowest better." The face of the old man softened involuntarily as he gazed into the laughing countenance of the girl before him.

Her head was crowned by a mass of red gold hair which, guiltless of crisping or curling pins, fell in ringlets over her shoulders; her complexion was of creamy fairness; her features regular, her eyes dark and luminous; her whole expression full of winsomeness; but there was a sparkle in the dark eyes now so full of mischief, and a set to the rich red lips that spoke volumes for the spirit of Mistress Francis Stafford.

"I would only that thy desire for learning was like to that of the Lady Jane's," went on 13 the tutor. "Yet I do not dislike thy courage, and thou art a good wench, surely."

"Hark!" cried Francis springing to her feet. "I hear the hounds. Look ware, Echo! Look ware! Ware, ware!"

The greyhound, answering with short sharp yelps, rushed forward frantically, and then stood at gaze as a tall red deer bounded from the covert into the open glade. The noble animal's strength was almost spent. His mouth was embossed with foam and large round tears were dropping from his eyes. With a motion that was at once despairing and majestic he turned to face his pursuers as a pack of hounds dashed from the trees and surrounded him, making the air hideous with their clamor.

Instantly the maiden fitted a shaft to her bow and let fly a bolt as the tutor uttered a shrill cry of remonstrance:

"Stay thy hand, girl! Knowest thou not the danger?"

Before the wounded animal could turn to charge this new assailant an answering twang sounded from among the trees and a second arrow, sent with unerring precision, imbedded 14 itself in the deer's body. As the stag fell, a lad of some sixteen years, clad in the dress of a forester, ran hastily forward and reached the animal at the same moment that Francis did.

"Behold, cousin," cried the girl triumphantly, "I have slain the deer. Could thy Lady Jane Grey have done so well, thinkest thou?"

"Nay, fair maid," and the boy turned quickly, "'twas mine own bolt that did the deed. Behold for thyself that thy shaft struck too far to the left."

"'Tis false," cried Francis angrily. "'Twas mine arrow that slew him. This one is mine, and thou seest that it alone hath entered the vital part. 'Tis thine that is too far to the left."

"Nay; not mine, but thine," retorted the lad. "What? Would I, who lack but little of man's estate be excelled by a girl? See for thyself, mistress. The two are not an inch apart. The point is only which did the deed. On mine honor, I tell thee, that it was mine own arrow. Thou seest that it hath penetrated deeper than thine."

"I see naught of the kind," answered 15 Francis with passion. "It was mine that did it."

"Good master," said the boy appealing to the tutor, "didst mark that the stag fell not until he received my shot?"

"Ay! I noted it, lad, and 'tis a point well taken," quoth Master Hugh. "But a truce to thy quibbling. Here are the huntsmen."

The noise of the horns had been growing louder and louder as the hunting party drew near, but the boy and girl were so absorbed in their controversy that they had not heeded it.

“Fair maiden, there is a penalty,” began the lad, but one of the hunters called out:

“Beshrew me! if the quarry be not slain! What varlet hath done this?”

As Francis started forward the lad spoke,

“I, good my master. Give me thy knife, I pray thee, that I may make the essay.”

“What, ho, boy? Thou? Then instead of breaking the stag, thou shalt break the jail. Knowest thou not that it is trespass to kill deer upon the land of another?”

“He did it not,” cried Francis. “’Twas I. What is the penalty? My father, Lord William 16 Stafford, will requite the loss; but permit me, I pray, to take trophy of my skill.”

“Thou?” The foresters who had surrounded the youth looked with amusement at the girl, and then broke into loud guffaws.

“Heed her not, masters. Could a maiden do such a thing? She knows not of what she speaks.”

“Nay; give heed to me, I beseech you,” cried Francis, but the lad interrupted her.

“Permit it to be as I have said, mistress. If there be penalty, ’twere meeter for me to suffer it than for thee. Withdraw, I beseech you.”

“The boy is right,” said Hugh Greville. “It is no place for thee, Francis. I will speak to thy father concerning the matter. Meantime we can serve no good purpose here. Come!”

“No, no,” cried the girl trying vainly to make the foresters attend her. “’Twas I who killed the deer. It was not this lad.”

But the verderers paying no further attention to her words busied themselves about the cutting up of the deer. With a burst of angry tears Francis reluctantly permitted the tutor to lead her away.

[A]

While fools avoid one error they fall into the opposite one.

17

CHAPTER II

THE SOLDIER GUEST

Passing out of the park, Francis and her tutor came into the forest proper. One vast sea of woods rolled, a flood of green, over hill and valley onward and ever on till lost among the moors. Presently they ascended Stoney Cross Hill and there opened out one long view. On the northeast rose the hills of Winchester but the city was hidden in their valley. To the east lay Southampton by the waterside; and to the north, gleamed the green Wiltshire downs lit up by the sunlight.

Among the beeches but a short distance away lay Castle Malwood with its single trench and Forest lodge, where tradition says that William Rufus feasted before his death, and down in the valley was the spot where he is said to have fallen. The road now became a long avenue of trees—beeches with their smooth trunks, oaks growing in groups, with here and there long lawns stretching far away 18 into distant woods. All at once the manor burst upon the view.

Situated in the midst of a noble park which crowned the summit of one of the hills that fringed the borders of the weald, Stafford Hall, in this year of grace 1586, the twenty-eighth of Elizabeth, was graceful and stately in the extreme. The general design of the castle was a parallelogram defended by a round tower at each of the angles with an Anglo-Saxon keep. The entrance through a vaulted passageway was its most striking feature. Of the time of the first Edward, there were signs of decay in tower and still more ancient keep. Crevices bare of mortar gave rare holding ground for moss and wall flower, and ivy and clematis mantled chapel and turrets with a dank shroud that added to the picturesqueness of the building.

The park, full of ferny depths, glorious old oaks and deep glades, stretched away on one side toward the soft recesses of the forest. On the other its wooded declivities sloped down to an idle brook now stopped up by water-lilies and white crowfoot. The fair corn lands sloping to the southeast so as to 19 miss no gleam of morning or noonday sun; the fat meadows where the herbage hid the hocks of the browsing kine, and the hanging woods holding so many oaks and beeches ripe for the felling, formed an appanage

that was almost royal.

The views of the castle, the winding declivity of hill, the trees, the fields, the exquisite landscape in the distance made an assemblage of nature's beauties that was at once inspiring and noble.

But Francis Stafford was too angry to heed either beauty of scene or sky, and she hurried toward the Hall with so quick a step that the tutor could scarcely keep pace with her.

"I cry you mercy, Francis," he panted querulously as the girl paused reluctantly in answer to his pleading. "Age hath stolen my vigor and I cannot walk as thou canst. Already thou hast made me plod many a weary step beyond my strength; and now thou wouldst have me run as though I were a lad. Thou art too unheeding."

"A truce to thy chiding, cousin," rebuked the girl sharply. "I marvel that thou dost appeal to my compassion. Thou knowest my 20 skill with the bow, and thou didst see the deer fall under my shaft; yet thou didst say with the boy that 'twas he who did the deed. Catiff! How dared he claim the stag? And 'twas a hart royal!"

"Yet had he not done so thou wouldst have had to suffer fine and imprisonment. Dost know the law? It says——"

"I care not what it says," declared Francis haughtily. "If I offend against the law then 'twere meet that I should bear the penalty. My father shall right the matter."

Master Greville knowing full well the futility of contradicting his charge when she was in such a wilful mood said no more, but meekly followed her

as she started once more on her way. Through the great doors, which were of weathered oak thickly studded with nails, over which hung the family coat of arms, a shield, azure, three quatrefoils, argent, the girl and the old man passed across the paved courtyard, up a flight of steps to the terrace which led to the porch and from thence to the ante-hall passage.

Serving men clothed in blue with the family arms upon the left sleeve, and retainers clothed 21 also in blue but without the heraldic device thronged courtyard, terrace and hall. Francis hastened through the ante-hall passage to the great hall which lay beyond. The floors were freshly strewn with rushes, the walls were hung with rich tapestries representing stories from the classics. The upper end contained an oriel window under which was a fringed dais. On one side of the apartment was a huge fireplace over which the ancestral arms hung with the arms of England over them. On the other side towered lofty windows. A screen gallery, an organ and a high table completed the hall which was the principal room of the castle and the place where all of the feasts, mummeries and masques were held.

Ushers were hurrying through the great hall for it was “covering time,” and the household was mustering for the midday meal. Francis threaded her way through the crowd of yeomen to the door of the presence chamber, and drawing aside the arras that hid the entrance, opened it and entered.

“My father,” she began abruptly, and then paused for she saw that her father was not alone. 22

“Is it you, my daughter?” Lord Stafford rose to meet her. The resemblance between them was very striking. “I had just asked for you. This is my child,

Fortescue. She of whom we were speaking. Give greeting, Francis, to my good friend Captain Fortescue."

Francis gave a quick glance at her father's guest. He was a man of commanding stature, with black hair and keen black eyes that held a cruel light in them. He was arrayed in a blue velvet jerkin with hose of the same material. A large beaver hat with a long feather in it lay on the table. A rapier depending from his belt completed his attire which was that of a soldier. Without heeding this fact something in his bearing caused the girl to address him as a priest.

"I give thee welcome, good father."

"Said I not that the wench was shrewd?" asked Lord Stafford with a hearty laugh.

"Ay, my lord; and 'twas well said," returned the guest. "My child, do you not see that I am attired as a soldier?"

"I crave forbearance," faltered Francis in some confusion. "I did not notice thy dress, 23 but judged from thy manner. Nathless, priest or soldier, I give thee greeting. Prithee heed not mine error."

"'Twas naught," smiled Captain Fortescue. "It is to my praise that thou didst accost me as an holy man. My lord, methinks the maid will serve our purpose well."

"I trow so," answered Lord Stafford with a proud look. "She hath spirit and courage to a rare degree in a maid. I know no lad of her age that can equal her in hunting or hawking. No tercelet for her, but the fiercest goshawk that e'er seized quarry. How now, Francis?"

"My father, I knew that thou wouldst believe my

skill," said Francis eagerly. "Yet a lad did but now contend that he it was who shot a deer in the forest," and she related the incident graphically.

"Beshrew me, I doubt not but that thine was the arrow that slew the buck, yet it contents me well that the lad should endure the penalty of the deed in thy stead. How now, Greville?" to the tutor. "Was the youth of noble birth?"

"Methought there seemed something of the 24 gentle in him, though he was but meanly garbed. Yet the apparel doth not always make the man," answered Greville.

"Not always," acquiesced Lord Stafford.

"He was not noble," interjected Francis shortly. "Else he would not have claimed the deer. I would, good my father, that you compass his release, and let me take the consequences of my action. I killed the deer."

"Be that as it may, child, the lad must bear the penalty. There are matters of grave import that must now be considered, and thou canst aid me."

"I aid thee?" asked the girl in surprise. "Father, didst thou say my aid?"

"Thine, child. Come to me anon, and I will acquaint thee with the full import of the matter. Greville, thou standest like a hind. Give greeting to our guest. One would think that thou hadst never been at court."

"I give thee welcome, sir," said Greville bowing. "As my lord's friend, I welcome thee."

"Methinks thy countenance is not unfamiliar, Master Greville," and the soldier returned his obeisance courteously. 25

“In London mayhap thou hast seen me. It was mine abode for a time,” replied the tutor carelessly.

“Perchance ’twas there,” mused the other with a searching look at the old man. “But howsoe’er that may be, later will I pledge to our better friendship.”

“I drink with no enemy of the queen,” said Greville coldly.

“Greville!” exclaimed Lord Stafford.

“We differ not, Master Greville,” smiled the soldier. “My life, my service, my all is devoted to our queen. God bless Her Majesty!”

“God bless Her Majesty, Elizabeth,” returned Greville pointedly.

“Thy mother waits thee, Francis, in her tiring-room,” interposed Lord Stafford hastily. “Come to me anon. Greville, no more of this an thou lovest me.”

The tutor without another word withdrew from the room accompanied by his pupil.

“Was it not strange, cousin, that I should have thought our guest a priest?” queried Francis when they were beyond the portals of the door. 26

“Nay; the habit doth not always proclaim the monk,” quoth Greville sententiously. “You spoke truer than you knew when you called him ‘father.’”

“Is he in sooth then a priest?” asked the girl curiously. “Why comes he then in such array? Are not priests always welcome in my father’s house?”

“Is it not within thy ken that an edict hath been passed making it treason for priests to be found within the kingdom, and felony to harbor them? And, forsooth, there is much reason for such a law. So many have been the plots against the Queen’s

Majesty that much precaution must be taken to preserve her from them."

"Would evil befall my father should it come to the ears of the queen that he had given a priest entertainment?"

"I make no doubt of it, child. Therefore it behooves us to be silent respecting the matter. But, by my life, girl! we dally too long. Away! and set a guard upon thy lips. If thou canst carry so weighty a matter sub silentio then will I deem thee better than the most of thy sex."

27

CHAPTER III

THE PAGE'S DRESS

The bower chamber of the Lady Penelope Stafford was both large and lofty yet there was nothing there of ponderous grandeur. The walls were covered with soft arras embroidered in bright coloring skilfully blended. The rich furniture was designed for ease and comfort rather than pomp and parade. The chamber was lighted by a large window with broad casements between the mullions, and with flowing tracery above of arch and quatrefoil.

On a low couch sat Lady Stafford swinging gently to and fro a delicate gold handled fan of flamingo

feathers which ever and anon she laid aside to direct Francis who sat on a low stool at her feet plying some embroidery work.

"So, my daughter," said the lady indicating a cross-stitch. "Take heed to thy work else thou wilt not excel with the needle. 28 Marry, I marvel that thou dost accomplish anything with such unskilful fingers. Knowest thou not that the Queen's Majesty did fashion a shirt of cambric for her brother when she was but six years old? I trow that that is more than thou couldst do now; and thou art more than double that age."

"I crave thy forbearance, my sweet mother," pleaded Francis. "My fancy dwells not upon my task, but the rather do I wonder in what manner I may be of service to my father. Dost thou know, my mother?"

"I could make a shrewd hazard as to its nature, Francis. Content thee, child. Thou wilt soon know all." A look of anxiety crossed the lady's face as she spoke, which the girl was quick to note.

"Thou art troubled, my mother. Prithee tell me the cause."

"Nay, girl. Thy father will open up the matter to thy ears when he deems it best. Until then neither thou nor I may speak of it. 'Tis a woman's lot to obey, and never to question the decree of either father or husband."

"But why?" asked the maiden. "Have 29 we not minds with which to reason? Can we not think as well as men? Wherefore then should we yield blind unreasoning obedience when mind and soul are as noble as theirs? Methinks that women's judgments are as wise as men's."

"Child, child," exclaimed the lady startled by the girl's vehemence. "Thou hast too much of thy sire in thee for a girl. I fear such spirit. Study lowliness, for a woman should be meek. Stifle whatever of questioning may come into thy heart, and render implicit obedience to thy father."

"That I will do, mother. Have I not ever reverenced him? 'Tis pleasure to obey his will. The more because I have so much of him in me. 'Twas he who taught me how to string a bow, and 'twas he who guided my maiden hand and eye until had I a brother he could not excel in hunting or hawking."

"I know, my daughter, yet my heart misgives me because of these very things. Hadst thou been a boy all this would not come amiss. But thou art a girl, and full of the weaknesses of women despite thy skill in men's sports. Nature, howsoe'er disguised, 30 will soon or late assert herself. Thou art a woman, therefore again I say, steep thy soul in humility. I fear that haughtiness in thee which thy father doth abet. Methinks it bodes but ill both to thee and to him. But this give ear to: in all things be submissive to thy father. Heedst thou, Francis?"

"Yes, my mother."

"I have thus spoken because dire forebodings have seized me of late. Thy proud spirit ill brooks authority, and thou wilt soon be of an age when if thy will should clash with thy father's, I trow not the consequences. Therefore have I counseled thee. But of this no more."

For a time the two sat in silence, and then Francis broke the quiet:

"My mother, there is something that I would fain ask."

“Say on, my child.”

“When I speak of it to Master Greville he calls me disloyal, but I mean it not so. ’Tis only that I would know. My mother, why doth Elizabeth reign as queen if our rightful queen is Mary of Scotland? Dost thou believe her to be the true heiress to the crown?” 31

“Yes, child; as what true adherent of the faith doth not? Yet hath Elizabeth been a good queen save and except that she hath made severe laws against the exercise of our religion. But England hath truly prospered under her.”

“But there be some that would willingly raise Mary to the throne, are there not?”

“’Tis treason to say so, but there be some in very truth. ’Tis because the queen fears them that she hath kept Mary so long a prisoner.”

“How long hath it been, mother?”

“Near nineteen years. It is a long, long time. She was full of youth and beauty when she set foot upon English soil, but now she hath grown old before her time with disease and confinement. Truly the queen hath dealt harshly with her own kin.”

“Master Greville saith that she is a cruel bad woman, and that if she could compass the death of our queen she would do so.”

“Greville speaks of that of which he knows naught,” said Lady Stafford sharply. “He hath let the gossip of the court fill him to repletion. It hath been said that Mary was a 32 wicked woman, yet I believe it not. That she desireth her liberty is no crime, but rather the longing of all nature to be free. Mary is the daughter and the granddaughter of a king. Sometime

queen of France, and crowned queen of Scotland. She is cousin german to Elizabeth, and if common natures cannot brook confinement what wonder is it that she sighs for freedom? This desire hath caused her to attempt escape often by the aid of friends, and given rise to the belief that many would raise her to the throne."

"Is Elizabeth beautiful, mother? Greville says that she is the most lovely woman in the world. That none can compare with her for beauty, or for learning."

Lady Stafford laughed and then checked herself.

"Child," she said, "it is my prayer that thou wilt grow here in thine own home as a wild flower without sight of queen or court. But if it should chance, which God forfend, that thou art called to the court, then remember what thy tutor hath told thee, and count the queen the most beautiful of women."

"But is she?" 33

"The queen is learned, child, beyond what is usual for her sex. Greville will tell thee that there never was her like for knowledge, save and except the Lady Jane Grey, the which would be treason to speak. I mind well when Elizabeth was crowned that she was fair to look upon, but that was twenty-eight years ago. The queen is now past fifty years of age. Doth a flower retain its loveliness forever? I trow not. Yet methinks I do but ill in speaking thus to thee. Elizabeth believes that time for her hath stopped, and that age but enhances those charms which are the pride of women. Yet I have heard otherwise."

"You go not to court, my mother. Why?"

"Because of its troubles and its dangers, Francis. Better to bide afar off in this remote spot than to dwell among the jealousies of courtiers. The favor of princes is uncertain, and even royalty is not always well disposed toward the happiness of a subject. I would fain never behold the court again, and I pray that thou mayst never be called to its treacherous pleasures."

"Art thou here, my child?" asked Lord 34 Stafford coming in at this moment. "This is a favorable time, I ween, for me to unfold my wishes to thee. Madam, will you bring the page's dress?"

Lady Stafford arose and drew from a chest of drawers the doublet, hose and short cloak of a page.

"Withdraw, Francis, to the tiring room, and don these habiliments," commanded her father.

"But why," began the girl, but Lord Stafford waved his hand impatiently.

"Do as I tell thee, girl. When thou art habited, return and hear the reason for thy strange attire."

Presently with a merry laugh Francis bounded into the room, and, doffing the jaunty bonnet that perched upon her tresses, swept him a deep bow.

"Am I not a fair boy, my lord?" she cried gaily. "Do I not grace the garb?"

"By my halidom, thou dost in very truth," exclaimed her father laughing. "But thy tresses? Should they not be clipped?"

"Nay, good my lord," spoke Lady Stafford entreatingly. "Command not that, I pray 35 thee. Thou shalt see how cunningly my hand can knot them up with silken strings. It will not be amiss in a

lad."

"Leave them then, if thou wilt be the better contented," said the father. "And now, child, if thou wilt but bring thy nimble wit into the part, thou shalt please me well. How say thee? Wilt thou bear me company upon a grave mission? Will thy courage fail, or canst thou, as if thou wert in very truth my son, aid me to compass that to which I am pledged? How now, girl? Hast courage for such an undertaking?"

"My father, what mean you?" asked Francis in bewilderment.

"Take heed to my words. There is on foot a movement to release from her vile durance Mary, Queen of Scots. Too long hath she lain imprisoned. I am to carry to her letters of import that inform her of the design. But Mary is so immured, that heretofore it hath been impossible to gain access to her. A lad would serve the purpose, but there be none known to me of like courage and wit as thyself. Girl, canst thou wear that garb and bear thyself as a man?" 36

"Ay, my lord; and to do more if needful," spoke Francis boldly.

"There spoke myself in you," said her father approvingly. "Then hearken! at the first sign of the dawn we set forth, thou and I, for Chartley. How now, sweet chuck?" as a sob escaped the mother. "Fear naught. Thy birdling will return to thee the better for having stretched her wings beyond the nest."

"I fear, my lord, for you both," said the lady brokenly. "You know how all these attempts have ended, and Elizabeth hath no mercy for the perpetrators of them."

"Now, now, be of good cheer. There is naught of harm meant to the queen. 'Tis only to give Mary freedom. Think only of thy daughter. Not many mothers in England can boast of such a girl."

"Would that I had given thee a daughter of gentler spirit," sobbed the lady. "Oh, my lord, pardon my utterance. I fear, I fear——"

"There! we will return safely and thou wilt forget thy misgivings in the success of our enterprise. But now to bed, to bed. The first gray of the morning must find us on our way. To bed, my child."

37

CHAPTER IV

ANTHONY BABINGTON

It was that darkest hour of the night, the one just before the dawn, that Francis was summoned to attend her father. None of the household was stirring save Brooks, an old servitor, who stood at the foot of the steps with the horses. The statues of terrace and court gleamed ghostly white in the darkness, and the grim old keep frowned darkly upon them. The deserted aspect of the courtyard filled the girl with dismay. High purposes and noble resolves flourish in the bright light of day and grow into mightiness in the first hours of the night, but the early dawn chills

enthusiasm and makes the inspirations of the night before seem poor and weak and hardly worth an effort.

Something of this feeling oppressed Francis Stafford. She missed the shouting of the gallants, the screaming of the hawks, the 38 yelping of the dogs and the blowing of horns that was the accompaniment of a hunting-party. Instead of such a triumphal departure there was only the low sobbing of Lady Stafford as she bade them farewell.

“My lord, you will have great care for you both, will you not?” she murmured, trying to control her emotion. “Oh, I like not the journey! I like it not!”

“Be not dismayed,” comforted her husband. “We will return soon, and there is no danger. We will be with thee again ere thou hast had time to miss us.”

The lady said no more but embraced them mournfully. Both father and child were silent as they swept out of the courtyard into the park beyond. Presently the sky began to soften in the east, and the gray uncertain light gave place to the blushing dawn. Soon the dark shadows that lurked under the trees fled before the golden beams of the sun. Suddenly the note of a lark rang out silvery and joyous. Bird after bird took up the note until from every tree and shrub there swelled a grand chorus as larks and throstles poured forth their matin song of praise. 39

“How beautiful!” cried Francis, her eyes sparkling, her spirits rising. “My father, right glad am I to be here with thee.”

“Thine is a wild spirit, Francis,” said her father rousing himself. “You mind me of these birds, so wild and free yet sweet withal. Child, mayhap I have done ill in taking thee thus from thy mother. And

yet, we are not in the queen's favor! Should misfortune overtake one it would involve all."

"Father, if by act of mine I can further thy purpose, make use of me, I pray. Glad am I that thou dost deem me worthy of thy confidence. And do we not go to the aid of Mary, our rightful queen? What excuse need we for so doing? Oh, if I can once behold her, can but once kiss her hand, then would I be willing to lose even my life if 'twere needful."

Lord Stafford smiled at her enthusiasm.

"Has the infection seized upon thee too, child? In like manner so do I feel, and so do hundreds of others. Strange what an influence Mary Stuart wields over human hearts! God forfend that thy life should be required, Francis, though many have been lost in her 40 cause. But I would not that thine should be numbered among them. Marry, it saddens me to think on't. No more of this!"

"What name shall you call me by, my father, since I am your page?" asked Francis presently.

"Thine own. 'Tis a name that thou dost wear because it was my father's, and will serve. But bear thyself in accordance with it and none will deem thee other than thou seemest. And I—I must teach my tongue to say boy instead of child. We have a long ride before us, and I fear that thy strength will fail ere we reach its end."

"Fear not, good my father. Thou knowest how used to fatigue I am in hunting and hawking."

"I know thy strength, else I should have feared to risk thee for so long a jaunt. And thou hast never been so far from home before."

"No; I went with thee once to Lymington where I

saw The Solent, and in the distance the Isle of Wight. But never have I been even across Southampton water."

"True; I had forgot. Then thou wilt be entertained greatly, for we go through Wilts, 41 Gloucester and Worcester before we reach Stafford."

And so conversing on through the woods they passed until at length they came to Bramshaw, a little village standing partly in Hampshire and partly in Wiltshire and forming the forest boundary. Before them swelled the rounded forms of the Wiltshire downs, and from their midst towered the spire of Salisbury with the mound of old Sarum looming darkly behind.

"I prithee tell me, father," said Francis, "what is that which I see in yon distance? Methinks it looks like the tower of a church."

"Its looks belie it not, Francis. It is the spire of the cathedral of Saint Mary, than which there is none higher in England. In the valley lies Salisbury where we will stop for rest and refreshment. Yon conical mound is Old Sarum which hath been a fortress from the earliest times. The fosse and rampart belong to the Roman period. In the vast plain which lies beneath it the Conqueror reviewed his victorious armies, and there also did the English landholders swear fealty to him." 42

Francis looked with the delight of one who goes abroad for the first time. At the beautiful cathedral, then at the old fort, and lastly at the town itself which lay in the valley at the confluence of four rivers: the upper Avon, the Wiley, the Bourne and the Nadder. In the centre of the city was a large handsome square for the market-place from which

the streets branched off at right angles. The streams flowed uncovered through the streets which added greatly to the picturesqueness of the place.

Lord Stafford turned into one of the side streets, and drew rein before a small inn, The Mermaid by name. As he rode into the courtyard the host hurried forward to greet him.

“Good my lord,” he said obsequiously, “light, and grace my poor house, I pray you. There be one here who hath waited since yester e’en to see you.”

“Beshrew me, sayst thou so!” ejaculated Lord Stafford. “I thought not to meet with any here. But oft must a man’s pleasuring be staid for by affairs of business. Is it not true, good Giles?”

“Marry, ’tis only too true,” replied the host. 43

“Where is he that would speak with me, Giles?”

“In the east parlor, my lord. I crave forbearance, sir, for placing any in the room which is reserved for your use, but I knew not that you were about to fare this way.”

“Trouble not thyself concerning the matter, good Giles,” returned his lordship. “Come, Francis.”

Tossing his cloak to Francis he strode toward the entrance of the tavern. The girl threw the garment over her arm, started to follow him, and then paused in sheerest confusion at finding the eyes of the myrmidons of the inn upon her.

Donning male attire in her own home had been mere sport, but with the curious eyes of strangers upon her the girl felt painfully embarrassed.

“Look to thyself, boy,” came in sharp tones from her father, and there was a note of warning in the faint

emphasis that he placed upon the word boy.

Thus adjured Francis collected her wits, and, looking neither to the right nor to the left, she followed after her father with all the 44 boldness which she could assume. Lord Stafford wended his way to the east parlor of the inn with the air of being perfectly familiar with the place, giving his orders to the rotund host as he went.

"'Tis but a short time that we will trouble thee, Giles," he said. "Serve us with dinner, I pray you. We will rest for a time, and then speed onward. Anthony," he ejaculated as the host threw open the door of the chamber, "it is thou?"

"'Tis even I, my lord," answered a tall young man coming forward. "I had news that you were coming this way and hurried hither to greet you."

"Right glad am I to see thee, Babington," was Stafford's rejoinder. "I have much to say to thee. Hast dined?"

"No, my lord."

"Then let us eat, and afterward there will be leisure for converse. Be in haste with thy meal, Giles."

The host hastened from the room while Francis slipped quietly into the nearest chair, and looked with interest at the young man. She had heard of Anthony Babington. His 45 attachment to Mary of Scotland was well known, and his devotion invested him with a romantic glamour now that she too had espoused the same cause. The young man was speaking in low, rapid tones to her father:

"I tell you, my lord, that the attempt will not be successful. No invasion or insurrection can occur during Elizabeth's life, for any open endeavor in

Mary's favor will cause Sir Amyas Paulet to slay her. He hath sworn it."

"Then, Anthony, it may be unwise to try to release Mary from her prison. She hath suffered much of late from illness. It was my hope that if we were successful, to place her where she might obtain the comforts of which she hath been bereft, and so placed she would regain her health."

"The matter hath gone too far to end in her mere release," cried Babington earnestly. "Elizabeth must die."

"Babington, thou art mad!" exclaimed Lord Stafford starting up in horror.

"Mad? Nay; I have just begun to see that I have been called to rid England of that most unjust queen who transcends the 46 laws of blood by keeping her own kin imprisoned as she hath done. And I am not alone, Stafford. There are others who believe as I do. Wilt thou join us?"

"Never," cried Lord Stafford sternly. "May my right hand drop from its shoulder ere it be raised against England's queen. Unjust to Mary she hath been. Unjust in her treatment of her, and unjust in usurping the throne. But still she is her father's daughter, and crowned queen of England. If it be so that the release of Mary can be compassed, and Elizabeth forced to recognize her as her successor, I will join the effort even as I have already pledged to do. But no more."

"Hast thou not seen Ballard?" asked the young man in surprise.

"Yes; he tarried with me at mine own house as Captain Fortescue. How now?"

"He said that thou wert ripe for the project," mused the other.

"Not to assassinate Elizabeth," returned Lord Stafford firmly. "I go to Chartley now to acquaint Mary with the plan for her release. But I tell thee, Anthony, if what 47 thou tellest me be true, then will I withdraw from the enterprise."

"My lord, I did but try thee. Some there be who advocate the slaying of Elizabeth, but they are few. I beseech you, as you have given your pledge, aid us in acquainting Mary with the plan for her rescue. No more than this do we ask, and thou art depended on for this much."

"As mine honor hath been given, I will continue to Chartley," said Lord Stafford.

"Then, my lord, wilt thou bear this letter also from me," and Babington handed him a small missive. "It hath given her some uneasiness at not hearing from me, and I would ease her mind."

"Yes, Anthony; the letter shall be given her with these others." Lord Stafford concealed it in his belt. "Methinks that thou art in a bad way, my lad."

"More anon," said Babington. "Our host comes. Thy dinner is served, my lord."

48

CHAPTER V

ON THE ROAD TO STAFFORD

Francis was so absorbed in the thoughts engendered by the conversation that she had just heard that she forgot all about her character as page and her duties as such. She was recalled to herself by a sharp reprimand from her father:

“Thy duty, Francis. Attend to the serving.”

Babington turned a startled glance upon her as she arose in obedience to her father’s command.

“The page?” he cried. “Did he hear our converse, my lord?”

“Yes; but fear not, Anthony. I would stake mine honor upon his silence. Thou canst be trusted, Francis?”

With heightened color, for the blood mounted to her cheeks at the intent gaze of the young man, the girl answered earnestly:

“Yes, my lord. Naught of what I have 49 heard shall pass my lips. Not even the rack should wring it from me.”

“Protest not too much, boy,” rebuked Babington. “Older and wiser men than thou have succumbed to its tortures.”

“You speak words of wisdom, Anthony,” remarked Lord Stafford. “Let us hope that the boy will not be tried by so grievous an instrument. Yet I do believe that he will be discreet.”

“He seems a proper lad,” returned the other. “A little backward, forsooth, but with none of the malapertness of some pages.”

Francis, now completely at ease as she saw that the

young man believed her to be what she appeared, flashed an arch look at her father. Lord Stafford smiled slightly, but his countenance soon became overcast with gravity. The meal over, the host withdrew, and the elder man turned once more to the younger one.

"Anthony," he said, "I must on my way, but let me plead with thee that if thou dost entertain a thought of such rash emprises as thy words suggest, to forego them. Naught but disaster could follow upon such projects." 50

"My lord, say no more an thou lovest me," replied Babington. "Mary's sufferings cry aloud for vengeance. Sleeping or waking her wrongs are before me. My lord, she is a prisoner; made to submit to privations that even the basest criminals do not undergo. Couldst thou have seen her at Tutbury or Wingfield as I have done, you would wonder no longer that deeds of blood suggest themselves."

"Anthony, thou art mad," exclaimed Lord Stafford compassionately.

"Mad! nay; but Mary Stuart hath languished too long in her chains. I would dare anything to release her from them."

"And so would we all who love and reverence her as the true heiress of England's crown, Anthony. Yet I fear that thou dost meditate wrong to Elizabeth, but surely thou wouldst not raise thy hand against a woman?"

"Ay, my lord! Against a woman, or what not for Mary's sake."

"But Mary would not approve such measure."

"No; therefore do we only contemplate her 51

rescue. The softness of her heart doth prevent other aims."

"Anthony," said Lord Stafford preparing to renew his journey, "I see that thou art ripe for some foolhardy enterprise. I misdoubt thy loyalty to Elizabeth, and fear that thou wilt soon engage in mischief. Had I not pledged mine honor to take these letters to Mary I would have naught to do with the matter. Thou hast raised grave doubts as to the nature of this undertaking. I fear for thee, for myself and family, and most of all do I fear for Mary Stuart. Thou knowest how eagerly Walsingham watches for an excuse to compass her death. Remember that, Anthony, and by the love you bear to her, forego the thoughts that charge thy brain."

"Fear naught, my lord. Thy doubts carry thee farther than the issue warrants," said Babington lightly.

"I bid you farewell, Anthony, but my heart is heavy with foreboding," and Lord Stafford embraced him. "Would that I had known all this ere mine honor had become involved."

"Be of good cheer. You lay too much 52 stress upon the matter," and the young man returned his embrace. "Farewell."

"Fare you well." Lord Stafford proceeded to the courtyard followed by Francis. When the girl would have ridden behind him, he motioned her silently to come beside him. Wonderingly she obeyed, for not thus were pages wont to travel with their lords.

"My child," said Lord Stafford when they had left the tavern behind and were on the old Roman road to Bath, "I have done ill in embarking upon this emprise, and more than ill in engaging thee in it also. There are dark days before us, Francis."

"My father," and leaning from her horse the girl kissed him. "No matter what befall thou hast deemed me worthy to share thy danger, and I will not repine. But I like not to think that they wish to kill the queen."

"Think not on that, Francis," said her father hastily. "On that matter my heart is heavy, though I trow such attempt will not be made. Anthony but raves. Such thoughts are not for thy young heart. Dismiss them, I entreat thee."

"Let us rather think only that we are to 53 carry the tidings to Mary that an effort will be made to release her. Surely it is right to seek to relieve her suffering," said the girl sweetly.

"It is in very truth, my child. Thou and I are not concerned in aught but in bearing good news; therefore will I cheer up, sweet chuck, though I am greatly troubled."

And by an effort he put aside the dire forebodings that filled his soul, and tried to enter into the enjoyment of his daughter who, with the elasticity of youth, had turned to the more cheerful scenes around them.

Frequently he called her attention to some historic spot, or pointed out the beauties of the sylvan landscape. And thus, sometimes in sweet converse in which Francis learned to know her father better than she had ever known him; at others, in long lapses of silence the more eloquent that there was no conversation, and in stopping for rest and refreshment at taverns did the days pass without further incident. Yet though nothing of import transpired, the journey was not without interest to Francis.

Bath, on the right bank of the river Avon, 54 presented a great variety of beautiful landscape; the old city of Gloucester, city of churches and beloved of kings; Tewkesbury, site of the battle between Lancastrians and Yorkists which placed the crown upon the head of Edward the Fourth; Worcester, with its glorious cathedral, filled her with delight. The beauty of the diversified scenery, consisting of hill, vale, forest and river, the numerous remains of Druid, British, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Norman to which her father called her attention; all these things contributed to her pleasure, and served to banish everything from her mind save the happiness of the moment.

"And now, Francis," said Lord Stafford on the evening of the fourth day, "yonder lies Stafford, and we are near the end of our travel. Behold, on yon mount, called 'Castle Hill,' the place where stood a noble castle built by William the Conqueror. He conferred it upon Robert de Torri who took the name de Stafford from whom, as thou dost well ken, our family hath sprung. Art thou weary, girl?"

"Yes, father, but the journey hath nevertheless 55 been full of delight," returned Francis brightly though her drooping body spoke of the fatigue by which she was almost overcome. "Yet right glad am I that we are come to Stafford. And on the morrow it may be that I shall see Queen Mary."

"Mayhap, child. But now put from thee all thought save that of rest. Let the morrow bring what it will, this night shall be devoted to quiet and repose."

Putting spurs to his horse the tired animal renewed his speed, and they were soon within the gates of the city.

56

CHAPTER VI

A GLIMPSE OF MARY

Francis' wish of beholding the Queen of Scots was gratified in a most unexpected manner.

"Do you remain here, my child," said Lord Stafford the next morning. "I would behold for myself if what I have heard of Mary's keeper, Sir Amyas Paulet, be true. If he be not so strict as report hath it, access to Mary may be easy. I would rather, if it be possible, that the matter be dispatched without employ of thee."

"But thou wouldst still let me see Mary, father?"

"By my troth, I would. Thou hast well merited it. But now farewell for a season. When I return we can tell better how to conclude this business."

"My father, what shall I do until thy return? Could I not go forth to the place 57 where stood the castle of our ancestors? I would fain examine it."

Lord Stafford hesitated for a moment before replying, and then said thoughtfully:

"Thou mayst, if thou wilt. I know that I need not tell thee to remember that though thou dost wear a man's habit thou art still in truth a maid, and to demean thyself in accordance therewith. But still as

thou dost wear the habit, more of liberty may be given thee than otherwise thou couldst enjoy. Yes; go to Castle Hill, an thou wishest, but say to none what and for why we tarry in the town."

"I am thy daughter, sir," said Francis proudly. "Thou dost deem me worthy to abet thy enterprises. I will so bear myself that thou couldst ask no more of me than if I were thy son."

"No more," said Lord Stafford smilingly. "Thou leavest me with no regret that thou art not my son. A son could do no more."

He kissed her and left the chamber. Francis followed after him to the courtyard of the inn where she stood watching him until he was lost to view. Then drawing her 58 cloak about her she left the yard, and walked slowly toward the eminence upon which the great castle formerly stood.

The ruins were interesting and served to entertain the girl for some time, but at length becoming weary, it occurred to her to set forth to meet her father.

"It seems long since he started," she mused. "It cannot be a great while ere he returns. Therefore to beguile my loneliness I will go to meet him."

Passing through the gates of the town she struck boldly into the open plain through which the road ran to Chartley. On and on she walked, the road turning and winding until at length it forked; one branch going to the left, the other to the right. Francis paused in bewilderment.

"Which shall I take?" she asked herself looking first at one and then at the other. "My faith, but either stretches forth invitingly. I have it! I will cast my dagger, and traverse that one toward which it

points."

So saying she unsheathed a small poniard from her belt and drew herself up to cast the weapon, when the clatter of horses' hoofs 59 broke upon her ear. She looked up startled. From behind a bend in the road to the right there came at full gallop a party consisting of several men and a lady. Francis was so amazed at their sudden appearance that she still retained her position, the dagger poised ready for the throw. With a cry of horror the lady spurred her horse to her side.

"Boy," she cried, "what art thou about to do? Stay thy hand, I command. Knowest thou not that self-destruction is forbid?"

Francis gave vent to a merry peal of laughter as the lady's meaning flashed upon her.

"Be not dismayed, fair lady," she said doffing her bonnet and making a deep courtesy. "I was not planning self-destruction. Life holds too much of promise to end it now. I was but wondering which of these two roads led to Chartley, and thought to follow the one toward which a throw of the dagger would point."

The lady joined in the laugh, and then became grave.

"To Chartley?" she said. "And what wouldst thou at Chartley?"

It was on the tip of the girl's tongue to reply, 60 "I go to meet my father," but she caught herself in time. None must know of his journey there, and even though she who asked were beautiful and gracious she must be discreet.

"I wished to see Queen Mary," she answered after a moment's hesitation.

"To see Mary?" broke in one of the men who had drawn near during the above colloquy. "And may I ask, young sir, what business thou hast with Mary?"

"Why, why," stammered Francis abashed by his harsh address and rude bearing. "I have no business. I only wished to see the queen."

"Queen forsooth! Of what is she queen?" asked the other brusquely. "Of nothing, I trow. Not even is she mistress of her own actions. Queen forsooth!"

"Thou speakest truly, Paulet," said the lady mildly. "Yet methinks it not becoming in thee to taunt Mary Stuart with the miserable state to which she hath been reduced. Boy, thou didst wish to see Mary. I am she."

"Mary? Art thou in truth Queen Mary?" Francis exclaimed rapturously, and seeing the 61 assenting smile on the lady's face she darted to her side and seizing her hand she kissed it fervently. "Oh," she cried, "if thou art Mary, know that mistress of thy actions thou mayst not be, but thou dost reign in truth a queen over this poor heart."

The dark eyes of Mary Stuart filled with tears and she pressed the girl's hand tenderly.

"Such homage is sweet to the poor captive, my lad. It gladdens our heart to know that there are some who still hold Mary in reverence. Take this and wear in remembrance of her who is grateful for even the homage of a page."

She drew from her neck a chain of gold to which was attached a locket which she threw over the girl's head. With an exclamation of delight Francis pressed it to her lips passionately.

"It shall never leave me while life lasts," she

declared. “But may I not wait upon you at your castle, Your Highness? I would be of service to you.”

Her eyes sought the lady’s with a meaning look that Mary was quick to catch.

“Nay;” broke in Sir Amyas Paulet for 62 the gruff old puritan was very rigid with his illustrious captive. “Thou hast had thy wish, boy, and obtained what was doubtless thy object: a chain for a kiss, a locket for an obeisance. It pays to give court to reduced royalty. Away with thee, and let me not see thy face at Chartley, else thou shalt meet a gruff reception.”

“Then farewell.” Francis drew as close to the lady’s side as she could. “There are letters,” she whispered.

“Away!” Sir Amyas laid a hand upon the bridle of Mary’s horse and turned the animal from the girl. “I will have no whisperings. Away, boy!”

“Be not overcome, my pretty lad,” and Mary drew rein despite the protests of her uncivil guardian. “We thank thee for thy homage, and hope to see thee again when we journey forth. Farewell.”

“Farewell,” returned Francis sinking upon one knee and saluting her. “I will see you again, Your Grace.”

With an impatient exclamation Sir Amyas Paulet gave a sharp blow to Mary’s horse, which reared and plunged at the treatment, 63 almost unseating the lady, able horsewoman though she was. The animal then dashed away followed by the grim old puritan and the remainder of the party who had halted at some little distance from them.

As soon as they were out of sight Francis took the locket in her hand.

“And I have seen Mary,” she said with gladness.

"How it will surprise my father. How beautiful is the locket, and how full of graciousness and sweetness she is! Service in her behalf must be a joy."

She turned and retraced her steps toward Stafford unmindful of the fact that she had started to meet her father.

It had been morning when Lord Stafford had left his daughter; the sun was declining in the west when, discouraged and low in spirit, he returned to the tavern!

"It is even worse than report hath it," he said as he entered the apartment where Francis awaited him. "Chartley is as much a prison for Mary as the tower itself would be. When I sought admission to its gates I was refused and threatened, forsooth. The manor is surrounded by a moat and is well 64 defended. The walls can be scaled only by birds. Methinks that there is cause for Babington's wild frenzy."

"Father," spoke Francis demurely, though there was exultation in her tones, "I saw Mary."

"My child, what do you say?" ejaculated Lord Stafford in surprise. "How couldst thou? You were not at Chartley."

"Nathless I saw the queen," and Francis laughed gleefully. "See what she graciously gave me."

Her father took the chain and locket in his hands and examined them closely.

"It doth indeed come from Mary," he said looking at the name, Marie R, engraved upon it. "Thou hast accomplished wonders, Francis. Tell me how the matter fell out?"

Francis related all that had happened. Lord Stafford

listened intently.

“Sir Amyas is an austere jailer,” he observed. “He thinketh to do his duty more acceptably to Elizabeth by treating Mary with rigor. Mary is quick of wit, and I doubt not that this will put her on the alert. Child, I 65 must trust to thy wit to help me in this. Canst thou compass it?”

“I am sure so,” answered Francis with the confidence of youth. “To-morrow I will again repair to the forked roads, and mayhap she will be there.”

“Mayhap,” said her father, “but I misdoubt it. Paulet may be suspicious of thee, but ’twill do no harm to be there. We will try to get the letters to her, but if we do not succeed then must Ballard, or Captain Fortescue as he calls himself, find some other means of communicating with her.”

“We will succeed. Never fear,” said Francis with conviction.

66

CHAPTER VII

FRANCIS TO THE FRONT

The next morning Francis was early at the crossroads but although she waited for several hours neither Mary nor any of her party appeared.

"It is as I thought it would be," said Lord Stafford, "but we must not be discouraged. You must go to the same place for several days. I feel sure that if Mary can compass it she will fare that way again. It is our only hope of opening up communication with her."

Three more days passed without result, but on the morning of the fourth day a cavalcade appeared. Francis was delighted to see Mary in their midst. Not as before on a horse but in a coach. As she stood with uncovered head the party swept by her without stopping. The queen bowed and smiled, but when the girl would have darted to the side of the coach she was prevented by the gentlemen of the guard who closed around it. 67

"Oh," cried the girl, tears of disappointment streaming from her eyes, "what shall I do? What can I do?" But the equipage swept on bearing Mary from her sight and Francis gave way to her grief unrestrainedly.

"And I thought to have done so much," she murmured when she had become calm. "Ah! my father did well to say that Sir Amyas was an austere man. Little doth it comfort Mary to be a queen when there is such an one to control her actions. Well, I must to the inn."

She turned to go back to the town when her eye was caught by a filmy bit of linen which was caught in a bush by the wayside.

"'Twas hers," cried Francis catching it up eagerly. "How foolish to repine when I should have known that there would be some sign."

Examining the dainty bit of cloth carefully she found it covered over with a lot of characters whose meaning she could not fathom.

"I must take it to my father," she said concealing the linen in her bosom. "Mayhap he can decipher it." And she hastened to return 68 to the tavern joyful at having obtained at least a token.

"It is written in cipher," remarked Lord Stafford, examining the bit of cloth attentively. "It is my good fortune to have the key to some of the ciphers which she uses. It may be that it is the one that will unravel the meaning of this for us."

Francis awaited the result with impatience while her father applied himself to the task of deciphering the characters. Presently he looked up triumphantly.

"I have it, child. Mary is in truth on the alert. She knows that we have messages for her. Listen! she says: 'I find no security in writing by carrier; the best recipe for secret writing is alum dissolved in a little clear water twenty-four hours before it is required to write with. In order to read it the paper must be wetted in a basin of water and then held to the fire; the secret writing then appears white and may easily be read until the paper gets dry. You may write in this manner on white taffeta or white linen, especially lawn; and as a token when anything is written on a piece of taffeta or linen a little snip can be cut 69 off from one of the corners. Friend, if so be that you have letters, transcribe their message in the above manner. As to the manner of their delivery I know not. I will this way as often as the disposition of my jailer will permit. Adieu, my friend—though I know not thy name, yet thy features are engraved upon the heart of your queen,

'MARIE, ROYNE.'"

"There!" Lord Stafford smoothed the piece of cloth complacently. "The thing that troubles is how to give

her the papers and letters. 'Tis my belief that they would be as easy to deliver as to transcribe their contents upon cloth to give her. She must be made aware of the plan for her rescue."

"What is the plan, father?"

"To overwhelm her escort while she is taking the air, child. Babington is to come with one hundred men and carry Mary off. Her escort seldom consists of more than eighteen or twenty men, and we think she might be easily taken from them."

"But would not other of Sir Amyas's men follow after and retake her?"

"We hope to place her in a secure spot ere 70 they could do so, Francis. Once across the border Elizabeth would have no power over her, and her son, unfilial though he hath shown himself, could not for very shame refuse her safe asylum. Then she might, if she would so choose, retire to France where she could dwell in peace."

"She must have those letters, my father."

"Yes, Francis; but how? My mind plays me false when I would discover a way. It is not active. We must think, think, Francis."

Francis arose and walked to the window where she stood abstractedly looking through the lattice which overhung a large yard, surrounded by the stables of the hostelry. Some yeomen were dressing their own or their masters' horses, whistling, singing and laughing. Suddenly she bent forward eagerly.

"My father," she cried, "prithee come here!"

"What is it, Francis?" asked Lord Stafford joining her.

"Dost see the boy on the cart that has just entered

the yard?"

"Yes." 71

"What is he, think you?"

"My child, he is a carter. What doth make thee so full of interest in him?"

"Might it not be that as a carter he would go to Chartley sometimes?"

"Gramercy! I see thy meaning. How full of wit thou art!"

Francis smiled, much gratified.

"If it can be compassed would it not be excellent to enter Chartley as a carter? The thing is to get within the gates. Then the delivery of the letters would be easy."

"'Tis excellently thought of, child, but there are guards within as well. 'Twould still require adroitness to accomplish the rest."

"Trust me! If I can get within, the rest shall follow," said she with great determination. "I will enter into talk with that carter and see what can be done with him. My father, do I bear myself in a manner befitting my garb?"

"Thou art a very model of pagehood, Francis. Go, my child. Heavy as the burden of this emprise is it seems to have shifted its weight to thy shoulders. Find if the lad 72 goes to Chartley, and if so, the way may be opened for us to enter therein. Divers means must be employed to accomplish our aims."

The girl left the chamber and, assuming the careless frowardness of a page, sauntered into the yard.

"Good-morrow, my lad," she said, stopping by the

side of the boy who was busily engaged in removing sacks, baskets and other receptacles from the cart.

“Good-morrow, young sir,” returned the wight civilly. “It hath been some days since I saw your worshipful sir. Methought that you had gone away.”

“Nay; I tarry here still for there is good cheer to be found at the Red Hand,” quoth Francis with a bold swagger. “How busy thou art.”

“Yes; the likes o’ us have to be. What with loading the cart, delivering, and unloading again, and caring for the nag I find the time full.”

“And where doth it all go, lad?”

“To Chartley, sir.”

“Chartley? Is not that where Mary of 73 Scotland is confined?” asked Francis, trying to speak indifferently.

“The very place.”

“Didst ever see her, boy?”

“Why, yes, my young master. Many a time and oft since she hath been at Chartley. She takes the air in the early morning in the gardens and I have seen her there when I drove in with my cart.”

“I would that I might see her. Could I—could I go with you?”

The youth stared for a moment and then answered soberly:

“It is forbid to us to carry aught besides our wares within the gates. And Sir Amyas is that particular that I misdoubt if he would let you enter.”

“Still I would like to try. ’Tis only for a sight of the queen. And see! here is a gold piece that thou canst

have. Do let me go with thee, Will. Thy name is Will?"

"That is my name, sir." Will's hand closed over the gold but he still appeared reluctant. "Well, it shall be as you wish, my young master. But you must wear other garb than that, else you cannot enter." 74

"What habit shall I wear, good Will?"

"I will give thee my cloak and bonnet, master. I durst not do this if thou shouldst want else but to look at the queen. But what harm is there in that?"

"What in truth, Will? A cat may look at a king, I trow. When do you go again?"

"To-morrow. Wouldst go then?"

"Ay, Will."

"Then, my master, you must be up with the lark for we start early."

"I will be ready. Then farewell until then. Thou wilt not regret thy favor to me, Will, I promise thee."

"I hope not, master."

"Thou wilt not. Farewell till the morrow."

And Francis ran lightly back to her father to report the result of the interview.

75

CHAPTER VIII

THE DELIVERY OF THE LETTERS

Will was disposed to be taciturn on the way to Chartley. Francis did not know whether he suspected her design was more than to see Mary or not, but summoning all the finesse of which she was mistress she made herself as agreeable as she could, relating stories and incidents of the chase, until long before the plain which lay between Stafford and Chartley was crossed, Will's surliness had vanished.

The sun was an hour high when they reached their destination. Chartley, grim and gray in the morning light, rose before them. The manor was large and roomy, surrounded by such a high wall that none, unless he were endowed with the wings of a bird, could scale its heights. A moat encompassed the whole. The castle with wall and moat forming a stronghold well suited to its present use as prison. 76

As they crossed the drawbridge and entered the portals Francis was surprised to see sentinels everywhere. Her spirit sank a little and her heart quailed as she noted all of the means employed to insure Mary's safe-keeping.

"My father was right," she thought. "To obtain entrance is not all. There will still be difficulty, I fear, in seeing her. What if she comes not to the garden? But courage! Poor lady! I marvel not that she doth wish to gain her liberty. Methinks I should die were I to be deprived of my freedom!" Thus she mused little dreaming that not many weeks would elapse ere she would be put to the test.

"There are the gardens," said Will breaking in upon her thoughts. "'Tis there that I have often seen the queen. See, the guard is leaving."

“Don’t they guard her through the day, Will?”

“Ay, master. But the sentinels stand not at the doors and windows as they do at night. The walls only are guarded through the day. There she is, forsooth.”

“I see her not, good Will.”



QUEEN MARY'S WIT GRASPED THE SITUATION

"In the main garden, master. To the right."

Francis looked in the direction indicated and soon descried the form of a woman seated in a large rolling chair which was wheeled by an attendant. Along the walks of the garden they went pausing ever and anon to pluck some flower or the cherries which were ripening in the sun. For a moment only

Francis gazed and then, before Will had time to say her nay, she leaped off from the wagon and bounded swiftly in the direction of the garden.

"Uds!" growled Will his mouth agape with astonishment. "Methought there was more to 't than appeared," and he went on to the kitchens.

Meantime Francis, trampling over flowers and vegetables in her haste, reached the side of Mary, and thrust into her hand the package of letters. Mary's quick wit grasped the situation instantly. Concealing the papers about her she drew back from the seeming carter, crying in a loud voice for she saw one of the guards approaching:

"Well, what meaneth this? Forgive me," 78 she whispered hurriedly, "if I seem angry. 'Tis but for thine own safety." So saying she drew back still further from the kneeling girl exclaiming as the guard came up, "I know thee not, boy. Why dost thou trouble me?"

"I wished to see thee," murmured Francis rising. "Forgive me. I wished——"

"There!" said Mary. "'Tis no matter. Barbara," to her companion, "hast thou the purse? Give the lad a groat. Marry! thou art all alike. Ye wish bounty whether ye deserve it or not. Go, and trouble me no more."

She turned as she spoke and without another glance at the girl passed back to the house. Francis stood looking at the coin for a moment undecided what to do for she saw that Will's cart was nowhere in sight.

"Get thee gone," said the guard coming toward her menacingly. He had overheard Mary's remarks and noted her demeanor, and thought that the carter lad

before him was really seeking to profit by Mary's well-known generosity. "Go, fellow! or I will take thee to my master. And if thou troublest the lady again, I will run thee through with my rapier. Go!" 79

Without a word in reply, glad to have the matter end so, Francis followed him meekly as he led her to the kitchen doors where Will and other carters were busy unloading their wagons.

"With which of you came this fellow?" demanded the guard.

"With me, master," spoke Will sullenly.

"See that he accompanies thee no more. 'Tis a mischievous wight and like to get into trouble. Quick with thy load. I wish to see thy cart safely beyond the gates."

"Will," said Francis when they were once more outside the gates, "art angry with me?"

"Ay! 'twere an ill turn that thou did serve me," growled Will. "'Twere an ill turn, master."

"Forgive me, and you shall have this groat that the queen gave me," and Francis handed him the coin. "My lord, I know, will give me more to give thee."

"Well, mayhap it be all right," said Will somewhat mollified, "but you go no more, young master."

"No, Will; I will not ask it of thee. I 80 have both seen and spoken with the lady. What more need I?"

"No more, I'll be bound, master," growled Will. "There was more in't than seeing and speaking, I'll warrant. But I ken none of it. Here we are at Stafford, master."

"I thank you, Will, for your courtesy," said Francis

sweetly as she left him.

Lord Stafford was awaiting her return anxiously. He folded her close to his breast as she entered his chamber, saying earnestly:

“Thank Heaven, my daughter, that thou hast returned safely to me. Not for all the queens in the world would I have thee adventure such a thing again.”

“Why, ’twas naught,” laughed the girl. “Mary hath the letters now. ’Twas not hard to give them after all.” She recounted the whole affair.

“Well hast thou done, my child. There will need to be further communication with Mary, but not from us. We have done our part. No more of plots or conspiracies will I have, and never again will I subject thee to such danger. Now we will wend homeward to allay the anxiety of thy mother. Whenever 81 I have need of a quick wit and a nimble brain I will call on thee.”

“Glad am I to have pleased thee,” returned Francis. “There is naught that I would not undertake for thee, my father.”

“I believe it, Francis.”

The next morning early they set forth on the return journey. Lord Stafford seemed to have thrown aside the weight of misgiving that had oppressed him on his way thither, and was full of the gayest spirits. With laughter and story did he beguile the way, and once as he jestingly spoke of her attire, he said laughingly,

“Listen, Francis, and I will tell thee of another such an one. Hast thou ever heard how the serving man became a queen?”

"The serving man a queen?" cried the girl. "Why how could that be, father?"

"Listen, and you shall hear." In a rich full voice he trolled the following ballad:

THE FAMOUS FLOWER OF SERVING MEN

"You beauteous ladyes, great and small,
I write unto you one and all,
Whereby that you may understand
What I have suffered in the land.
82

"I was by birth a lady faire,
An ancient baron's only heire,
And when my goode old father died
Then I became a young knight's bride.

"And then my love built me a bower,
Bedecked with many a fragrant flower;
A braver bower you ne'er did see
Than my true love did build for me.

"And there I lived a lady gay
Till fortune wrought my love's decay;
For there came foes so fierce a band,
That soon they overran the land.

"They came upon us in the night,
And rent my bower and slew my knight;

And trembling hid in man's array,
I scarce with life escaped away.

"Yet though my heart was full of care,
Heaven would not suffer me to despair;
Wherefore in haste I changed my name
From fair Elise to Sweet Williame.

"And then withal I cut my hair,
Resolv'd my man's attire to wear;
And in my beaver, hose and band,
I travel'd far through many a land.
83

"At length all wearied with my toil,
I sate me down to rest awhile;
My heart it was so filled with woe,
That down my cheeks the tears did flow.

"It chanced the king of that same place,
With all his lords a hunting was,
And seeing me weep, upon the same
Askt who I was, and whence I came.

"Then to His Grace I did reply,
'I am a poor and friendless boy,
Though nobly born, now forc'd to be
A serving man of low degree.'

"'Stand up, fair youth,' the king reply'd,
For thee a service I'll provide;
But tell me first what thou canst do
Thou shall be fitted thereunto.

"'Chuse, gentle youth,' said he, 'thy place,'
Then I reply'd, 'If it please Your Grace,
To show such favor unto me,
Your chamberlain I fain would be.'

"Now mark what fortune did provide;
The king he would a hunting ride
With all his lords and noble train,
Sweet Williame must at home remain.
84

"And meeting with a ladye's vest,
Within the same myself I drest;
With silken robes and jewels rare,
I deckt me as a lady faire.

"And taking up a lute straitway,
Upon the same I strove to play;
And sweetly to the same did sing,
As made both hall and chamber ring:

"'My father was as brave a lord,

As ever Europe might afford;
My mother was a lady bright:
My husband was a valiant knight.

"'But now, alas! my husband's dead,
And all my friends are from me fled,
My former days are past and gone,
And I am now a serving man.'

"The king who had a hunting gone,
Grew weary of his sport anon,
And leaving all his gallant train,
Turn'd on the sudden home again.

"And when he reached his statlye tower,
Hearing one sing within his bower,
He stopt to listen and to see
Who sang there so melodiouslie.
85

"A crimson dye my face orespred,
I blush'd for shame and hung my head,
To find my sex and story known,
When as I thought I was alone.

"'Faire ladye, pardon me,' says he,
'Thy virtue shall rewarded be.
And since it is so fairly tryde,

Thou shall become my royal bride.’

“Then strait to end his loving strife
He took Sweet Williame for his wife.
The like before was never seen,
A serving man become a queen.”

Francis laughed merrily when he finished.

“Poor Williame! but it ended well after all. Well, my days for man’s attire will soon be o’er.”

“’Tis to be hoped so,” answered her father. “Though the dress well becomes thee.”

At length, though they had returned by easier stages than they had performed the journey to Stafford, Lyndhurst was reached, and soon the turrets of Stafford Hall became visible.

“Home again, my child,” spoke Lord Stafford cheerily. “Right glad am I to enter 86 its gates once more. How is it with thee, Francis? Thou hast fared widely. Dost still revere thy home?”

“More than ever, my father. Never have I seen it look so beautiful. Even the stones seem to smile a welcome.”

“Marry, there stands my lady wife! Look, she sees us.”

With a cry of joy the lady ran to greet them.

“Ye are safe,” she cried embracing them. “Ah, but it hath been long, long since ye left. Methought something had befallen you.”

“No; my sweet wife. Weary we may be with the journey, and ready for the good cheer which we

know awaits us, but well otherwise. How now, sweet chuck? Thou art pale, and even though thou hast us safe with thee, yet doth thy lip still quiver, and thy form tremble. What is it? Speak, madam, I beseech thee."

"My lord, I wot not what to think of it, but to-day a messenger came from the queen saying that Elizabeth in her royal progress through Hampshire would honor us with a visit." 87

"Elizabeth here?" cried Lord Stafford in astonishment. "Art sure?"

"Sure, my lord. What doth it portend? Is there hidden menace in the fact? Doth she suspect, think you, that Ballard hath been here? My lord, what can it mean?"

"Madam, I know not. We are her subjects. If Her Majesty chooses to visit us we can but receive her. But look not so pale. 'Tis but a matter of a few days' entertainment, and surely we would do ill to be churlish of them. It is not the first time that royalty hath honored Stafford. Right well do I remember that Henry, Elizabeth's bluff old father, favored us with a visit. With his own hand he brought down many a fat buck in yon forest park. Right well pleased was my father with that visit."

"True, my lord; but he had favor with Henry, and had naught to fear."

"And what is there to fear from his daughter? We must bestir ourselves to give the queen most royal welcome. Here she will not find the 'princely pleasures of Kenilworth,' but nathless! hearty welcome and good cheer are much even to a queen. 88 How now, girl! Thou dost not look displeased?"

"Neither am I, good my father," spoke Francis quickly. With the natural instinct of youth she delighted at the prospect of the pleasures in store. "Glad will I be to see the queen even though she be old and not so beautiful as Mary."

"Beshrew me, girl! let no such words pass thy lips," cried her father in consternation. "'Twere treason, forsooth."

"Have no fear. I will speak naught of that order to any save thee and my lady mother. Discreet am I and full of matter, but nothing will I disclose."

"Thou hast need to be discreet," replied her mother. "Be not malapert and froward, child."

"Said the messenger when she was coming?" now asked the nobleman.

"On the third day from this, my lord."

"'Tis but short notice for what must be done," mused Lord Stafford. "Supplies must be obtained for the queen's retinue, and pageants prepared to amuse her. Call Greville, my wife. Bid him hasten to the presence 89 chamber. Francis, repair to thy chamber and rest. Thou dost merit it. It will be thy part, madam, to attend to the ordering of the royal apartments. As for me there will be much to employ me during the next few days. Pray Heaven, that Ballard come not during the festivities."

90

CHAPTER IX

THE COMING OF ELIZABETH

The days that followed were full of bustle and activity. The officers of the household scoured the country far and near to secure provisions and delicacies sufficient for the queen and her retinue. Game, droves of bullocks, sheep, hogs and great hampers of groceries filled the larders to overflowing. Near and remote neighbors and kinsmen embraced the opportunity to send contributions. No man knew when his own time might come and sympathized accordingly. The queen was not tolerant of any but a royal reception, and a visit, while an honor, was not always an unmixed blessing; as many an impoverished nobleman could testify.

Hugh Greville, the tutor, was overjoyed at her coming, and, as master of the pageants preparing for the amusement of the queen, assumed a pompous importance greatly at variance with his usual manner. 91

“We must have a play, my lord,” he said to Lord Stafford who was for the moment idle. “Her Majesty doth take delight in a play. This to be preceded by an address in Latin. Latin, my lord, because the queen is learned, and deference should be paid to her knowledge. The welcome to be spoken by a boy.”

"Have what thou wilt, Greville, so that it will please the queen," returned the nobleman. "I had word from my Lord of Leicester this morning that his mummers accompanied Elizabeth in her progress. They will give the play with more of satisfaction, I trow, than any of the strolling players who have come hither. The address of welcome could be managed, but what boy couldst thou get to deliver it? Boys there be in plenty, but boys with Latinity ——" and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Had your lordship only a son," sighed Greville regretfully, "it would be right fitting for him to give the speech. I myself would write it. 'Twould only need to be conned well. Ah, would that thou hadst a son!"

"Gramercy!" spoke Francis overhearing 92 the tutor's speech. "Hath he not a daughter? I will give thy harangue, Master Greville."

"Nay;" and the old man shook his head positively. "'Twill not do, Francis. The Queen's Majesty would relish it more if 'twere spoken by a lad. Her heart inclineth to them. A pretty lad, for she loves beauty. Marry! 'tis pity thou art a girl!"

"Father," Francis spoke quickly, a roguish light coming into her eyes, "I could put on the page's dress again, and who would be the wiser? Not the queen, I trow, for she doth not know whether or no thou hast a son."

"If it might be," said Greville eagerly. "The girl is brighter than most lads, and could quickly con the speech. What say you, my lord?"

"Let the child have her way in this, my lord," spoke Lady Stafford joining them. "Did she not don the garb to please thee? Now that it be for her pleasure

deny her not, I entreat."

"When thou pleadest for her, madam, I cannot deny," said her husband slowly. "I thought never to see thee in such dress again, 93 Francis. There seemed necessity for it before. Now——"

"Now there is necessity also," broke in Francis. "Shall the queen go without her welcome for the want of a boy? I trow not, when Francis Stafford makes so good an one. Fear not, my father. I have become so accustomed to the dress that each day do I don it. And 'tis but sport."

"Have thine own way," said Lord Stafford resignedly. "Do but honor the queen, and I will not inquire too closely concerning the manner."

Pleased at receiving the permission, Francis applied herself to memorizing the speech prepared by the tutor while the other preparations went on royally. Elizabeth was to arrive in the afternoon, and on the morning of that day her master of horse, the Earl of Leicester, with his stepson, the Earl of Essex, came to see that everything was in readiness. Then in company with Lord Stafford they went forth to escort the queen to the Hall.

A great concourse of people stood without the gates. Lord Stafford's retainers were 94 drawn up on either side of the base court ready to shout a welcome so soon as the queen appeared. At the top of the stairs leading to the terrace stood Francis arrayed in doublet and hose of purple velvet. A short cloak of the material hung gracefully from her shoulders. A purple velvet bonnet with a long white feather crowned her head. Her curls were blown about her cheeks by the breeze; her color was coming and going for she was somewhat dismayed at the

magnitude of the task she had set herself. Stories that she had heard of the great queen's anger at those who failed to perform well their parts rushed to her mind and almost overwhelmed her with confusion.

"Courage," whispered Greville who stood near her. "Courage, girl. Remember who thou art, and whom thou art to welcome. Do thy father credit, else I will repent me of having intrusted so important a duty to thee."

"I will, good cousin," returned Francis her spirit rising at his words. "Not even the presence of the queen shall make me forget what is due my father. But hark!"

A blare of trumpets sounded without the 95 gates. The bell in the tower, used only upon great occasions, pealed forth merrily. The musicians stationed in court, terrace, and hall struck up, and viols, sackbuts, cornets and recorders sounded, while from the retainers and people who thronged the roads and the court there went up a great shout of acclamation as a glittering cavalcade appeared.

The dresses of the courtiers were a blaze of splendor remarkable even in that imaginative age. First rode the Earl of Leicester, magnificent in black satin, his horse richly caparisoned with embroidered furnishings. On the right of the queen was the Earl of Essex resplendent in cloth of silver. Upon her left, rode Sir Walter Raleigh gorgeous in white satin raiment. Back of them came the ladies of the court, maids of honor, and the gentlemen. In the midst of all these was the one upon whom all eyes were bent —Elizabeth. She was attired in white silk bordered with pearls the size of beans, and over it a mantle of black silk shot with silver threads. Instead of a chain she had an oblong collar of gold and jewels. Her air

was stately, and as she passed along in great state and magnificence, 96 she bowed graciously first to one side and then to the other. Wherever she turned her face the people fell upon their knees, crying, —"God save the queen, Elizabeth!" To which she replied,—"I thank you, my good people."

At the foot of the terrace she alighted from her chariot, and, escorted by Lord Stafford, ascended the steps and approached the place where Francis stood. The girl gazed at her earnestly, mentally contrasting her with Mary of Scotland.

Elizabeth was very stately though her stature was not great; her face, oblong, fair but wrinkled; her eyes small, yet black and pleasant; her nose a little hooked; her lips narrow and compressed; her teeth black as were most of the ladies' teeth at that period from the excessive use of sugar. She wore a wig of false red hair; and upon her head sat a small crown of gold reported to be made of some of the celebrated Lunebourg table. When she reached the terrace two cannons were shot off; the one filled with a sweet powder; the other with sweet water, odoriferous and pleasant; the firing being imitated 97 by a crash of instruments. When the noise of these had died away Francis stepped forward, and began timidly, gaining self-possession as she proceeded:

"Oh Excellent Queen! true adamant of hearts,

Out of that sacred garland ever grew

Garlands of virtues, beauties, and perfections,

That crowns your crown, and dims your fortune's beams,

Welcome, and thrice welcome!

"O lady, that doth ennoble the title you possess, with the honor of your worthiness, rather crowning the great crown that derives fame from having so excellent an owner, than you receiving to yourself any ornament therefrom; vouchsafe with patient attention to hear the words which I, by commandment, am here to deliver unto you. Disdain not to smile upon our feeble efforts to entertain you, yet do I dare warrant myself so far upon the show of rare beauty, as that malice cannot fall from so fair a mind. Welcome! This hall and all it contains are yours. Do with them as you list, fair queen, but oh, disdain not to breathe your favor upon us. Welcome and thrice welcome to these portals! Loving 98 hearts greet you, and declare you queen of them as well as of Love and Beauty."

Elizabeth listened smilingly, and as the girl concluded she passed her hand over her auburn curls saying affably:

"Well done, thou pretty lad! I like well the spirit as well as the delivery of it. Thy Latinity holds much to be commended. And what may be thy name?"

"Francis Stafford, may it please Your Grace."

"It does please me. Francis? Ah, well do I ken that was the name of thy father, my lord," and she turned to Lord Stafford.

"You speak aright, Your Highness," answered he.

"Thou shalt come to me anon, thou pretty lad, for I would speak with thee further," said the queen as she moved away. "Hast thou other children, my lord?"

"This is mine only one," replied Lord Stafford.

"And was the welcome of your composing?" queried

she.

"Nay; I am not so ready with the pen," laughed Stafford. "I am not a Sidney, my 99 liege. Greville did it. Dost remember him?"

"Assuredly. Where is he? Ah, Greville," as the tutor overwhelmed with rapture at her notice, threw himself on his knees before her, and seizing the hand which she graciously extended to him, covered it with kisses. "Art well?"

"Ah, madam, madam," murmured the old man, "can you ask that when it hath been so long since I have been in your presence? As well expect the flower to flourish without the rays of the sun."

"There, flatterer," said the queen tapping him lightly on the shoulder to Francis' amazement for she expected her to take no notice of such adulation. "Thou must come to the court oftener, Greville."

Greville arose as she passed on, his face aglow with gratification.

"Child, is she not the most gracious, the most lovely of sovereigns?" he whispered to Francis.

"Gracious, I grant thee, cousin; but lovely, no. My mother is fairer by far than she."

"Hark ye, lad," said a courtier who had 100 overheard the girl's words, "a hint in thine ear: repeat not that speech. Nay; think it not even. It behooves thee, and me, and all of us to believe that the queen is the loveliest, the fairest, and the most learned of all women, bar none; which she is. God bless her!"

"God bless Elizabeth," echoed Greville fervently, but Francis, with a haughty look at the speaker, turned

upon her heel, and entered the hall.

101

CHAPTER X

THE QUEEN TAKES OFFENSE

The queen at length reached the great hall of the castle, gorgeously hung with tapestries for her reception, and resounding to the strains of soft and delicious music. At the upper end of the chamber was a throne and beside it a door which opened into a suite of apartments for the queen whenever it should be her pleasure to be private. The hall was thronged with spectators, for a masque was to be given, and menials as well as courtiers were interested in the pageant.

Francis mingled with the crowd purposing to retire very soon to her bower to don habit more befitting her sex, but enjoying for the nonce the freedom which her garb gave her. Presently she felt her cloak twitched as some one said:

“Where is your sister, sir? I see her not among those who attend the queen.”

“My sister?” The girl wheeled about, 102 and uttered an exclamation of amazement as she recognized the speaker. “What dost thou here?” she demanded sternly. “And why art thou in that attire?”

The boy, for it was the lad who had shot the deer in the chase, gave vent to a low laugh.

“I came to see the queen. Why should I not? I am her leal and true subject, which is more than thou canst say even if thou didst rattle off her welcome so glibly in Latin. As for my dress, it is my own. Why should I not wear it, Master Stafford?”

“I am as true a subject to the queen as thou art,” retorted Francis. “Why art thou here? Thou shouldst be in durance for the deer which thou didst shoot in the forest,” and a sneer curled her lips.

“So she told you of it,” exclaimed the lad.

“She? Whom mean you?” queried Francis in bewilderment.

“Thy sister, stupid. How else couldst thou have known of the deer? Truly, thou art as much like her as one pea is to another. Should you but don her frock there would 103 be none that could tell ye apart. Where is she?”

Francis laughed outright as the lad’s mistake dawned upon her, and a merry twinkle came into her eyes.

“My sister is occupied,” she answered mischievously. “Marry! it were well for thee that it was she with whom thou didst dispute over the deer. But thou hast been punished enough, else I would not let thee leave this hall before thou wouldst feel the weight of my whip.”

“Beshrew me, I like not thy brag,” cried the other angrily. “Know, Master Stafford, that I was not punished. So soon as the keepers found who and what I was they made apology for treating me in such an unmannerly fashion, and brought me the horns of the deer as trophy of my skill. They now

repose in mine own abode."

"Brought thee the horns in trophy of thy skill?" repeated the girl in wrathful incredulity. "Brought them to thee, forsooth! Why, minion, thou didst not kill the deer. I slew it myself."

"Marry! dost thou take thy sister's quarrel 104 upon thee," cried the boy. "Know then that I slew it, and I am ready to maintain the matter by force of arms."

"Francis," Greville came up opportunely at this moment, "thou art forgetting thyself. Thy mother wishes thy presence. Why doth thou show choler toward this lad? Why, it is the lad who shot the deer!"

"You too, Greville," exclaimed Francis bitterly. "I think the sight of Elizabeth hath addled thy wits. As for you, young sir, 'tis well that my duty to my mother calls me hence else thou shouldst not get off so easily."

"At another time then," replied the boy, "thou wilt find me at thy service. We can settle our difference then."

"Now heaven forfend!" ejaculated the tutor urging Francis away. "This comes of donning male habit. I will report the matter to my lady, Francis. She will see to't that thou dost conduct thyself in more seemly manner. 'Twould but amuse my lord."

"Keep a still tongue in thy head, cousin," said the girl sharply. "Meddle not with that that doth not concern thee. Couldst thou 105 not see that the fellow did but laud himself? The varlet dare not meet me."

"Methought he spoke not without courage," observed Greville. "I should judge by his dress that his rank was equal to thine."

"His dress, forsooth! What doth hinder any hind from appearing in rich attire?"

"The law of the queen. It regulates dress according to rank, and works with severity against those who dare transgress it," returned Greville. "There stands thy lady mother. I entreat thee, girl, abide close by her side during the queen's visit else thy sharp tongue may work mischief for all of us. My lady, here is the child."

Lady Stafford who stood near the queen and her ladies looked reproachfully at her daughter.

"Hast thou not changed thy garb yet, my child?" she asked. "It behooves thee to do so at once for it savors of disrespect to the queen not to appear in other array."

"Nay;" said Elizabeth who had overheard her words. "The lad is well enough as he is. We warrant that he wished not to miss any of this pageant which hath been prepared in our 106 honor. He shall attend us in our own chamber to which we and our ladies will now retire for some privacy. Come, my boy."

Much embarrassed Lady Stafford strove to stammer forth the truth but the queen waved her hand peremptorily.

"No more, madam. It is our wish that he attend us as he is. He shall don other garb later."

There was nothing left for Francis to do but to follow her as she retired with the ladies to the apartments which had been allotted to her use. For the first time the girl was painfully conscious of the incongruousness of her attire. That the queen might ask her attendance had not occurred to any of them, and had it done so the affair would have seemed

easy of explanation, but it had been found exceedingly difficult to get a hearing. She resolved, however, that should occasion present she would tell all hoping that the queen would pardon the deception, if such it might be called.

107



ELIZABETH EXTENDED HER HAND GRACIOUSLY

For some time Elizabeth conversed with her maids, taking no notice of Francis, but at length she said abruptly,

“Come here, my lad.”

Francis approached diffidently, and, unused to the customs of the court, remained standing.

“Kneel, boy,” whispered one of the ladies whom she afterward learned was the Duchess of Rutland. “Where are thy manners?”

“Thy pardon,” murmured Francis in consternation sinking upon one knee. “I knew not. I——”

“There! ’tis naught.” Elizabeth extended her hand graciously, and the girl retained presence of mind enough to kiss it respectfully. “My good Rutland, expect not court manners in the midst of a forest. The youth means well enough, I dare say, and I liked well his words of welcome. ’Tis a pretty lad! His tresses match our own for brightness.”

Francis looked up somewhat indignantly. Her locks were of red in truth, but they were glossy and lustrous becoming golden in the sun, while Elizabeth’s were a dull red and false.

“Oh, no, Your Majesty;” interposed one of the ladies. “The lad’s hair is well enough, but I should as soon think of likening a weed 108 to a rose as of comparing such lack-lustre locks to your liege’s.”

“Foolish girl!” chided Elizabeth though a smile played about her lips for this great queen did not object to the most fulsome flattery. “To speak such words to me who am an old woman. Now the lad, we dare affirm, doth not think me so fair as his mother who is, in truth, a beautiful woman. Speak, boy!” She smiled at Francis as she spoke and rearranged her draperies coquettishly.

Francis’ young nature was filled with scorn for the vanity of the woman before her, queen though she was. Her mother’s face arose before her with its

delicate complexion guiltless of the powder and the rouge affected by the ladies of the court. Her tresses were streaked somewhat with gray, but they were still her own. Her eyes were as blue as periwinkles and full of tenderness and love. The girl's eyes swept the painted face above her, and her heart grew hot within her breast at the queen's question. Amazed at her own audacity she arose and said boldly:

"Madam, I crave pardon, but my mother is to me the fairest woman in the world." 109

For an instant there was dead silence in the chamber. An expression of fury crossed the queen's face. She half rose from her couch, and then sank back upon it.

"We were near forgetting, Sir Malapert, that thou hadst not had benefit of court life. Thy manners must be mended ere thou dost come into our presence again. Go! you weary me. Come near me no more. And he is a pupil of Greville's!" Francis heard her exclaim as she hurried away. "My life, the boy is duller than he looks!"

Full of consternation at what she had done, angry and resentful also, Francis sought her parents to relate the incident to them.

"Oh, child, child," moaned the mother. "What hast thou done! What hast thou done!"

"My mother, was it not the truth? Thou art fairer; a thousand times fairer than she. She is an ugly old woman——"

"My daughter," interrupted Lord Stafford, "say no more. Elizabeth is the queen, and whatever may be her weaknesses and faults she is still the queen. And mark you, child! though she hath many faults she hath also 110 great virtues. For this reason her

people overlook her vanity and exalt her. She is a queen, but she is also a woman. Thou art too young to understand all that that means yet. Now, let me think how to make amends."

"She said that I was to come near her no more while she remained. I am sorry if I did wrong in speaking so, but still it is the truth. My mother is the fairer."

"Hush, hush," whispered the lady drawing her close. "'Tis treason, child. What doth it matter to us whether or no I am the fairer. It bodes us ill to say so. Oh, child, I am afeared."

"Let us ask Greville to aid us," said Lord Stafford. "Mayhap he can suggest a remedy, for well doth he ken Elizabeth's humors."

111

CHAPTER XI

AT THE QUEEN'S COMMAND

But neither Greville's obsequious homage, nor Lord and Lady Stafford's apologies could regain the goodwill of the queen. Seeing her state of mind Lord Stafford advised that Francis should retain her chamber during the rest of Elizabeth's visit.

For the three days that the queen remained at the Hall her demeanor was such as to fill its master with

a vague uneasiness. Lady Stafford she hardly tolerated, and though Lord Stafford lavished gifts upon her, yet she refused to be propitiated.

"Surely," Francis heard her father say to her mother, "the remark of a child would not suffice for such behavior? Elizabeth is vain beyond most women, yet 'twere doing her an injustice to deem her capable of resentment for so slight a thing. Can she have learned of Ballard's presence in England? Of our visit to Chartley? And yet none save 112 we three knew whither we went. And you would be discreet, I trow. Francis, young as she is, would reveal naught that would do me harm. She is too straightforward, too truthful,"—he stopped with a light laugh and kissed his wife. "What spirit the girl had to tell the queen that thou wert fairer," he said. "Thou art so in truth, Penelope, yet for my life I durst not tell it to Elizabeth."

"Nay; I would not have thee to, my lord. Say that Elizabeth is the loveliest, the fairest of womankind, I care not so that I may keep thee with me. But our child, my lord! I fear for that very directness which thou dost commend. A weaker spirit would be more politic. I would not that she be less truthful, but I wish, I wish——"

"Nay, sweetheart, wish not that she be other than she is. I would not have her fawning upon the queen as do the maids of the court. Dost mark what words of flattery they utter and yet with what ridicule they speak of her to each other when they think that there is none to hear? I would not that Francis should be as they are."

"Nor I," acquiesced the mother. "Yet 113 sometimes truth doth not meet with the merit it deserves."

"True; but let us think not on that, but be grateful that our child is as she is."

Francis' heart glowed with love and tenderness toward her parents, and she was grieved that words of hers had brought such disquiet upon them.

"I must try," she mused, "to retain my truth and yet not offend by it. But how could I have said other than I did? My mother is fairer to me. There was but the one answer to be given to such a question."

Over and over she turned the matter in her mind striving to reconcile policy with truthfulness. A problem which has vexed the souls of men since the beginning of time.

At last the queen took her departure. As she bade her host and hostess farewell, she said:

"Madam, I thank you for your entertainment. My lord, though thou bearest me no good will, yet shalt thou find that Elizabeth doth not forget that thy father was the friend of her father. 'Tis pity that more attention hath not been given to thy son's manners, but 114 the fault shall be amended, I promise you. England surely hath schools for its youth that are equal to those of thy faith abroad."

"Madam, what mean you?" asked the nobleman detecting the menace in her words.

"We shall see what we shall see," was the queen's enigmatical rejoinder. She swept to her chariot, and with her brilliant train, soon left Stafford Hall behind.

As the days glided by, and no sign or message came from her, the anxiety engendered by her last words faded away, and once more a feeling of security crept into their hearts. This false confidence was

dispelled however one warm day in July when a messenger from the queen rode into the courtyard, and demanded an audience with the master of the Hall. The guest had been but a short time in the presence chamber when Lord Stafford emerged from the apartment with pale face.

“Bid my lady and my daughter repair hither without delay,” he cried hailing a servitor.

“But, my lord,” Francis heard him say as they hastened to the room in answer to the summons, “I do but speak the truth when I 115 declare that, as I live by bread, I have no son. I have but one child, and that a daughter. She is here to speak for herself.”

“What is it, father?” asked Francis going to him, while Lord Shrope, the queen’s messenger, looked his bewilderment.

“The queen hath commanded that my son, Francis Stafford, shall accompany my Lord Shrope to the court to become one of her pensioners. He doubts my word when I say that I have no son.”

“Nay, my lord; I must believe you if you say that you have none,” said the nobleman courteously. “But there is misapprehension somewhere. If I do not misreckon foully the queen spoke of both seeing and speaking with him during her progress hither. There is grave misunderstanding, I fear.”

“Alas! my lord, this comes of deception,” Lord Stafford despairing cried. “Let me unfold to thee all that chanced during Her Majesty’s stay, and do you advise me what course to pursue for I am nigh bereft of wit.”

“Let me hear all, Stafford,” returned the other. “Thou knowest that I bear a heart well disposed toward

thee, and will gladly do 116 aught that will aid thee. Full well do I remember how thou and I did consort together at the court, and there hath been none to take thy place since thou didst go into retirement upon thy marriage. Therefore, say on."

"I thank thee that thou hast spoken so favorably and kindly of the friendship that once held between us," replied Lord Stafford. "Albeit, I would not curry favor with thee because of it. But to the matter in hand. Know then that when the Queen's Majesty was about to come hither, and we were preparing for her reception, Hugh Greville, my daughter's tutor and my kinsman, did lament that I had no son to speak the welcome to Elizabeth. In an idle moment, I unwittingly consented that Francis should don the habit of a page and deliver the speech not thinking that the queen would do more than to listen to it. But she was drawn to the girl and spoke words of approbation to her, enquiring her name. 'Francis,' she observed as the child gave it her, 'ah! well do I ken, my lord, that that was your father's name.' Then as she moved on she asked if I had other children. To which I answered, 'No.' Methought 117 that that would end the matter, but mark you! She bade my supposed son to attend her in her chamber; and then, thou knowest the tenor of the court talk, she asked if she did not deem her mother fairer than she, the queen, was. My daughter, Shrope, knows naught but to speak the truth. She is a maiden of tender years, simply brought up, and as wild and free as the linnet that sings upon yon bough. She spoke the truth when she answered that to her, her mother was the fairest woman that lived. Elizabeth spurned her from her presence, and conveyed threat as to the manners of my son when she left the hall. 'Ods life, my lord! to what pass hath England come when children must be

taught to dissemble and fawn else they be subjected to discipline by the queen? Had she not enough courtiers to hail her as 'Diana,' and 'The Miracle of Time,' and other things of like ilk that she must needs try to subvert my child from truth? Gramercy! I am ready at this moment to enter the tilt-yard to defend the girl's saying against all comers. Her mother is the fairest lady that ere the sun shone on. I ——" 118

"Hold, Stafford, thou ravest! Be not so heated in thy words. Give pause while I think on what thou hast told me."

Lord Stafford tried to subdue his feelings while the other sat in thought. Presently Lord Shrope looked up.

"Stafford, for the sake of that old friendship to which I have before referred, bear with me for what I am about to say. Rumor hath whispered that thou hast given entertainment to Jesuits which, as thou knowest, is felony. Nay;" as Lord Stafford was about to speak, "I would not ask thee if it be true or no. But for that cause do I say, let the girl assume once more her male attire and go with me to the court. Elizabeth likes not to be made the victim of a hoax, but there are times when none enjoys a jest more than she. When the time is propitious, I and other of thy friends, will disclose the matter to the queen. Believe me when I say that it will be best so."

"Let Francis go from me to that court?" cried the father in agonized tones. "I cannot! I will not! She shall not stir from 119 here! I will go to the queen and lay the whole affair before her."

"Do not so, my lord. There are those who have the queen's ear who have whispered against thee.

Stafford Hall hath broad lands in its demesne, and covetous eyes have been cast upon it. 'Twould be a choice morsel for some favorite. 'Twould not be wise for thee to appear at court just now."

"Father," said Francis, "why should I not do as thy friend advises? I would not that aught of harm should come to thee, and surely none can come to me? Let me go. It will be but a short time until my return, because I feel certain that when the queen learns that there was naught of intent to deceive she will pardon all. Once, my father, thou didst say that she was a queen but still a woman. A woman, my father, with a woman's heart and a woman's compassion."

"A woman, yes; with a woman's vanity, and a woman's spite," broke from Lord Stafford.

"Stafford, Stafford, it is well for thee that none other hears thee. Thy daughter hath well said that Elizabeth is a woman. Lion-hearted 120 as well becomes a Tudor, but properly appealed to, sympathetic and generous. Be guided in this by me, my lord, and let her go."

"Yes, my father," pleaded Francis.

"It shall be as her mother says," said Lord Stafford turning to his wife who had stood as if stricken since hearing the advice of Lord Shrope. "Speak, my wife. Shall we keep our daughter, and defy Elizabeth——"

"Oh, no, no!" sobbed Lady Stafford. "I am loath to let her go, and yet I would not have her stay if by so doing we shall seem to defy the queen. My lord, surely harm could not come to the child, while for thee, I fear, I fear."

"Then I may go." Francis sprang to her mother and

embraced her. “Oh, ’tis only for my father that we need to fear. Naught of harm will I come to.”

“Upon mine honor, Stafford,” said Lord Shrope going to Lord Stafford who had bowed his head upon his hands, “even as I have two lady birds of daughters of mine own, so will I look after thine. Take heart, old friend. I believe that all will be well else I would not advise this step. Courage!”

121

CHAPTER XII

THE FAVOR OF PRINCES

The Bow bells were ringing as Francis and her escort, Lord Shrope, drew near the city of London three days later. It was sunset and the silvery peal of the bells was clearly borne to them upon the evening breeze. Merrily they rang. Now wild and free; now loud and deep; now slower and more slow until they seemed to knell the requiem of the day.

“How beautiful!” exclaimed Francis involuntarily drawing rein. “Pause, I pray you, my lord. Do they always ring so?”

“Ay, child. Ever since and long before they sounded so musically in Dick Whittington’s ears: ‘Turn again, turn again, thrice lord mayor of London’! What think you they say? Do they bear a message to your ears?”

The girl listened intently.

“Methinks they say, ‘Come not to London, 122 Francis! Come not to London town!’ But is there not in truth amidst all their toning some melody or chant?”

“There is, child, but not as thou hast so fancifully thought a warning to thee. How melodious is their chime! Think the rather on that than on aught else.”

“Yes, my lord; and how wonderful is the city! Marry! whatever betides I shall have seen London!”

She sat erect as she spoke, and drank in the scene with appreciative eyes. Lord Shrope looked at Britain’s metropolis with pride.

The last rays of the setting sun fell lingeringly upon the great city. For great it was though it numbered but one and thirty thousand inhabitants at this time. Paris alone excelled it in numbers. London, as the representative of England in her supremacy of the seas, her intellectual grandeur, and above all as the friend of those who dared to oppose the power of Rome, London stood in the eyes of all men as the greatest city of the world.

The towers and turrets that gleamed above 123 the strong walls that encircled the city; the sure gates that gave entrance thereto; the princely palaces with their large gardens, rich porches and stately galleries; the open fields that came up close to the walls; the distant hills of Essex, Middlesex, Surrey and Kent covered thickly with woods; the silvery Thames, the silent highway of the Londoners, its bosom covered by a forest of masts and spanned by the great bridge, —even then old,—with its gateways, towers, drawbridges, houses, mills, chapel and wharfs; all these went to make a picture that thrilled every

English heart.

The girl looked first this way and then that as though she could never drink her fill.

“My lord,” she cried, “prithee tell me which of all those turrets is the Tower?”

“To the east, child. The white tower that rises so majestically from the surrounding turrets. Therein is written the whole history of England. That is the lofty citadel which it is said the great Julius himself raised. And yonder lies Saint Paul’s. That sombre and dungeon like stronghold is Baynard’s 124 castle. To our left is Westminster, and yon beautiful palace is Whitehall. It is known of all men how it reverted to the crown at the fall of Wolsey. The queen’s father adorned it in its present manner. There stands Somerset house, and yonder is Crosby. On the bankside in Southwark are the theatres and Paris gardens where are the bear pits. Look about thee, Francis. On every building, almost on every stone is writ the history of our forbears. On all those walls are traces of Roman, Briton, Anglo-Saxon and Norman. History in stone. What sermons they might preach to us had they but tongues!”

“It is beautiful!” said Francis again.

“The bells have ceased their chiming,” said Lord Shrope. “I would not break into thy enjoyment, child, but we must hasten. Before the darkness falls we must enter Greenwich where Elizabeth is.”

With a deep drawn sigh, Francis gave one more look about her and then they passed into the city.

Within the immediate vicinity of the walls there were many gardens and open 125 spaces. The houses with their fanciful gables and vanes, and tall twisted

chimneys invited and enchained the eye. The streets were narrow, and alleys, courts and by-paths abounded in every direction. While they were at a distance they had heard only the subdued noises of the city, above which the bells sounded clearly. But now as they passed through the streets their ears were assailed by the cries of the pent-house keepers, or the noises of the apprentices as they set upon some offending pedestrian. The din was almost indescribable. And yet in the midst of the confusion there was music. From every barber shop came the twang of cittern or guitar, while song burst from the lips of every tankard bearer.

All these, with other wonders, Francis encountered as they wended their way through alleys and byways until presently they came to London Stone.

“Now here will I dismount,” cried Francis pleased and excited by all that she had seen and heard.

“But why, child? We have not yet reached the wharf where we take the wherry 126 for Greenwich. Why should you pause here?”

“Because,” cried the girl with a laugh, “if I cannot take possession of the city, I can at least emulate that arch traitor, Jack Cade, and strike my staff upon this stone.” So saying she struck the ancient stone a sharp blow with her whip.

“Beshrew me, girl!” cried the nobleman laughing, “thou shouldst in very truth have been a boy! Marry! who but a lad would have thought on such a thing! But hasten! The last rays of yon setting sun must see us at the palace.”

Francis remounted her palfrey, and without further incident they came to the wharf. Leaving their horses in the charge of some of the servitors of Lord Shrope

they descended the stairs that led through one of the numerous water gates to the river, and entered one of the wherries that lay clustered about waiting for fares.

“See the barges,” cried the girl as they shot London Bridge and passed down the river. “How many there are!”

The bosom of the river was covered over 127 with barges, wherries and vessels of every description. Busy as it was fleets of swans were sailing upon its smooth surface, the noise of their gabble mingling agreeably with the song of the watermen.

“Yes, many;” assented Lord Shrope in answer to the girl’s remark, as retinues of barges passed them, filled with many a freight of brave men and beautiful women. “Hearken, how the oarsmen keep time to their oars.”

Francis listened with delight as the song of the wherrymen swelled in a mighty chorus, for every boatman sang the same thing:

“Heave ho! rumbelow!”

“And the swans,” she cried excitedly.

“Yes; ’tis a pleasant sight, and many have wondered that they should stay upon the river when it is so busy, but they are kindly treated and no harm suffered to come to them. Behold the dwellings of the nobles.”

Nothing could have been more picturesque at this time than the north bank of the Thames with its broad gardens, lofty trees and embattled turrets and pinnacles of the palaces, 128 each of which had its landing-place and private retinue of barges and wherries.

"This is the Tower," said the nobleman as they drew near that grim fortress. A low browed projecting arch, above which was a tower forming a striking part of the stronghold, attracted the girl's attention. Steps led up from the river to a small ricket in the arch which gave entrance into the Tower.

"That is the Traitors' Gate," said Lord Shrope. "Through that wicket pass all those guilty of treason."

A shudder passed over Francis as she gazed at the forbidding portals.

"Why dost thou shiver?" asked Lord Shrope kindly, as he noticed her involuntary tremor.

"Sir," answered Francis, in mournful tones, "I fear that Tower. Something seems to whisper me that yon grim walls and I will become better acquainted."

"Now Heaven forfend!" ejaculated Lord Shrope. "Thy doubts of thy reception at the queen's hands render thee fearful. Take courage, child. All will yet be well. 'Tis not amiss that thou shouldst be doubtful, as 129 the issue is uncertain. Were you but as the queen thinks, and not in masquerade, you would fare well at court. For 'tis worthy the ambition of any young man, be his rank of the highest, or his prospects the most brilliant, to become one of the queen's pensioners. For thus doth Her Majesty accomplish divers things: she honoreth those who are such; obligeth their kindred and alliance, and fortifieth herself; for none can be brought near her person without becoming willing to lay down life itself in her behalf."

"I should not be, were I in truth the boy she thinks me," declared Francis.

"Subdue such spirit, girl," rebuked he. "The queen is graciousness itself to those whom she favors, but frowardness and pertness are not to her liking. In sooth, she tolerates them not in those near her. For thy father's sake, have a care to thy words. The slight disfavor under which thou dost labor will soon be overcome, I doubt not, if thou wilt show thyself submissive to her will. But I mean not to chide thee, child, for I know that thy maiden heart cannot but fail thee in this hour. I would, an I could, turn thy 130 mind to more of liking toward the queen else will it be hard for thee to sue to her. Elizabeth is a great ruler. The land hath never before enjoyed so much of peace and prosperity. Even her enemies cannot gainsay this fact. But I fear that I weary thee, and thou art troubled enough."

"Nay, my lord; I know that thou dost speak from the fulness of experience, and therefore do thy words carry weight. I am not weary but my heart doth fail me when I think of the queen and the court. I am but a maiden, my lord, unlearned in the ways of courtiers, and should I fail to find favor with the queen, who shall stand between me and her will? Who is there who would brave her displeasure to speak one word for me? Marry! not one!"

"Think not on that aspect, girl, an thou wouldst maintain thy spirit. He who would achieve his end dwells not on failure. Think on thy father. For his sake thou must get the favor of the queen. For his sake so demean thyself that all that he hath done will be condoned. Mark thee, Francis! There are those who whisper that he is the more inclined 131 to Mary of Scotland than to Elizabeth of England. There lies his danger."

"I thank you, my lord, for your words," said Francis.

“Well will I heed them. Thou hast been to me as a father in the discharge of thy duty, though it must be irksome to thee to be burdened with so troublesome a charge. Nathless, I thank thee for thy words and for thy care.”

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke and she turned her head quickly that he might not see them.

“Thou art welcome to all that I have done,” said Lord Shrope brusquely to hide his feelings for he was filled with pity for the forlorn state of the girl. “Troublesome thou hast not been, but full of courage until now. How now? Wilt thou play the girl when thou dost wear that garb? Command thyself, I pray, for we draw near the palace.”

“’Tis true I wear this garb,” sobbed Francis, “but yet I am a maiden, with a maiden’s fears and a maiden’s weakness. Prithee bear with me for a moment until I am myself again.”

She gave way to the emotion that overwhelmed 132 her, for she was wearied by the journey, excited over the new and strange scenes of the past few days, and overwrought with her fears. Lord Shrope bent a look of compassion upon her, but uttered no word.

The song of the boatmen ceased as they drew near the landing stairs of the palace. There were numerous wherries waiting to unload their human freight, and this gave Francis time to recover her composure. So soon as she was calm Lord Shrope motioned to the watermen and they drew up at the stairs which led to the great gate of the palace. Courtyard and terrace were filled with gaily-dressed ladies and nobles. Here a lady attended by her gentlewomen traced her way delicately, a gentleman-usher making way for her, her train upheld by a

page. Then gallants ruffled along, their attire vying with that of the ladies for brilliancy and richness. Each courtier wore a rose behind his ear, and upon his shoes were roses also to hide the strings. Each bore a long sword upon one side and a poniard on the other, and behind him a body of serving men, proportioned to his estate and quality, all of whom walked 133 with the air of military retainers and were armed with swords and bucklers. Laughing, jesting and making merry, they seemed not to have a care, though many a satin doublet and silken vest concealed a heart as full of anxiety as that of the girl who had just come among them.

"Beshrew me, my lord," exclaimed a noble in brave attire as Lord Shrope entered the palace yard with his charge. "Art thou come again? Methought I heard that wast sent to France."

"And France is (Francis) here," retorted his lordship, indicating his companion.

"Good! I' faith, very good, if Francis be his name," laughed the other. "A proper lad, I trow. The queen hath ever an eye for beauty."

"Where is Her Grace?" questioned Lord Shrope.

"In the presence chamber," was the reply.

"Then let us hie thither," spoke my lord, and Francis hurried after him, confused and embarrassed, as she encountered the curious gaze of the courtiers and ladies. They passed through the lofty halls and ante-chambers of 134 the palace until at length they stood in the long gallery at the upper end of which were the folding doors that gave entrance to the presence chamber.

"Go not in, my lord," pleaded the usher of the black

rod in charge of the door. “Something hath gone amiss with Her Highness, and the moment is not favorable.”

“I thank you, Master Usher, but the queen bade me seek her instantly upon my return,” said Lord Shrope. “I needs must go to her now. Come, Francis.”

So saying he boldly entered the chamber. It was hung with magnificent tapestries toward which Francis cast not so much as a single glance, so intent was she upon the form which seemed to dominate the room. At one end of the apartment was a dais upon which the queen sat under a royal canopy, surrounded by her ministers and some courtiers. They stood about with dismayed countenances for the queen was in a rage. She looked up as the two entered, and stared for a moment as if seeking to know the meaning of their entrance.

“My liege sovereign,” cried Lord Shrope 135 without waiting for the Lord Chamberlain to announce him, “I have come. Behold here is the lad for whom you sent me.”

“Out of my sight,” cried the queen angrily. “’Ods death! is there none to keep the door that every minion that lists may enter? Out of my sight, and plague me not with a sight of that boy. Away, varlet!”

With crestfallen visage Lord Shrope arose, bowed profoundly and hurried Francis out of the chamber.

“I should have heeded thy warning, sir,” he said to the usher. “Now I cannot seek the queen until she bids me to her.”

“What shall I do?” asked the girl almost in tears. “Whither shall I go?”

"Thou shalt come with me, my child. My lady wife will look to thy comfort. There shalt thou abide until it shall be safe to approach Elizabeth. Thy star is not in the ascendant."

"And I have involved thee too in Her Grace's displeasure," said Francis with contrition.

"Nay; Elizabeth is too just to harbor ill toward me who hath but wrought her 136 pleasure. Though verily the humors of princes like their favors are uncertain. But come!"

137

CHAPTER XIII

A FAMILIAR FACE AND A CHALLENGE

Lady Shrope received the girl with kindness but her anxiety, when her husband recounted the manner of his reception by the queen, was great.

"Thou hast no cause for fear," remarked Lord Shrope. "Elizabeth is the very muster of justice and honor. When she hath suffered a few hours to pass she will repent her of her injustice."

The nobleman was right. At an early hour the next day he was summoned to the presence of the queen, and bade to bring his charge with him.

"I cry your pardon, my lord," said Elizabeth

extending her hand to him graciously. “Thine entrance yester e’en was ill-timed. We had received tidings that ruffled our royal dignity and permitted us to treat thee with undue rigor. Dost forgive thy queen, my lord?” 138

“There is naught I would not forgive Elizabeth,” returned he with earnestness. “Had I known I would have delayed seeking an audience but methought it was your wish that I should come to you upon my first arrival. Forgive me that I did misinterpret your desire.”

“If thou hast forgiven me then do I forgive thee,” said the queen. “Rise, my lord, and I will speak of this boy, and then to other matters. Business of state awaits the morning hours.”

“He is here, my liege, to speak for himself,” answered he, and beckoned Francis to come forward.

She did so diffidently and kneeled before the queen.

“Nay; I wish not to speak with him, my lord,” and Francis noted with dismay that she did not extend her hand to her. “Let him take his place with the pages. They will soon let him into the manners of the court, I trow. When he shall have rubbed off some of the rustic mayhap I will have something to say to him.”

“My liege,” ventured the nobleman, “will 139 you listen to something concerning the lad which ’tis best that you should know?”

“Now, by my faith, my lord! thou dost try our patience,” said Elizabeth sharply. “Said we not that affairs of state awaited us. We go at once to the council chamber. My lord chamberlain,” turning to that official whose white staff indicated his office,

"place this lad where his manners will meet with the most improvement."

She swept out of the room followed by her ministers, while the courtiers and ladies dispersed according to their fancy.

Francis had remained in a kneeling posture all this time scarcely able to control her tears. A tap on the shoulder aroused her, and looking up she saw the kindly face of Lord Hunsdon, the lord chamberlain, bending over her.

"Be not disheartened, boy," he said compassionately. "The tide will turn, and thou wilt soon be swept upon the flood into the sunshine of Her Majesty's regard. Come, and I will show thee those who are to be thy fellow companions."

"My lord chamberlain," said Lord Shrope 140 hurriedly, "out of the goodness of your heart, permit me one word. The lad is unacquainted with the court, and unused to the society of pages whom as thou knowest, albeit their outward 'havior conforms to custom, yet still are ofttimes unmannerly in their demeanor to each other. For that reason, and for the love which once I did bear his father, I entreat you, let the lad remain with me. I will see to't that his deportment is all that could be asked."

"My lord, I dare not," was the chamberlain's reply. "Thou knowest that where the queen commands she exacts obedience to her behests. He must go with the pages."

"My lord, a word in your ear. The lad is not as he seems." And Lord Shrope rapidly explained the matter.

"Ha! sayst thou so?" explained Lord Hunsdon

regarding Francis earnestly. “By my halidom, my lord, there is none who would take her to be other than she appears. Somewhat delicate looking, forsooth, but there are many lads as maiden-like. If the matter be given to the queen in proper manner she will regard it with lenient eyes, but if 141 not, she may treat it as deceit practised upon herself. That she would not forgive.”

“True;” assented Lord Shrope. “’Tis that aspect of the affair that troubles me. Thou seest that for this cause I would that the girl might remain with my lady wife.”

“It may not be,” said the chamberlain. “Let the girl be in attendance with the pages in accordance with the queen’s command until she learns of the child’s sex, which, for the damsel’s sake, I would discover soon.”

“I thank you, my lord, for your kindness,” returned Lord Shrope. “It is my desire also that the queen should learn of the affair at an early season. But the time must be propitious.”

“Yes; the time must be propitious.” The lord chamberlain turned to Francis who had listened to the above conversation with blushing cheeks. “It seems best, my child, to carry out the queen’s command at least in part. Canst thou so bear thyself that none will be the wiser of thy sex? The discipline of the palace is strict and the pages observe punctiliously the outward forms of respect. Still the minions do ofttimes o’erstep the 142 bounds and indulge in rare pranks. Methinks ’twould be wise for them to know naught of thy disguise. The knaves are as full of mischief as sprites.”

“I fear them not,” said Francis spiritedly. “I fear

naught but the queen's displeasure. For any other, I care not who he be, woe to him who dares touch Francis Stafford." She touched the poniard that dangled from her belt significantly as she spoke.

"Child," cried the old lord in delight, "thou wearest the proper garb. Thou wast never meant for a girl. Zounds! what spirit! And so thou fearest naught in all England but the displeasure of the queen. Gramercy! the air of the court is beginning to tell upon thee for those are the words of a courtier. Come! I no longer fear for thee so long as thou dost continue to bear thyself in so fearless a manner."

"I bid you farewell, my lord," said Francis to Lord Shrope.

"Farewell for a season, my child. Return to my lady when thy duties are ended," said her friend. "Lighter will my heart be when thou art once more in thy father's house. 143 Marry! I would that I had not advised bringing thee thither. Now I know not what may befall."

"Chide not thyself, my lord," returned Francis who had recovered her natural courage now that the interview with the queen was over. "All will be well in a few days, I doubt not. Meantime, it suits me well that I am to see somewhat of the court."

"Marry! it suits not me," returned his lordship bluntly. "I like not to see a wild bird caged. The linnet is never so sweet as in its own woodland."

"But the hawk flies as high for its keeper as when seeking its own quarry," said Francis as she moved away. "Again, my lord, farewell until the eventide."

"Farewell. Be discreet, child."

Francis followed Lord Hunsdon through several lofty

halls and chambers. Finally the official caught sight of a youth who stood idly by a pillar.

“Devereaux,” he called. “I would speak with thee.”

“I am here, my lord.” The boy was at his 144 side instantly. “Command me, I pray you. How can I serve you?”

“Take this lad, and make him thy pupil, Edward. He hath been sent here to be taught manners. There be none so well versed in such things as thou art. Therefore do I give him into thy charge.”

The youth raised his head and gave a keen searching glance at Francis. The recognition was instantaneous. Francis gave a slight exclamation for the boy was he with whom she had contested the slaying of the deer. Beyond a slight sparkle of his eye the lad betrayed no sign of ever having seen her before.

“And, Edward, I know the custom that prevails amongst the pages of treating with undue harshness such as come among ye for the first time. I charge you, as you wish to curry favor with me, that this lad shall meet with naught but gentleness. Dost hear, Edward?”

“Ay, my lord. It shall be as thou sayst. He shall be treated with gentleness. With exceeding great gentleness, I promise you.”

The boy’s manner was very deferential, but 145 the ears of Francis caught the sinister meaning that lurked beneath his words.

“My lord,” she said boldly, “is there none other to whom I may be consigned except this youth? I like not his appearance.”

“Like not Edward?” exclaimed Lord Hunsdon in

surprise. “Why, what caprice is this? He is a proper lad, and there is no other of the pages so trustworthy. Thou shouldst deem thyself fortunate to be put into his hands.”

“Marry, sir,” remarked Edward Devereaux with a sorrowful air, “’tis pity that my visage is so unattractive. If the boy is afeared,” with a slight emphasis on the word, “you would best place him with another. Fear makes cowards of us all, and breeds distrust of the most worthy.”

“Gramercy,” cried the girl hotly, “dost thou think that I fear thee, sirrah? Nay; my lord, I will take none other for my mentor than he. Mayhap while he imparts to me the nice customs of the court, he will in turn learn of me something he wots not of. Marry! we each have much to learn.”

“Tut! is this the way to begin?” said his 146 lordship impatiently. “Edward, I shall look to thee for a good report of thy charge.”

“It shall be well, sir,” returned Edward Devereaux bowing profoundly. The chamberlain left the two, and the boy faced the girl. “So,” he said, “we are come to learn manners, are we? By my faith, ’tis time. Thou dost discover too much heat, Master Stafford, and that, thou shouldst know, is not permitted at court. Take that for thy first lesson.”

“I will take naught for my lesson from thee,” said Francis quickly. “Who art thou to teach manners to me?”

“Hast never heard of Edward Devereaux?” queried the lad. “Much hast thou missed for he is before you,” and he bowed mockingly. “Know, Francis Stafford, that thou and I have a feud of long standing. Hast heard thy father speak of Sir Thomas

Devereaux of Kent? I am his son, cousin german to Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex. Surely, even if thou dost reside far from the court, thou dost know that there hath always been enmity between the Devereaux and the Staffords?" 147

"Ay! I know of it," assented Francis. "And that is why thou didst claim, the deer which was slain by my hand in the park?"

"So thou dost still claim the deer? Mark you, Francis Stafford! We of the court think it not honorable to claim that which doth not belong to us. Thou hadst no shadow of hand in the deed. It lies between thy sister and me. Yet still thou sayst,—'I slew it.' Hark ye! if ye so choose we can settle the matter in the great park some eventide. But for the sake of truth say no more that you slew it. It is between thy sister and myself."

"My sister," murmured Francis, and then remembering herself: "My sister be it."

"And thou and I will meet and decide the business once for all," went on Devereaux. "Come! what say you to the third night from this? There are duties that forbid the undertaking sooner."

"But, but," stammered Francis. "I——"

"Ah! thou dost fear." Edward Devereaux looked his scorn. "We will drop the matter. But thou must fight, or concede that I slew the deer." 148

"I fear nothing," cried the girl. "I will meet thee when and where thou wilt."

"Then on the third night from this, thou and I will meet in the park close by the wicket of the western gate. I will show thee this day where it lieth. And now we must to duty."

149

CHAPTER XIV

A STRANGE DUEL

Now, Francis Stafford knew but little of the noble art of fencing. Once or twice her father had given her the foils and shown her some of the attitudes and thrusts, but beyond that her knowledge did not extend. It was with considerable trepidation, therefore, that she thought of the approaching combat.

“Marry!” she mused. “Were it not that Master Devereaux would impute it to fear I would not engage in such contest. It is not befitting my maiden dignity, and I know my mother would not approve. Yet there have been maiden warriors, why should there not be maiden duelists. I doubt not, were the truth known, that there have been many. But howsoe’er that may be, my father, I know, would not like me to submit to the implication of fear; albeit I would not harm the lad even though he be the son of my father’s enemy.” 150

Through the watches of the night the question of swordsmanship troubled her, and when the morning came she had reached no solution of the difficulty.

“I dare not appeal to any who know my sex,” she thought as she took her place among the pages that swarmed one of the ante-chambers. “I would that I

knew of one that would teach me to thrust and to parry."

While she was thus musing a courtier approached her. He was gorgeously arrayed. Jewels to a fabulous amount adorned his person. Even upon his pantoufles or shoes were large pearls instead of the roses beloved of the gallants. His beard was pointed, his eyes set close together; his manner, when he chose, was irresistible, and his smile very winning. There was a pipe of the new found tobacco in his mouth,—a weed that had just been imported from the new world.

"My fair lad," said the courtier removing his pipe, and speaking in the broad soft accent of Devonshire, "I have not marked thy face before. Art new to the court?"

"Yes, my lord," answered Francis noting with delight the accent. "I am Francis Stafford 151 from Hampshire, but newly arrived at the court. But thou, thou art from Devon, I am sure. It is my mother's native heath."

"True, boy; I am from Devon. Sayst thou that thy mother is from that shire? Then thou and I should be good friends. Bethink you! Could you play Hermes for me to one of the maids of honor?"

"I could, my lord. But prithee tell me whom I serve?" and the girl looked eagerly into his face.

"I am Walter Raleigh," answered he. "This weed hath given me somewhat of fame."

"Nay;" said Francis quickly. "Not the weed but thine own achievements."

"By my faith, thou art as silvery tongued as Orpheus with his lute," said Sir Walter with a smile. "Mark

me, boy! I would not that any should know of this message, least of all the queen. 'Tis not that there is aught of harm in it, lad. As thou art new to the court thou mayest not know that it is not permitted to any to deem any fair save the queen, and so we are sometimes forced to send tokens sub rosa." 152

"I know, Sir Walter," said Francis sadly. "'Tis for that very self-same cause that I am here."

"Then, lad, we understand each other. Know you Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of the queen's maids?"

"Nay; 'tis but my second day in the palace," replied Francis.

"Then must I show her to thee," said Sir Walter. "As Her Majesty goes to take the air upon the river to-day I will linger a little behind. When the maids of honor come forth, mark well my action. As they pass I will drop my glove at the feet of her who is Elizabeth Throckmorton."

"I will note thy action, Sir Walter, and give to the lady thy token in such manner that none save the fair one herself shall be the wiser."

"Good, my lad! Thou art a true Hermes. As gracious in thy service as was ever that messenger of the gods. Thou wilt make me thy debtor a thousandfold. What guerdon dost thou wish?"

"Nay, Sir Walter; I want nothing. 'Tis pleasing to me to be of service to thee." 153

"Why, boy, 'tis the custom of the court to take all that one can get," cried Sir Walter who was noted for that very thing. "Hast thou no favor to ask? No desire of thine inmost heart?"

"Oh," cried the girl as a thought darted into her mind, looking at him timidly, "if I might be beholden to you for one favor. If thou wouldst, Sir Walter——" she paused.

"Speak on, lad," said Raleigh kindly. "Thou are not the first to prefer request for service. In truth thou wouldst be a rara avis shouldst thou not demand something. There lives no man, nor woman, nor child at the court who hath not his own end to further. Therefore speak and say what I shall give thee."

"Sir Walter," said Francis emboldened by his words, "thou art a great swordsman and noted for thy skill in the use of that weapon. Impart to me that knowledge, I beseech you."

"Is that thy wish?" cried Sir Walter in amazement. "Right willingly will I teach thee, for I perceive that thou art a lad of parts. 'Tis an art that is more excellent than any other military exercise, because there is 154 very great and general use thereof. Not only in general wars, but also in particular combats. Seek me anon, and I will soon make thee a master of the sword."

With a dazzling smile he left her. Francis repaired to the courtyard to await the coming of the queen and her maidens.

The royal barge, manned by watermen attired in regal liveries, lay at the foot of the great stairs which ascended from the river. The yeomen of the guard in scarlet jerkins with halberds in their hands, guarded the passage from the palace to the waterside. Presently the ushers issued from the mansion, flanked by a band of gentlemen pensioners. After this, amidst a crowd of ladies and gentlemen, came

Elizabeth herself.

Sir Walter Raleigh walked by the queen, but, as if pushed back from his position by the press of people who crowded to see her, he dropped slightly to the rear. As the ladies went gaily by, laughing and talking, he let fall his gauntlet just in front of a beautiful girl. Recovering the glove as Elizabeth looked about inquiringly for him he resumed his place by her side. He was in high favor 155 at this time, and consequently obliged to be in constant attendance upon her.

Francis looked attentively at the lady so indicated and followed the maids as unobtrusively as possible to the boats. The young ladies of honor were to be in a boat by themselves with two older ladies for chaperons. As soon as the girl perceived this she pushed forward boldly, and, with true page-like officiousness, proffered her services to the beautiful Elizabeth Throckmorton.

“I have a page of mine own in attendance, young sir,” said the lady with a smile. “Nathless I thank you for your courtesy.”

“Fair lady,” said Francis in a low tone, “hast ever heard of Hermes?”

“He was the messenger of the gods, sir,” returned she in surprise. “Why?”

“Because I am he,” returned the supposed page with a bow. “Albeit I come not from the gods. ’Twas Eros who sent me, therefore, I beseech you to permit me to hand you to the boat.”

With a laugh and a deep blush Mistress Throckmorton extended her hand, and Francis led her to the barge, leaving the missive 156 of Sir

Walter in the maiden's soft palm.

Later in the day, receiving a summons from Raleigh she hastened to him and reported the success of her mission. "Gramercy, boy! thou wert most gallant in the delivery," laughed Sir Walter. "And now for thy first lesson with the sword." And soon the two were deep in the mysteries of fencing.

"Every man should be master of this weapon," declared the sailor when Francis, exhausted by the swift play of the blades, sank down for a few moments' rest. "Even though one be small of stature and weak of strength, dexterity with the sword may make him master of a much larger adversary. I could tell thee tales, lad, as would make thy hair to rise of the way I have seen the sword used. Have to, boy! I have but little more time to give thee. Thou art an apt scholar! So! that was a good parry. A little removing of the foot, a sudden turning of the hands, a slight declining of the body, and thine opponent is at thy mercy. So, lad, so!"



THE TWO WERE DEEP IN THE MYSTERIES OF FENCING

157

The fencing lesson was repeated the next day. Francis no longer dreaded the meeting with Edward Devereaux, and when the night fell, she stole away

to the dueling place confident that she would be the victor in the affair.

There was no one at the wicket of the western gate, and she sat down to await the coming of her adversary with impatience. The broad yellow beams of the full moon lighted up the open spaces of the park with a brightness as if the sun had just set while the shadows under the trees were darker and heavier by contrast. Numerous statues gleamed in the pale light like ghosts newly risen from their sepulchres. Fountains threw jets of water into the air, caught the moonbeams, and fell again into their basins in showers of molten silver. A light breeze ruffled the leaves and came with refreshing coolness after the sultriness of the day. All was still save for the music of the night bird of song. The beauty of the scene, the melody of the nightingales, oppressed Francis with a sense of melancholy.

“Am I doing aright,” she said aloud. “Surely I could do naught else unless I betrayed my sex. Now the matter hath gone 158 so far that I must bear myself as if I were in sooth a boy. But I will not kill the lad. Only make him acknowledge my skill with the deer. I would that he would come. I know not why, but I feel my courage departing from me in the loneliness of the night.”

At this instant, as if in answer to her wish, there was the sound of hurried footsteps, and soon the form of Edward Devereaux appeared among the trees.

“I crave thy pardon, Master Stafford,” he cried, “if I have kept thee waiting. Sir Christopher Hatton detained me, and I could not come sooner. Draw and defend thyself.”

He drew his own sword as he spoke and threw

himself on guard. Without one word of reply Francis placed herself on the defensive. And then began a curious scene. Parry, thrust and parry—the steel rattled, and the strange duel was on. The nightingales ceased their singing as if amazed at the folly of the human things. The only sound that fell upon the air besides the clash of the blades was the labored breathing of the contestants. Francis' new-found knowledge stood her well in hand, and she pressed her 159 opponent furiously. Suddenly she made a false step——

"A hit! a hit!" cried Edward Devereaux.

As the rapier entered her right arm the weakness of her sex overcame the girl. She uttered a faint cry, and, for the first time in her life, fell in a dead faint.

160

CHAPTER XV

THE STRANGE WEAKNESS OF FRANCIS STAFFORD

When Francis recovered consciousness she found Edward Devereaux bending over her with the utmost concern.

"You live," he cried joyfully as she opened her eyes. "Now Heaven be praised! Methought that I had killed thee, Master Stafford."

"Methought that it was to be a tilt a l'outrance," said Francis trying to rise. "Oh," she moaned sinking back as dizziness again assailed her. "I know not why but I am so weak. Bethink you that I am dying, Master Devereaux?"

"I understand it not," returned the lad much perturbed. "The wound is naught. See! I slashed the sleeve of thy doublet and examined it. The cut should tingle and smart as all such do when green, but there is naught in it that should cause thy death. Art thou still no better?" 161

"Nay;" said Francis feebly. "I am sure that my time is come. Good Edward, I beseech you, bring me a priest that he may shrive me."

"There is no priest in all the castle walls, Francis Stafford. Know you not that priests and all such popery are forbid? I will call a chirurgeon."

"Nay; do not so," said the girl. "What this weakness that has o'ertaken me may be, I know not, unless it be death. E'er I depart I would assoil my soul of all taint. Therefore incline thine ear, Master Devereaux, and receive my confession. It cuts me to the quick to make acknowledgment, but I have hated thee because thy skill with the bow was greater than mine." She paused for a moment. It was hard for Francis Stafford to confess fault even though she believed herself to be dying. Soon she continued: "It was thine arrow, Edward Devereaux, that slew the deer. I knew it at the time, but I liked not to own thy skill. Wilt thou pardon me?"

"Gladly, gladly," said Devereaux. "Only I know not how thou couldst have seen the arrow. Thou wert not there." 162

"I was, Edward," returned Francis. "I am in truth

Francis Stafford, but I am the daughter instead of the son of my father."

"Thou!—A girl!" The youth drew back in astonishment. "And I struck thee with my sword? O chivalry! I am undone! I am undone!"

"Nay; take it not so to heart. The blame is not thine. How couldst thou know that I was other than I seemed?"

"But I struck thee!" The boy seemed almost stunned. "Would Sidney have been guilty of such an act? Would the basest hind in the field have lifted a sword against a woman? Fair mistress," he cried in distress offering his sword to her, "do one last favor for Edward Devereaux. Bury that sword in the breast of him who is unworthy to bear it."

"In the name of St. George, what means this?" cried Lord Shrope as he and Lord Hunsdon ran out from among the trees.

"By my faith, my lord," cried the chamberlain bursting into a laugh. "If there has not been a duel!" 163

"Art hurt, Francis?" and Lord Shrope bent over the girl with solicitude.

"My lord, methought just now that I was dying, but the weakness that overcame me hath departed," and the girl staggered to her feet with his assistance.

"But thou art wounded? Girl, girl, what doth it mean?" Lord Shrope caught hold of the sleeve that dangled from her bared arm.

"Edward," said the lord chamberlain sternly, "I am surprised at thee. Is this thy honor? Thou wert to treat this girl with gentleness. I had thy word. Thou

knowest also that no brawling is permitted near the person of the queen. It shall go hard with thee for this. Francis Stafford might not know the law, albeit ignorance excuses none, but thou didst. Besides, in the name of chivalry, what cause had you to draw your sword against a maiden?"

"My lord," said Devereaux who had received the rebuke with bowed head, "deal with me as you list. There is no penalty too severe to be visited upon me. There is naught that can restore self-esteem to Edward Devereaux. But, I beseech you, believe me 164 when I say that I knew not until now that yon maiden was a boy only in attire. My lord, believe this, and you may do with me as you will."

"'Tis true," corroborated Francis. "He is no more at fault for the encounter than I, my lord. And he knew not that I was not a boy, until, thinking that my end was near, I told him. I know not why I felt so weak."

"Thou didst swoon, child," said Lord Shrope. "'Tis a matter that is of frequent occurrence among thy sex. Didst never experience it before?"

"Never," replied Francis with a light laugh. Save for the sting and smart of the wound she was fully herself. "And I like it not. I' faith, were I to have them often, there would be few sins of Francis Stafford's that would be unknown."

"Didst confess to Edward?" laughed Lord Shrope. "You two should be great friends anent this."

"No;" said Francis. "I confessed that he killed the deer, and that its horns were justly his. I will not retract that, but still do I 165 count him mine enemy, even as his father and mine are at feud."

"So be it," said Edward Devereaux mournfully.

"Thou canst not, maiden, hate me more than I loathe myself."

"Come, Francis," said Lord Shrope, "we must to my lady. We were filled with alarm when thou didst not come at the usual hour, and my lord and I have sought for thee everywhere. It was lucky chance that brought us this way. Child, child, I would that thy father had thee with him, or else were here. I would also that the queen were not so obdurate in her mind against thee. But she will not have thy name broached to her. Something lies underneath it all. Hadst thou been concerned in treasonous undertakings the matter would be plain. As it is—but why think of it? That wound of thine which to a man would be a mere scratch must with thee be looked to. Let us away."

The inconvenience caused by the hurt was short, but, before the girl resumed her place among the pages, Lord Shrope again ventured to speak of her to the queen. 166

"My liege," he said one morning when the queen had been particularly gracious to him, "I would that you would let me speak of Francis Stafford. There is somewhat——"

"Now a murrain on thee, Shrope, for mentioning that name," cried Elizabeth her humor changing instantly. "We, too, have somewhat to say of Francis Stafford, but the time is not yet ripe. When it is, then will I hear what thou hast to say. Until then we would not be plagued with the matter. Hearest thou?"

"I do, my sovereign mistress," answered Lord Shrope humbly. "I hear and will heed thy commands. Only take not from me thy divine favor."

"Hadst thou ever been connected with any enterprise against her," he said to Francis as he reported the result of the interview, "I could understand it. As it is, her mood toward thee gives me great concern."

"Trouble not thyself, my good friend," answered Francis, though she herself was more disturbed than she cared to admit. Perhaps the journey to Chartley had come to the queen's ears, and that enterprise wore a different 167 complexion now to the girl than it had done ere her coming to the court. "Trouble not about me. Thou canst do no more than thou hast done."

And so she went back to her place among the pages. The greeting between her and Edward Devereaux was formal. As the time passed she became aware that the lad's manner toward her was quite different from what it had been before their encounter. Now he seemed to regard her with something akin to admiration, and assumed a protecting air toward her, assuming many of her duties, that irked the girl exceedingly.

"Prithee, sirrah," she said one day pettishly when his guardianship was more than usually apparent, "who gave thee leave to watch over me? It irks me to have thee play the protector. Beshrew me, but Francis Stafford can care for herself."

"I crave pardon, Master Stafford," replied Devereaux who never by word or deed dropped a hint that he knew aught of her sex. "I crave pardon if I have offended. I will vex thee no more."

From that time his care was more unobtrusive, 168 but Francis was still conscious of it, and it was gall and wormwood to her. She could not forget the acknowledgment of his skill had been wrung from

her when she thought herself dying. Although she could not but admit that Devereaux was innocent in the matter, she felt as though a fraud had been perpetrated upon her, and, girl-like, held him responsible for it.

And so life at the court went on. A great family under the same walls, loving and hating. The courtiers divided into factions; their followers being kept from brawling only by the presence of the queen. The serving men followed the example of their betters and squabbled in the kitchen; the butlers drank on the sly in the cellars; the maids chattered in the halls; the pages pilfered from the buttery; the matrons busied in the still rooms compounding fragrant decoctions for perfumes, or bitter doses for medicine; the stewards weighing money in the treasury; gallants dueling in the orchard or meeting their ladies on the stairs. But Francis liked it all.

The gallant courtiers with their song and 169 fence, and quibble and prattle and pun; the gaily dressed ladies; the masques in the great hall of the castle; the pomp and ceremony that attended the queen when she went abroad: all appealed to her æsthetic nature.

She soon learned to distinguish the courtiers. The Gipsy Earl of Leicester, with his swarthy handsome face; the tall and comely vice chamberlain, Sir Christopher Hatton; the venerable Burleigh; the trusty and wily Walsingham; the gay, witty and sarcastic Harrington, godson of the queen, and the fiery and impetuous Earl of Essex, stepson to Leicester.

Sometimes a low, broad-shouldered, heavily-built man would appear at court followed by brawny sailors who bore great chests of gold gathered from

the Spanish Main. Then the court would be filled with the deeds of Sir Francis Drake, and of the wondrous happenings in that new world which lay over the sea.

Youth does not examine closely below the surface, and so to the girl all was bright and beautiful. She herself would have entered 170 into the life more fully, but that the cloud of the queen's displeasure hung over her. There is no place where a sense of the august disapprobation makes itself so quickly felt as a court. And, as the days went by and Elizabeth still refused to permit her approach, Francis found herself more and more isolated.

Even the courtiers who had formerly called upon her to perform services for them now chose other of the pages, while the pages themselves no longer stopped to chat or gossip with her.

Thus the days went by.

171

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT CAME OF AN OFFER OF FRIENDSHIP

One thing had puzzled Francis upon her first arrival at the court. That was the number of those who had red hair. She soon came to know, however, that most of the ladies wore wigs of false hair over their own

tresses out of compliment to the queen. The demand for hair was therefore great, and frequently the supply was not equal to it. Divers means were employed to obtain such locks, as the girl soon found to her sorrow.

“Where art thou from, my pretty page?” asked a lady one day pausing before her.

“Hampshire, an it please your ladyship,” answered Francis grateful for the attention. She thought the lady must have recently arrived else she would not stop to bandy words with one who was without the pale of the queen’s good will.

“Hampshire? Ah, yes! I passed through the shire once with Her Majesty on one of her 172 progresses,” remarked she. “My lad, know you that you are a pretty boy? But certes! of course you do. Nathless, hear it again from me.”

“I thank your ladyship,” returned Francis with blushing cheeks. “’Tis only your kindness that bids you so to speak.”

“Hear the boy!” laughed the lady, shaking her finger archly. “Nay; I shall not give thee more compliments, but I would have thee know that I am thy friend. I am aware that the queen regards thee with disfavor, and I would aid thee. If thou carest to know more come to the Round Tower which is the dormitory of the maids of honor this night. There is my bower. I am the Lady Priscilla Rutland. Know you the place?”

“Yes, my lady; but why, why?——” began Francis, but the lady interrupted her.

“Fie, fie, naughty boy! art thou so curious? Ask no more until to-night.” With a quizzical look she went on her way leaving the girl staring after her.

"What said the Lady Priscilla to thee?" demanded Edward Devereaux drawing near. 173 "Beware of her, Francis Stafford. She is full of wiles and deceit. 'Tis unseemly to speak ill of a woman, but I would fain warn thee. When Mistress Priscilla is most gracious she is bent on mischief. Therefore do I bid thee to beware of her."

"Am I so rich in friends that I can cast from me one who proffers amity?" inquired the girl bitterly. "Who art thou, Master Devereaux, that thou sayst do this, or do that, and expect me to obey? Thou art mine foe, the son of my father's foe. What hast thou to do with me?"

"The son of thy father's foe, 'tis true," answered Devereaux, "but not thine, Francis. I make no war on women though I did unwittingly strike thee once. I repent me that ever I claimed to have slain that deer. Yet hear me, mistress. Had the foresters not come as they did, I would have given thee the horns. I came to thy father's castle to offer them to thee, but dost thou remember how didst greet me with scorn? And I, thinking thee to be thy brother, did answer in like manner."

"Thou hast been long in the telling, master," 174 remarked the girl scornfully. "Dost expect me to believe thee?"

"Upon mine honor it is the truth. But to the matter in hand. Believe me, 'tis for thy good to have naught to do with the Lady Priscilla Rutland. I have been longer at the court than thou and therefore know of that of which I speak."

"I am tired of thy watching and prating," declared Francis with spirit. "I am no child to be chidden. Leave me, and know that Francis Stafford will do as

seemeth best to her."

"As you will, mistress. But if you come to grief blame me not," and the lad walked away.

"I hate him," ejaculated the girl, her eyes filling with angry tears. "I hate him with his trite speeches and his sage advice! Why doth he not leave me in peace? I will go to the Lady Priscilla were it only to show him that I regard not his words."

Nevertheless she could not but wonder why any lady should take such a sudden interest in her, and a slight misgiving lurked in her heart as she approached the Round 175 Tower, entered its portals, and made her way to the Lady Priscilla's bower.

The lady was lying on a couch surrounded by her tire women.

"So, my pretty lad," she said with a careless glance, "thou hast come. Didst thou not have enough of flattery? Gramercy! hath it not always been true that sugar would catch more flies than vinegar?"

"What mean you?" stammered Francis, her sensitive nature becoming aware of the change in the lady's manner from the caressing sweetness of the morning to the mocking air of the moment.

"Didst think thy beauty had ensnared me?" queried the lady quizzically. "It hath. As the yellow metal of the earth hath always thrown a spell over men so the red gold of thy hair hath fascinated me. I dote on thy locks, my fair page. Ay! so much so that they and I shall ne'er be parted more. Celeste! Annabelle! have at him!"

"Why, why," cried the girl, struggling to rise as the maids set upon her. "My lady! My lady!"

But strong as her outdoor life had made 176 her, she was no match for the damsels of the Lady Priscilla. Soon she lay back in her chair bound hand and foot.

"No harm is meant thee, master page," remarked the lady as, armed with a huge pair of shears, she approached the maiden. "'Tis only that thy silken tresses have tangled my heart in their meshes until sleep hath fled my pillow. I think on their lustre day and night. And so do I take them to adorn mine own pate. Thinkest thou that they could cover a fairer head?"

"Oh, madam," cried the girl tearfully as the shears snipped relentlessly over her head, for her hair had always been a weak point with her. "O, spare my hair, I entreat!"

"Fie, sir page! Thou dost shame thy manhood. True, thou art yet guiltless of beard, yet still thou shouldst not play the woman."

"But, madam, I shall report this to the queen. What think you she will say when she knows that one of her ladies was guilty of this outrage?"

"She would not listen to thee, malapert. Should she do so, I would say that Priscilla Rutland knew no peace until she could emulate 177 in her own locks the regal color that crowned her august mistress' brow. That she would stoop to do anything could she but faintly follow such beauty. But I fear not thy disclosure, sirrah. Art thou not in disgrace? Then what boots it what thou sayst?"

"True;" said Francis and opened her lips no more. Clip, clip, went the shears until at last all of her ringlets lay, a mass of ruddy gold, in a great heap among the rushes. Francis looked at them, and then at the mocking face of the lady, and her heart

throbbed with wrath.

“Madam,” she said as the Lady Priscilla untied her bonds and she was once more free, “I will never forgive this.”

“Thou art rude, sirrah,” laughed the lady. “But I blame thee not. Be patient, master page. I will come to thee when thy locks have been woven into a wig and thou shalt see how well they become me.”

“Thou shalt never wear hair of mine,” cried Francis, white with anger. Before the lady or her maids could prevent she seized a lamp from one of the scones and threw it into the midst of red curls. 178

“Help! Help!” cried the lady and the maids simultaneously, for the lamp which was of the simplest manufacture, being a wick fed by oil, set fire instantly to the curls and surrounding rushes. Scattering to the right and left the maids called lustily: “Fire! Fire! Seize the boy!”

Staying only long enough to see that there was no probability of saving the hair, Francis dashed through the arras, and fled through chamber after chamber trying to find an exit.

“This way,” she heard a voice call as, bewildered and confused, she paused, not knowing which way to turn.

To her amazement, Edward Devereaux stood in a door of a chamber beckoning to her. She gave an exclamation of surprise but, enemy though she considered him, followed him without hesitation. Through a maze of rooms the boy led the way with the air of one to whom they were familiar; then down a flight of steps, through an open window and out upon a balcony that overlooked the great garden.

"We will conceal ourselves in the shrubbery," he said vaulting lightly over the rail 179 into the garden below, followed closely by the girl. They stopped in the shadow of a clump of close clipped black yews. "Here we can remain," he said, "until the hue and cry is over. What happened, Francis?"

Francis poured forth her story rapidly.

"I hate this vile court," she cried with a burst of passionate tears as she concluded. "I want my home! Oh, I want to go home!"

"I blame you not, Francis Stafford," said Edward Devereaux forbearing to taunt her with the fact that had she heeded his words this last misery would not have come upon her. "You feel as we all feel at times, yet are we constrained to bide here. Were it in truth to serve the queen, God bless her, there would be joy in staying. But to be at the beck and call of every noble; to bear the trains of the ladies or dance attendance upon them is not the life that a youth wishes. I pity thee, Francis, and thy plight is not so bad as it will be should yon tower burn to the ground."

"Oh!" Francis looked up with startled eyes. "I did not think of that. It was not my intent to burn the tower. Think you that it is in danger, Edward?" 180

"Mayhap not," answered the boy regarding the tower with anxious eyes. "We can but watch."

The two stood looking at the building in silence. As the moments passed the lights disappeared from the windows, darkness settled over the tower, and all was quiet. Francis drew a long breath of relief.

"It was unthinking and unheeding in me to throw the light," she said. "What if the building had burned?

The castle might have followed and thus endangered the life of the queen. Oh, miserable girl that I am! What would my father say to me?"

"Be not so cast down," comforted Edward. "Thou hadst great provocation, and pardon me, mistress, but thy temper is not of the gentlest."

"I know," said Francis with unwonted meekness. "But when I saw my hair, my pretty hair," she paused, her utterance choked, unwilling to give way to her grief before him.

The boy touched the shorn head compassionately.

"'Twill not be long before it will grow again," he said. "And so long as thou must 181 wear that garb it will be all the better. I have seen many longing glances cast at thy locks, Francis. 'Tis wonder that such mishap hath not occurred before. If thou dost not wear them, thou hast at least put it out of their power to grace the head of another. There is something in that."

"Yes;" said Francis with a flash of spirit. "I would not that harm should come to the palace, yet glad am I that the tresses were consumed. Thou hast been kind to me, Master Devereaux. And yet thou art mine enemy!"

"Better an open enemy than a deceitful friend," quoth Edward sententiously. "Say no more, Francis Stafford. If I have been of service to thee, let it in some measure atone for my churlishness in killing that deer. But we must to our several abodes else we shall bring the displeasure of my lord chamberlain upon us. We shall have enough to answer to this charge. I fear the issue to-morrow. Come!"

182

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT FRANCIS OVERHEARD

Francis awaited the coming of the day with some trepidation, fearing that she might be obliged to render an account of the night before. And indeed had the result been other than it was, she would have been called to a very serious reckoning. It was marvelous that there was not more damage sustained, but it came to her ears during the day that the fire had been extinguished before it had gone beyond the rushes. The hair had been totally consumed.

The girl soon became aware that the episode was known throughout the court. When the Lady Priscilla Rutland made her appearance there was subdued laughter and titterings among the ladies and their gallants. Francis' shorn head was the cynosure of all eyes, but her manner was so haughty that it repelled all facetious remarks.

The incident was recounted to Elizabeth. The queen laughed heartily at the discomfiture 183 of the lady for she was never ill pleased when one of her maids brought ridicule upon herself, and turning to Lord Shrope who stood near while it was being related she remarked graciously:

"Upon my word, my lord, there is more in that charge of thine than I thought. If certain rumors which have come to our ears be not verified we will have him placed nearer our person. Methinks such

spirit well trained could be made useful."

"You speak truly, madam," returned Lord Shrope. "I know not what is the nature of the rumors, but knowing Francis Stafford, I make bold to say that Rumor hath played thee false."

"We shall see, my lord," was Elizabeth's reply.

Lord Shrope feared to press the matter, but as soon as it was expedient he hastened to seek Francis.

"The tide hath turned, child," he ejaculated. "Fate hath at last become propitious to thee, for Elizabeth hath begun to look upon thee with kindness. The accident of the hair hath done for thee what naught else 184 hath been able to do," and he told her what the queen had said.

To his surprise Francis was not so elated as he expected. On the contrary his words filled her with alarm.

"Said the queen of what the rumors consisted?" she asked with uneasiness.

"No, child; but there can be naught of harm in them. Thy life hath been so innocent in thy Hampshire wilds that there is no act or thought of thine but could be laid open to the queen. Thou hast naught to fear from any gossip. 'Tis only when conscious of baseness that we fear to have our lives searched. Thou hast done nothing wrong; therefore fear nothing."

"My lord," said Francis touched by his faith, "you honor me too much. Pray Heaven that you may never have cause to repent your words."

"Tut, child! why should I repent them? Now be advised by me, and take advantage of the humor of

the queen. A good husbandman, as thou knowest, improves the sunshine to make hay. We must do likewise. It is the queen's habit to repair to her closet to 185 play each day upon the virginals. This she doeth for the most part privately, but, as she plays markedly well, she is not ill pleased to have others hear her. Especially is this true if it transpires accidentally. Now do you place yourself in the gallery behind the arras. When the queen plays seem to be drawn into her presence by the sweetness of her music, even as Orpheus drew Eurydice from among the demons. Then excuse thy intrusion with some well-timed phrase. Elizabeth is great, but she hath a weakness for judicious flattery the which, in truth, doth not ill accord with her femininity. Then, if she receive thee graciously, throw thyself upon her mercy and confess all."

"But, my lord, doth it not savor too much of guile?" objected Francis, her spirit revolting at the manner of the transaction.

"It doth, Francis, but what would you? 'Tis the manner of all courts, and the queen is not deceived thereby. Such things the rather appeal to her if the fashion of them be adroit. What boots the method then if the end is accomplished, and the queen pleased. No harm is done." 186

"My lord, I like not the style of it. It seemeth to me that nothing is ever done in a straightforward manner any more. Is life full of naught but crookedness and devious windings and turnings? Let me go to the queen openly, I beseech you."

"Nay; 'twill avail thee nothing. Subdue thy pride for once, and be guided by one to whom all the ways of the court are as an open book. Thou dost hold thyself with too much of spirit. Set not thyself above those

who are older and of superior wisdom."

Francis felt the rebuke so sharply spoken, and answered in a conciliatory manner.

"My lord, I intend not to hold my judgment higher than thine for thou art of superior wisdom and age. I am willing to be guided by thee, but I would that the end could be gained by other ways than those of crookedness."

"'Tis for thy parents' sake as well as thine," observed the other. "Thou knowest how full of anxiety they must be, and how solicitously they await thy return. Thou shouldst be willing to adopt any course that would allay that uneasiness and restore thee to their arms." 187

"And I am willing," responded the girl with fervor. "Away, indecision! Away, doubts! No longer will I listen to ye; for what says Will Shakspeare:

"'Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt.'

Speak on, my lord. Unfold again thy plan, and I will follow it, be the issue what it may."

"There spake the Stafford blood," exclaimed the nobleman approvingly. "Listen, girl, then haste thee to the queen's gallery; for on the hazard of this die depends thy fortune."

Francis gave heed to all of his instructions, and then made her way to the queen's apartment. The chamber was unoccupied, and she looked about in quest of some suitable hiding-place. At one end of the room the mullioned window opened upon a long

balcony which overlooked the private garden. Francis resolved to place herself there rather than behind the rich tapestries.

She had scarcely taken her position near an 188 open window where she could both see and hear without being herself seen when Elizabeth entered. To the girl's consternation she was not alone, but attended by Walsingham, Burleigh, Hatton and Leicester.

Elizabeth seemed much agitated, and Francis, unwilling to be a listener in matters of state, looked about her for some means of retiring when her attention was caught by a name.

"And thou art sure, Walsingham, of the truth of this matter? Hast thou indisputable proofs that Anthony Babington is guilty of design to murder us? Long have I known that he inclined toward the claims of our cousin, Mary of Scotland, but so too do my Lord Stafford, my Lord Percy, and other of our subjects. Yet none of these gentlemen would lift a hand against the person of his queen. Art sure of what thou art saying?"

"I have here the proofs, Your Majesty," returned Walsingham. "Here is a tablet upon which is painted the face of Babington and five others who are associated with him in perilous enterprise, as thou seest engraved. Further: here are letters which have passed between Mary of Scotland and the conspirators 189 in which she commends the performance of the deed. The act was to be committed on thy way to chapel."

"Then, my lord, if this be true, why have you not apprehended these men? Methinks that the safety of your queen should be your first consideration."

"Her Highness is right," cried Leicester. "Upon her

life depends not only the safety of her ministers but the welfare of the Commonwealth."

"Pardon me, my liege lady," said Walsingham, "if I have seemed to be careless of that life which is so dear to all of us. But I wished to involve Mary so deeply in this conspiracy as to open the way to rid the country of her. Your Majesty will never be safe while that woman lives. She is a menace as long as she remains in England."

"Deport her then," suggested Elizabeth. "France would gladly receive her."

"Nay, madam. That were to place her where she could abet the design of Phillip to invade England. That bourne from which no traveler returns is the only proper abode for Mary Stuart. And for thy protection, madam, 190 I took precautions. Ballard, the priest, as thou knowest, hath long since been confined in the Tower. Babington has been lodged in mine own house where I could watch him. He can be taken at any time. That time hath now come. The warrants are issued, not only for him, but for Tilney, Savage, Tichbourne, Stafford and other conspirators associated in the enterprise."

Stafford! Francis gave a faint gasp, and started up in terror. Her father? Was he to be taken with these men? But the queen was speaking:

"Lord Stafford?" she said interrogatively. "Stafford, Walsingham? Surely not he. He is an honorable gentleman, and would not be concerned in such foul designs."

"Did I not tell you some time since that it was whispered in mine ear that Stafford and his son delivered letters to Mary? The whisper hath become a certainty. Those letters were to apprise the queen

of the intent to slay thee, deliver her from custody, and raise her to the throne. This hour will I send to arrest Lord Stafford as well as the others. And then ——”



SHE GAVE A FAINT GASP

191

"Death to the traitors," said Burleigh impressively. "They must perish, as must all who are traitors to England and to England's queen."

Francis waited to hear no more. Her father to be taken and tried for treason? That would mean death. She must warn him.

She ran quickly to the other end of the balcony, and swung herself over the balustrade. Hastily she made her way through the grounds to Lord Shrope's lodgings, bursting in upon that astonished nobleman just as he was about to partake of his dinner.

192

CHAPTER XVIII

AN ADVENTURE

"I must see thee, my lord, alone," she cried in such tones that her friend arose without a word and conducted her into his own withdrawing room.

"How now, Francis? What mishap hath attended thy enterprise? Gramercy, girl! what is it? Thou art disheveled and as excited as though some untoward accident had befallen thee. What said the queen? Say

what hath happened?"

"My lord," gasped the girl scarcely able to articulate, "once thou didst love my father. For the sake of that love, I pray you, grant me aid to reach him."

"Child, what is it?" cried he in alarm "Tell me what hath occurred? Hath Elizabeth sent thee from her?"

"I have not seen the queen," said Francis trying to speak with calmness. "After I had hidden myself as you bade me, the queen in 193 company with Hatton, Lord Burleigh, Sir Francis Walsingham and Lord Leicester entered the chamber. They discovered to her a plot to slay her, and to elevate Mary of Scotland to the throne, furthered by Anthony Babington, and others, among whom they named my father. My lord, I must go to him. Aid me I beseech you."

Lord Shrope's face turned white, and he withdrew himself from the girl's clinging hands.

"A plot to slay the queen? The saints defend us! Girl, I cannot, I dare not aid thee. It would be as much as my life is worth."

"You must, my lord. I must reach my father. I must and will, my lord."

"If William Stafford be concerned in conspiracy against Elizabeth he must abide the consequences. I will aid no traitor to the queen."

"My lord, he is no traitor," cried the girl in despair. "He did wish to release Mary from bondage, for he had compassion on her misery as who hath not? But that he is party to the design to murder the queen, I deny. I know, my lord, I know." 194

"What do you know? Are you too engaged in

conspiracies? I thought thee as innocent as the daisy that grows in thy father's field."

"I am in no plots nor conspiracies, sir," declared Francis. "But we lose time in idle words. Give me thine aid to reach my father, I implore thee."

"Never, girl! And thou,—thou must be restrained of thy liberty, for I see that thou knowest much of this matter."

He turned toward the door as he spoke, but Francis was before him.

"My lord," she said, and there was determination in her manner, "thou shalt not touch me, nor cause others to touch me. Heaven be my witness that I speak truth when I say that my father is innocent of design to murder the queen. I must have means to reach him, and thou must give them to me."

"Must? Thou useth strange terms, girl! Not only will I not give thee aid, but I will take thee into custody."

He sprang toward her, but the girl turned upon him fiercely with uplifted dagger. 195

"Lay but one finger upon me, and I will slay thee," she said in a low intense voice.

"Francis Stafford, this from you?"

"Ay, sir, from me. I would kill thee, or any who sought to hold me from my father. The queen herself should not keep me from him."

"Seditious girl! those are words of treason."

"I care not," cried Francis recklessly. "I care not, my lord. And if thou wilt not give me aid thy life shall pay the forfeit."

"Dost threaten me, girl?"

“Ay! if you deny me. I will slay thee and take thy signet ring.”

“If I aid thee, what then?”

“I will tell no word of it to any man,” declared she earnestly. “No word, my lord. Thou shalt not be implicated in any manner, as indeed, why should you? I am determined to reach my father, and if to do so I must kill thee, I will do so.”

“I believe in thee, Francis. Thy love for him is great. For the sake of that love, and also for that which once I bore him, I will aid thee. Not because of thy threats, girl. They are but talk of an excited brain.” 196

“Nay, my lord; you do me wrong. I would carry them out if it were necessary, albeit I am glad to have gained the end without bloodshed.”

“Here is my signet ring, Francis. By that token the boatmen will take thee to London. By that token also thou mayest obtain horses at my house. Go, girl! Even now thou mayest be too late. As for me, with that ring on thee, ’twill be my undoing, but—take it.”

“Say that I stole it, my lord. Say that I forced it from thee,” cried Francis, receiving it from him joyfully.

“That thou forced it from me?” echoed Lord Shrope with a laugh. “Why, girl, I had rather be beheaded.”

“Then will I leave it at thy house in London when I shall have obtained a horse,” said the girl dropping upon one knee by his side. “Forgive me, my lord, for my words,” and she kissed his hand with fervor. “Thou hast always been kind to me, but my father, sir. There is naught that I would not do for him.”

"Thou art forgiven. But hasten! Time is precious."

Without further parley Francis bounded 197 from the room, and hurried through the palace yard, out of the great gate and down to the steps that led to the river.

Within the yard and at the landing-place there was a great deal of confusion. Servitors were running to and fro, courtiers were grouped together talking excitedly, while numerous officials and dignitaries were taking boat for London. Among these latter the girl discerned the form of Walsingham, the queen's secretary of state. Her heart sank at sight of him.

"He goes to send pursuivants for my father," was her thought, and her conclusion was correct. The secretary was indeed on his way to cause the arrest of the conspirators.

Seeing her among the followers of Walsingham, the watermen permitted her to enter one of the wherries and she found herself being carried to London more expeditiously than would otherwise have been the case. There was no indulgence on the part of the boatmen in song. Stern and silent they bent to their oars, responding with all their mights to Walsingham's "Faster, my men, faster!"

It seemed to Francis that they no sooner 198 reached London than the whole city was ablaze with the news. Traffic was suspended, and citizens discussed in hushed accents the plot to kill the queen.

Francis made haste to Lord Shrope's house in Broad Street, and by means of the ring, procured an excellent horse. Mounting him she urged the animal to great speed and was soon outside the city.

"Heaven grant that I may reach my father before

Walsingham's men," she murmured. "I have gotten the start of them somehow. Let me make the most of it."

Now the reason for her advantage was this: several of the conspirators, notably the six who had associated together to assassinate the queen, were in London awaiting their opportunity. Anthony Babington lodged at Walsingham's own house, lured there by the wily secretary under pretense of taking him into his confidence; while Babington, to further his own ends, seemingly acquiesced in the minister's plans. It was a case of duplicity against duplicity, craft matched against craft, with the odds on the side of Elizabeth's brainy secretary. For the reason that the chief conspirators 199 were in London, Walsingham tarried there to apprehend them before sending forth to arrest the other gentlemen concerned in the plot who lived somewhat remotely from the city. But the conspirators had gotten wind of his intentions, and when he reached the city they had fled.

All this the girl did not know until long afterward. Now she pushed forward with the utmost expedition, hoping to reach the Hall before the pursuivants started. The weather was warm, it being the last of July, and the Hall was two days' journey from London by hard riding. Therefore whatever distance she might gain in the first stage of the trip would be of incalculable advantage.

Toward the end of the day, her horse showing great signs of fatigue, Francis was of necessity forced to allow the animal to settle into a walk. As the steed slackened pace the girl relapsed into thought. So absorbed did she become that she was startled into something closely akin to fright when a man sprang

from behind some trees, ran into the road, and seized her horse by the bridle.

At this time the woods and forests of England 200 were infested by highwaymen, gipsies, or Egyptians as they were called, and wandering vagrants whose depredations had been the cause of severe legislation to rid the country of its pests. It had not occurred to Francis that she might be molested by any of these, and she could not forbear a slight scream at the appearance of the man.

His clothing, though of rich material, was torn and ragged as though it had been caught by thorns in the unfrequented paths of the forest. His head was bare of covering, his locks disheveled; his face and hands were of an uneven dark color as though stained with some decoction unskilfully applied. His whole manner was so distraught that Francis trembled excessively.

“Boy,” cried the man wildly, “dismount, and give me thy horse.”

At the first sound of his voice the girl started violently, leaned forward and scanned his face keenly.

“Anthony Babington,” she cried as she recognized the unhappy man, “how came you here?”

“You know me?” cried Babington in dismay. 201 “Who in the fiend’s name are you that know me?”

“One that knows all of your nefarious purpose,” said Francis accusingly, her girl nature imputing to this man her father’s trouble. “Wretched man, knowest thou that the queen’s men search for thee even now?”

“Ha!” cried Babington peering into her face, “’tis the

page that was with Stafford at Salisbury. Boy, where is thy master?"

"At Stafford Hall."

"And thou! Thou art not with him. Hast thou been at court?" Babington peered suspiciously into her countenance.

"Yes;" answered the unsuspecting girl. "I have been at court, Anthony Babington, where all thy deed is known. The whole palace, ay! the whole city of London is in an uproar because of the discovery of thy intention to kill the queen. I was present when the matter was discovered to the queen. Death will be thy portion if thou art apprehended. Why stand you here? If you would save yourself, fly!"

"Thou present when it was discovered? Then it is thou who hast betrayed us? Varlet! 202 Base brawler of men's secrets! die, ere thou canst betray others."

His dagger flashed in the air as he spoke, but ere it could descend Francis gave him a sharp, stinging cut across the face with her whip. With a cry of rage Babington let fall the poniard, and before he could regain the weapon the girl dashed away. On she rode, never stopping until at length the night fell, and she knew that she was far from the wretched Babington.

203

CHAPTER XIX

A SHELTER FROM THE STORM

The morning of the second day found Francis once more on her way without having seen any of the queen's men. The day was unusually warm, and both the girl and her horse, wearied by the hard riding, showed the effects of the journey. But fatigued though she was she pushed resolutely on, pausing only to care for the tired animal. At length the road entered a deep wood and she gave a sigh of relief as the grateful shade of the trees enveloped her. The horse too seemed to revive somewhat and went forward with more briskness.

So dense was the shade that Francis was not aware that the sky had become overcast with clouds until a distant peal of thunder broke upon her ear.

"A storm is coming," she cried. "I must seek shelter; but where?"

It was a problem that would have puzzled a 204 head older and wiser than that of Francis Stafford. She was in the midst of a dense forest. She looked about her in dismay.

"Beshrew me!" she uttered, "these woods are impenetrable enough to furnish hiding-place for Robin Hood and all his men. Surely there must be an inn or house somewhere near. Patience! I will find

shelter. On, good horse!”

The mutterings of the thunder became louder and deeper as the storm approached. The clouds scudded across the heavens swiftly, borne on the wings of a heavy wind. Suddenly a blinding flash of lightning zigzagged across the sky followed by a deafening crash of thunder, and the storm broke in all its force. The rain came down in torrents. The trees bent and swayed in the wind, tossing their proud heads as if in defiance to the storm king. The horse snorted in terror as flash after flash of lightning blazed across the road. Francis was drenched to the skin, but she struggled on, soothing the frightened animal as best she could.

Presently she thought she saw an opening in the trees. Drawing closer she was overjoyed 205 to find that there really was a path through the wood. Turning into it she followed it for some distance, finally coming to an open glade where stood what looked to be an ancient inn.

One wing had fallen into decay. The rose covered trellis of the porch lay rotting on the ground. All about the building hung an air of dilapidation and decay that forbade the thought of cheer. One part of the tumbled down structure looked as though it might serve as a shelter, and the girl hastened to the door of this portion and knocked.

There was no response, and Francis rapped again; this time more loudly than before, resolving to force the door should there be no answer. She waited a few moments, and then there came a high shrill voice from behind the closed door.

“Who’s there?”

“One who desires shelter from the storm. Open, i’

God's name!"

"And who be ye that seek shelter of Dame Margery? Know you not that men call me the white witch?"

"I care not," exclaimed Francis impatiently. 206 "Open, woman, else I will force the door."

There was a muttering of protest, then the bolts were drawn, and the door opened. A woman stood in the aperture. A woman, old and bent, and looking not unlike the witch she called herself. A hood of brown sat on her white hair; a brown lappet was thrown about her, and she supported herself by means of a staff. Her black eyes regarded the girl with keenness from under her shaggy brows.

"Now thou art brave, forsooth, who dares take shelter here," she said. "There are those, and they are many, who would brave the fiercest storm rather than risk Dame Margery's evil eye."

"But not I," said Francis boldly. Nevertheless she made the sign of the cross, for the age was a superstitious one and the belief in witches and witchcraft well nigh universal. "Good dame, tell me, I pray, where I may put my horse. Give us both shelter, and thou shall have this angel for thy guerdon."

She held the gold piece out as she spoke. The woman's fingers closed over it eagerly.

"Back of the house are the stables," she 207 said a trifle more civilly. "There will ye find food for the beast as well as cover. But thou wilt have to be thine own groom, young sir. These old bones be racked with rheums."

"I thank you," answered Francis briefly. Following the direction indicated by the beldame she led her

horse round the house where she found the stables in somewhat better condition than she had expected. After looking after the welfare of the animal she muttered a short prayer, and entered the dwelling with a bold front.

The door gave entrance into a large, low ceiled room whose rafters were grimed with smoke and dirt. A low bed stood in one corner of the room; a small deal table and three chairs completed the simple furnishings, but the girl's eyes were caught by the strings of herbs that depended from the walls, and the cabalistic signs that were everywhere in evidence. A fire burned on the hearth and over it, depending from a crane, hung a large kettle in which something savory was brewing.

A black cat which had been stretched near the fire rose at her entrance, and spat as if he 208 resented the intrusion as well as his mistress. Francis glanced at the mysterious signs, the black cat, the old woman, and a half wish came into her mind that she had braved the fury of the storm rather than enter such an abode. As if in answer to her thought the dame spoke:

"Draw nigh the fire, boy, and dry thy wet garments. Marry! hearest thou the rain? Even the dwelling of a witch, I trow, is better than to be out in't. Hark!"

The storm had redoubled its fury. The wind shrieked and howled as though a thousand demons were loosed from durance and were exulting in their freedom. The rain came down in sheets, while peal on peal of thunder crashed and rolled. Francis shuddered and drew nearer the fire. The steam arose from her saturated garments, and rendered her uncomfortable. The old woman noticed her discomfort and said not unkindly:

"Boy, no garments have I of thy sex, but if thou wilt play the woman for the nonce thou canst have of mine apparel until thine own be dried."

For the first time since she had left the 209 court Francis laughed. She flushed rosy red under the old woman's glance, and then grew bewildered and confused at her continued scrutiny, and answered with an effort at self-command.

"I thank you, my good dame, but I will stay as I am an it please you."

"Content yourself,—master," answered the dame with the slightest hesitation before the word. "'Twas but to soften thy distress."

She spoke no more, but busied herself about the brew over the fire. Presently she placed some of the stew before the girl, saying,

"Eat, sir. Thou wilt find it to thy liking, I trow."

"It is in sooth," replied Francis falling to heartily. Under the influence of warmth and comfort her fear of the woman had vanished. "Think you, good mother, that the storm will soon pass?"

"Nay;" answered she her face softening at the appellation. "Not till midnight comes; for

"When storm comes at end of day
The midnight hour takes the rain away.'"

The girl's face clouded. 210

"Then I must forth at midnight," she declared.

"Thy need must be urgent that impels thee onward through the darkness," observed the woman keenly. "Boy, what is thy business? Would have me read the

stars for its issue?"

"Nay, mother," answered Francis in agitated tones. "Were it favorable all would be well, but if it were evil I would not know of it. But it will not be ill. It must not, shall not be!"

She arose and paced the floor, chafing that she must be inactive when time was so precious. The dame regarded her curiously. Presently she spoke.

"Mistress, I may not call thee because of thy garb. Master, I cannot because of thy sex; but whatsoe'er thou art, tell old Margery why thou art so dressed, and why you wander forth alone?"

"Woman, are you in very truth a witch?" cried the girl in astonishment.

"So men call me," returned Margery dryly.

"But save for the few who were told, not one at the court penetrated my masquerade," 211 said Francis. "Then how is it, that thou, at our first meeting, know that my dress covers a maiden?"

"Old Margery hath lived long, and her eyes are sharp," answered the dame. "But tell me. What brings you hither, if you are of the court?"

Francis paused in front of the woman and looked long and earnestly into her eyes. Something she saw there made her say impulsively:

"Good mother, thou must be in truth the witch men call thee, because thine eyes impel me to tell thee all. Listen! and I will unfold the tale from the beginning." And she recounted the affair of Elizabeth's coming, the reason for donning the page's dress, her going to court, and now the cause of her desire to reach her father. The woman listened

attentively.

“Child, thou hast done well. And thou sayst that none of the queen’s men have passed thee?”

“None, mother. I have outstripped them all,” exulted Francis. “Let me but continue in the lead for a few hours longer so that my 212 father may have opportunity to get to a place of safety, and I care not how soon they come.”

At this moment there came the sound of hoarse shouting of men, followed by the clatter of horses’ hoofs, and then above the storm came a loud knocking at the door.

“Open in the name of the queen,” came the stern command.

213

CHAPTER XX

FRANCIS FINDS A HELPER

“It is the pursuivants,” cried Francis in consternation. “Good mother, hide me, I entreat. They must not know that I am here.”

Then, indeed, was she thankful that she had taken the old woman into her confidence. The beldame arose and with an agility that was surprising in one of her years glided across the room, and opened a

small door that was so small, and black, and grimy that it had escaped the girl's attention.

"Enter," whispered the woman. "Enter and fear nothing. They shall not know of thy presence."

Francis passed through the entrance and closed the door after her just as the rapping came again with renewed vigor.

"What, ho inside!" came a voice. "Give entrance, whosoe'er ye be, else it will be made by force."

"Now who be ye who would seek admittance 214 to the house of a white witch?" asked Dame Margery's shrill voice.

"Gramercy! we will show who we be," and there was a sound as of a man pressing against the panels of the door. The dame undid the fastenings and threw open the door. A man who had evidently put his shoulder against it for the purpose of forcing an entrance sprawled his entire length on the floor. With a loud laugh at his discomfiture several other men crowded into the room.

"Marry! what an unmannerly welcome," cried the man picking himself up. "My good woman, is this the way to receive guests?"

"Be that the way to enter a body's house?" cried the dame. "Ye bean't gentle, surely, else ye would know that an old woman can't move the swiftest when she's bent with the rheums."

"I crave thy pardon, dame," said the leader who was evidently a man of high degree. "I crave thy pardon for such an unceremonious entrance. I thought that no one was within. Give us shelter from the storm and supper. Then must we on our way. We pay for your trouble." 215

"Well, ye won't get either supper or shelter here. Do ye take this for an inn?" she asked querulously.

"Nay, dame; for then would we find greeting and good cheer," returned the leader good naturedly. "This seemeth more in truth like witch's dwelling. Whatsoe'er it be here we stay until the storm abates. We are from the queen, woman."

Dame Margery said no more, but began to bestir herself about the supper.

"Some of you see about the horses," commanded the leader, placing himself before the fire.

Two of the men went out and presently returned.

"'Tis a crazy sort of a barn, sir," said one, "but it encloses as good a bit of horseflesh as e'er trod a heath. How now, dame? Where didst thou get so fine a horse?"

"Are there men here other than us?" asked the leader hastily. "If there be we must look to ourselves for we are on the queen's business, and naught must delay us."

"No men, sir," answered Margery.

"The stable is bad, sayst thou, Martin?" 216 with an expression of relief on his face as he heard the dame's reply. "The dwelling, too, is none of the best."

"None asked ye to enter it," said the woman bluntly. "An ye like not mine abode, ye can leave it."

"Hold thy tongue, old beldame!" said the leader imperiously. "Nay;" as the dame flashed an angry glance at him, "be not prodigal of thy looks. An thou cast the evil eye on me, I'll sheathe my blade in thy flesh. We want no witch's work here."

Margery made no answer, but placed the supper before them. The men fell to, and soon disposed of all that was on the table. Then the leader began to show signs of impatience for the storm had not yet subsided.

“Beshrew me!” he exclaimed to his companions. “I fear that we will be compelled to pass the night in this vile place. Marry! how it rains!”

“It doth, Master Wainwright,” answered one. “But better the storm than pass the night in the abode of a witch, and if yon dame be not the veriest witch in the kingdom then I ne’er saw one. The house makes me creepy. 217 ’Tis fitting place for some dark deed to be committed. The horse in the stable, I dare say, belonged to some belated traveler caught like ourselves in a storm afar from an inn. Marked you how she answered me not when I spoke on’t? How the wind howls, and how blue the taper burns! ’Sblood! I’d sooner be out in the storm.”

“I would not,” observed Master Wainwright. “One drenching a day is enough for me. Marry! there is naught to do but to possess our souls in patience. I dare say, we will o’ertake the boy on the morrow.”

“Marry! yes, master. If he be out in this storm he will drown like a rat. Who would have thought that he could have kept so far ahead of us?”

“They ride fast who flee from justice,” quoth another sententiously. “If we be not careful he will outstrip us, and we will be void of our quarry.”

“Be not alarmed. We will o’ertake him,” reassured the leader. “Though I like not for the storm to continue. It delays us too much.” He mused for a moment and then turned to the dame suddenly. 218

"My good woman," he said, "have ye seen aught of a boy to-day?"

"A boy? What boy?" asked she stupidly.

"A boy of the court in page's dress. Hast thou seen him?"

"No boy have I seen this day," answered the dame stolidly. "Marry! nor for many days for the matter of that. What did ye want with the boy?"

"We have a warrant for his arrest," said the leader. "Also one for his father, Lord William Stafford. What think you, my good dame? There has been foul attempt to slay the queen."

"Ye do well to say 'attempt,'" said the woman. "Elizabeth will never die by the hand of an assassin."

"Say ye so?" asked the leader eagerly. "Good dame, how will she die?"

"Not in her bed. No hand shall be raised against her, and she dies by misease; yet shall she not die in bed," and the old woman nodded prophetically.

"Ask her how long the queen will live," whispered one. "The queen waxeth in years and it may not be amiss to be prepared." 219

"Seek no further, sir," said Margery quickly. "Know that thou wilt never live to see the day of her death. Thy time is nigh."

"Now a murrain on thee for that foul prophecy," cried the man starting up, his hand on the hilt of his sword. But Master Wainwright interposed.

"No brawling, sirrah. We are on the queen's business. Thou and thy right arm may be needed ere it be completed. Have done!"

The man sank back. Quiet fell upon them, broken only by the sweep of the rain against the house and the fitful howling of the wind. Night deepened, and still the storm continued. The men disposed themselves about the hearth for their damp clothing made them chilly, and soon one after another fell into slumber, until, after a time, all were asleep. Then Dame Margery rose to her feet and tiptoeing to the small door opened it, and passed out of the room.

Francis stood just within where she could hear everything that went on in the outer chamber. She came forward eagerly as the woman entered. 220

"Mother," she cried, "those men must be detained here, but how? Canst thou help me?"

"Child, I could make them sleep until the sun was high noon, but they are about the queen's business, and I durst not."

"Good mother, tell me how, and let me do it," coaxed Francis. "I must get to my father. O, if you have ever had a loved one, for the sake of that one, give me the aid I ask. I am but a girl. Weak and helpless with the great queen and her ministers against me. Yet I must warn my father. O dame, I lack so little of being home. If I had a few hours more, just a few hours! Please, good mother,"—she paused, and flinging her arms around the woman's neck, she kissed her. Dame Margery's frame shook and she held the girl close. Then she whispered, stroking her hair softly:

"My bonny maiden, thou shalt have thy wish. For that kiss I would give thee anything. It hath been years since Margery felt the touch of fresh young lips. Men fear me, and children shun me, but thou hast not. Once more, child." 221

Gratefully Francis kissed her; not once but many times. Then the dame stole softly out, and the girl followed her. To a corner cupboard the old woman went, and taking out a phial that held some dark mixture she held it to the light for a second and shook it gently. Then with that marvelous agility that had caused Francis to wonder earlier in the evening she glided among the sleeping men and let fall a tiny drop of the decoction near the nostrils of each slumberer. A sweet odor filled the room so subtle and penetrating that the girl beat a hasty retreat into the smaller chamber, fearing that she too might be overcome by it.

"Come, child," called Margery. "They sleep as slept the seven sleepers of long ago. And so they will sleep until the dawn. I dare not give them more for fear of death. And they are the queen's men. Thou wilt have to hasten, child. With these few hours' advantage thou shouldst reach thy father in time. The storm hath broken. Now thou must away."

The storm had indeed passed. The rain still fell, but gently. In the west a few stars peeped between the rifts in the clouds. 222

"How can I ever repay thee?" whispered Francis embracing the dame warmly. "Heaven bless thee, mother. Farewell!"

"Farewell. Fear naught. Trust to the guidance of thy horse and this lanthorne. The night is dark, but the dawn comes early. Ride now for thy life, girl. Farewell."

223

CHAPTER XXI

AN UNLOOKED FOR RECEPTION

The night was dark as Dame Margery had said. The broken clouds that flitted across the sky obscured the faint light of the stars that struggled to peep through the nebulous masses. At another time the superstitious spirit of the girl would have shrunk from the noises of the wood, and found omens in the hoot of the owl, or the moaning of the wind as it sobbed fitfully through the trees. But now the screech of the night bird and the soughing of the wind fell upon deaf ears for she was so absorbed in the one idea of getting home that all else was unheeded.

In the darkness she was obliged to proceed slowly, trusting rather to the instinct of the horse than to the dim light of the lantern. The dripping trees saturated her garments almost as thoroughly as if it were indeed raining, but the fire of filial love was in her heart, and its flame rendered her impervious to 224 creature discomforts. At length the dawn came, and the sun's bright beams soon dispersed the mists of the night, his revivifying rays inspiring the girl with new courage. The horse, of his own volition, struck into a brisker gait, and Francis was obliged to control her emotion as each succeeding moment brought her nearer the Hall.

Just before noon the turrets of Stafford Hall came into view. With a cry of exultation she spurred her

horse forward.

“On, on!” she cried. “Thy journey is almost done!”

At full gallop she sped through the gates and into the base court. Her father’s horse, bridled and saddled, stood at the foot of the steps leading to the terrace.

“Mistress Francis,” cried Brooks, the old servitor who held the horse, “how came you here?”

“My father?” gasped Francis as she sprang to the ground.

“In the presence chamber, mistress. He——”

She waited to hear no more, but ran up the steps, through the ante-rooms, and bounded into the presence chamber. 225

Lord Stafford and his wife stood with their arms twined about each other, as if in the act of saying farewell. They started at her entrance, the utmost surprise upon their faces when they saw who the intruder was.

“Father!” exclaimed Francis running to him with outstretched arms. “Father!”

Her father did not stir to meet her, but, folding his arms, regarded her sternly.

“False girl,” he cried, “why come you hither?”

“To save thee, my father.” Francis paused bewildered by his manner. “Father, they accuse thee of treason. The queen’s men are coming to take thee to the Tower. You must fly.”

“And do you bid me fly? You who have betrayed me? You whom I trusted? You who vowed that not even the rack could extort one syllable from your lips? Base girl, is it thus that thou dost requite my love?

Away! Go back to that court whose enticements have caused thee to betray thy father."

"I betray thee?" cried Francis in horror. "I, Francis Stafford, betray my father? Never! Never!" 226

"Seek not to deny it, girl. One hath been here from the court. I know that every incident of the journey to Chartley, even to the meeting with Babington at Salisbury, is known to the queen. Who knew all this but thee? Fool that I was to confide in thee! But thou wert so cock-sure of thy ability! So apt and froward with thy promises, that I believed in thee."

"My father, if there are those who say that I betrayed thee, they speak not the truth. I have come to warn thee of peril. Even now the pursuivants are on their way to take thee. Oh, sir! tarry no longer but fly. 'Tis death to be taken, father. Death!"

She wrung her hands as her father stood there so unheedingly when time was so precious.

"And if it be death, by whose hand hath it been wrought? Why hast thou dallied at court so long? Why dost thou still wear that garb which shames thy modesty?"

"Father, hear me," cried Francis, flinging herself at his feet. "If ever thou didst bear aught of affection to her that kneels to thee, believe me when I say that I betrayed thee 227 not. May my tongue be palsied if I speak not the truth. Father, by all the saints, I——"

"False girl, perjure not thy soul," and he strove to release himself from her grasp. "Unclasp thine arms, Francis Stafford, and hearken to a father's curse. May ——"

"Hold, my lord!" shrieked Lady Stafford. "Curse not thy child! Curse not thine own flesh and blood!"

"No child is she of mine, madam. Rather do I believe her some changeling forced upon us by witches' craft. Never did Stafford betray trust before! Stay me not! Whether child or changeling yet still shall she be cursed."

"Father, father, I am innocent of having done this monstrous, wicked thing! 'Twas Anthony Babington that hath so maliciously spoken about me! I know ——"

"How know you that 'twas Babington?" demanded her father quickly. "Girl, thine own words condemn thee. Say no more! I will listen to thy false words no longer. I curse the day that thou wast born. I curse thee——"

"Forbear," shrieked the girl in agonized 228 tones. "O, father, withhold thy curse! Hear me for the love of mercy."

But Lord Stafford tore himself from her clinging hands, and hastily left the room.

"Father," cried Francis, darting after him. "Father!"

He heeded her not, but strode out of the castle to the place where old Brooks held his horse.

"Father, father!" The frantic girl reached him as he mounted his steed and held out her arms entreatingly. But the father answered never a word, and without another look at her gave spur to his horse, and dashed through the open gates of the court.

Then a great cry of anguish broke from the girl's lips. A black mist rose before her eyes, engulfing her in its choking, smothering embrace. She swayed unsteadily and fell in an unconscious heap upon the ground.

229

CHAPTER XXII

AS IT FELL OUT

When consciousness returned to Francis Stafford she was lying on a couch in the presence chamber with her mother bending over her.

"Mother," she cried as a full realization of all that had taken place rushed over her. "He is gone! My father is gone, and he hath cursed me!" And she burst into a flood of tears.

"Think not on it, child," said the mother, her own eyes streaming. "Thou didst try him greatly. It was ill in thee not to return to us, but thou art young and full well do I ken the allurements that court life holds for youth. But this thy father could have pardoned had this been all."

"My mother, art thou too against me?" The girl struggled to a sitting position, her indignation giving her strength. "Dost thou believe that I betrayed my father, or 230 that I lingered at court from choice? Then what avails it if I tell thee all? Am I not thy child, and wherefore should I do so evil? Would that I had died ere this had come upon me!"

She flung herself back upon the couch and wept bitterly. Her mother, alarmed at the intensity of her grief, strove to soothe her.

"Let me make my moan, mother. If my father would have but listened, he would have known that I did not betray him; but he would not. He would not!"

"Judge him not too harshly, Francis. Now tell me the cause of thy delay. Why thou didst not send us word? Why thou didst not return?"

"Who was there to do my bidding? I would not have been here even yet had I not heard the queen and her ministers planning to arrest the conspirators. So soon as I heard my father's name I left the court without leave, and came hither with all dispatch to warn him."

"Tell me all, Francis," urged her mother. "All that hath happened thee from the beginning. 231 I fear me much that thy father hath done thee wrong."

"He hath," said Francis bitterly. "Grievous wrong! And as I live by bread, there hath never been aught but love toward him in my heart. But now——Oh, my mother," she cried with another outburst of woe, "my heart is broken!"

"There, child! weep not so much. Thy father will repent him of his injustice when he learns the truth. Dry thine eyes and tell all that hath befallen thee."

Presently, when she had become calmer, Francis complied with the request, and told her mother all that had occurred since she left her.

"And thy hair! Thy pretty hair!" cried Lady Stafford weeping when Francis related that incident. "Ah, child, I repent me that ever I consented to let thee leave me. But continue, I pray thee! I would know all."

And the girl continued her narrative to its close. Her mother clasped her close when she finished it.

"We have done thee great wrong, my daughter. Forgive me and thy father also. 232 We should have known that thou wouldst not have done this thing,

but when we did not hear, and thou didst not come, we marveled at it greatly. This morning Anthony Babington came, and told us that all was known to the queen through thy treachery. And thou must be lenient toward us that we believed him."

"But why didst thou, mother! Have I been so ill a daughter that ye must believe the first word against me? I can not forgive it."

"Not now, my child, while thy hurt is recent, but later thy mother must not sue to thee in vain. But, Francis, come to my tiring room. I mislike that garb. Methinks it hath caused all our woe. Come, and let me see thee in thy proper attire once more."

"Nay;" said Francis resolutely, "from this time forth I wear none other. 'Twas at my father's bidding that I donned it. I will discard it only when he calls me 'daughter' again. Otherwise I shall go to my grave Francis Stafford, the page."

"Francis, Francis," wailed the lady, "thou art distraught. Entertain not such purpose, I entreat. Soften thy proud heart, and be 233 not stubborn when thy mother pleads with thee. For my sake, child, remove that dress."

"Nay, mother;" replied she obdurately, "seek not to change my purpose, for it is fixed. This page's dress I wear until my father takes me once more to his heart."

"Thou art as unyielding and inflexible as thy sire," cried her mother. "What can I do between ye? Have thy way, thou wilful girl! Naught remains for thy mother but to pray that the day may be hastened when all will be well with us again."

Just then there came a clattering of hoofs in the

courtyard, and the sound of voices. Lady Stafford sprang to her feet in alarm.

“What is it?” she cried. “Oh, child, what if they have taken thy father?”

“’Tis the queen’s men,” said Francis starting up. “They seek my father, but they seek in vain. I have foiled them.”

A sense of exultation swept over her, causing her to forget for the time her father’s distrust. She faced the men who entered the apartment triumphantly.

“What seek ye?” she demanded with scorn. 234

“Thy father, boy, and thee,” was the reply. “We know that thou hast warned him so that he hath given us the slip. But marry! the game is but afoot, and we the greyhounds who will bring him to bay. Of him anon. Here is a warrant for one Francis Stafford. Art thou he?”

“I am,” answered the girl haughtily.

“Then, Francis Stafford, son of William, Lord Stafford, in the name of the queen, I arrest thee on a charge of high treason.”

“Arrest thee, Francis?” cried her mother flinging her arms about the girl. “Oh, child, why thee?”

“I was with my father at Chartley, mother,” said Francis calmly. “If he be guilty of treason, why, then so am I.”

“But I knew not that thou wert in danger,” sobbed the mother. “Oh, Francis, why didst thou not go with thy father? Why didst thou not tell him of it? Why, why?”

“I did not think of it,” answered Francis simply. “I thought only of him.”

"How thou hast been misjudged," exclaimed the lady weeping bitterly. "Oh, cruel, cruel fate that hath befallen thee!" 235

"Cease thy lamentation, woman," commanded the officer sternly. "Make ready to accompany thy son to London."

"I?"

"My mother!" exclaimed Francis and her mother in one breath.

"Thou. Thou canst no longer remain here, because this Hall and its estate are forfeited to the crown by the treason of its owner. 'Tis the queen's command that thou dost go with thy son to London there to be immured in the Tower. Make ready, madam. Ye two must this hour to the queen."

"But what crime have I committed?" asked the poor lady in dismay.

"I know not, madam. 'Tis the queen's command," was the reply.

"'Tis the worst of all crimes, my mother," said Francis with irony. "Thou art too fair. 'Tis a fault unforgivable by Elizabeth."

"Hush, child," whispered the lady quickly. "Make our sad plight no worse by thy railing."

"Stay, boy!" cried Wainwright as Francis started to leave the apartment with her mother. "Remain where thou art. I would have speech with thee." 236

Wonderingly, the girl paused, and Master Wainwright, making a peremptory motion to Lady Stafford to leave them, continued:

"Thou art too elusive to be out of my sight, young sir. Now answer these queries. Wert thou in the

dwelling of old Margery when we entered it?"

"Marry! what is it to thee where I was," answered Francis, desiring not to get the dame into trouble.

"Be not too pert, sir page. I wrung from the old woman that thou wert, after I found that we o'erslept. Now, boy, was it due to thee or to the witch that we slept so long?"

"To me, master," replied the girl boldly. "Upon my shoulders cast all blame. Impute nothing to the old woman. I did all, for I knew that I must distance thee to warn my father. And thou wert outstripped! Thou wert close after the game but he took to soil, and the track is lost, good master."

"Crow on, my bantam," cried Wainwright angrily. "Thou wilt sing another tune when Sir Francis Walsingham hath thee. And mark me, sirrah! The track will be regained, and the game brought to cover ere thou dost 237 reach the Tower. Then upon Tower Hill thou canst behold its breaking up."

Francis turned pale as death at this reference to what would be her father's fate if taken.

"Ah, that hipped thee, young cock! Dost ken what happens to traitors? 'Twill be thy fate as well as thy father's. Dream on't, master! Now must you and your mother take horse for London."

"To-day?" said Francis faintly, a sense of weakness coming over her. "Oh, sir, not to-day, beseech you. I have ridden so much. I am so tired!"

"This day shalt thou start," said Wainwright rejoicing with all the might of a small man in the power over another. "No pleading will avail thee. Thou must go!"

"As you will then," answered Francis wearily, though every muscle in her tired body rebelled at this further tax upon her strength.

And so the long, weary journey to London was again begun.

238

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE TOWER OF LONDON

It was a dreary journey. The motive which had sustained the girl in her former trip from the city to her home was lacking. The fatigue incident to travel, the unjust reception of her by her father, with the doubtfulness of his escape, and the uncertainty of what was to become of her mother and herself, now bore upon her with such overwhelming force as to almost crush even her brave spirit. Lady Stafford suffered a like mental anguish, and so, on account of the weakness of the two prisoners, the guard was compelled to return to the city by slow stages.

Upon their entrance within the gates they found that the whole city was in an uproar, caused by the apprehension of Anthony Babington and several others of the conspirators. Bells were ringing, bonfires burning and the most vehement satisfaction expressed by the people, who, with shouts and

singing of 239 psalms, gave every demonstration of joy at the escape of the queen from their treasonable designs.

When it became known that these two were also implicated, a hooting, jeering mob followed them through the streets, hurling vile epithets upon them, and taunting them with their disgrace. Lady Stafford drooped under the attack, but the assault roused the spirit in Francis, and she sat erect, her flashing eyes and contemptuous looks bespeaking the tempest that raged in her heart.

"Bear up, my mother," she said to Lady Stafford who could scarcely sit her horse. "Give not the rabble cause to laugh and jibe."

"But, my child, that we of the house of Stafford, be thus dishonored!" exclaimed the lady in anguish. "Oh, I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it! Carest thou not for this disgrace?"

"I could weep my heart out, if it would avail aught," uttered Francis in low, intense tones. "Bethink you, mother, that this mob of the streets shall see one tear from me? Nay; 'twould give them too much of pleasure."

"And has it come to this? That thou 240 shouldst be an example to thy mother?" asked the lady sitting up. "Let them rage! Not another tear shall they behold. There will be time enough for tears later."

And so saying she followed her daughter's example and rode with uplifted head, apparently indifferent to the taunts of the people who followed them down to the waterside, even to the wharf where they embarked for the Tower.

Babington and his companions occupied another

boat which preceded them down the river, and Francis felt relief when she saw that her father was not among them. The tide being in their favor, the boat passed swiftly down the river, shot London Bridge, and all too soon drew near the sombre mass of the Tower.

In spite of her undaunted front Francis could not forbear a shudder as their wherry drew near Saint Thomas' tower. As a mere matter of form the boats were challenged by the sentinels. A wicket, composed of immense beams of wood, was opened and they shot beneath the gloomy arch, through the Traitors' gate. A feeling of dread took possession of 241 the girl as her gaze fell upon the slimy walls of the dismal arch. The wherrymen ceased rowing and the water rippled sullenly against the sides of the boat which soon, impelled by the former efforts of the oarsmen, touched the steps.

The lieutenant of the Tower, followed by numerous warders, appeared and gave acknowledgment of their receipt to the guard. Slowly the prisoners ascended the damp and slippery steps, Francis and her mother being the last to go up. A few quick commands and Babington and the others were hurried away, each man between two warders. Then the lieutenant turned to Lady Stafford.

"Follow me, madam," he said making a respectful salutation. "I will conduct you to your chamber, where, I pray your pardon, my orders are to place you under some restraint. You, young master, will remain here until my return. The time will be but short."

"Oh," cried the lady in supplicating tones, "are we to be separated?"

"Such are my commands, madam," returned he in tones of commiseration. "Thou art to 242 be confined in the Brick Tower. Thy son in the Beauchamp Tower. Come!"

"Oh, my child! my child!" sobbed the mother throwing her arms about Francis. "What will be thy fate? What will they do to thee?"

"Calm thyself, my mother," comforted Francis. "We can but hope. Mayhap the good keeper will permit us to see each other occasionally. Go now, mother. We must not vex him."

Clasping her convulsively to her breast for a moment, Lady Stafford released her, and then followed the lieutenant, weeping bitterly.

Then Francis sat her down in the midst of the warders upon that very stone where Elizabeth had rested when she herself passed into the Tower, a prisoner to the jealousy of her sister, Mary. Soon the lieutenant returned and said courteously:

"And now, master, be pleased to follow me to your chamber."

Francis arose and followed him without a word. Through the outer ward they passed through the lofty portal which formed the principal entrance to the inner ward over 243 which rose a dismal-looking structure, then called the Garden Tower, but later known as the Bloody Tower. Passing beneath these grim portals the lieutenant led his prisoner into the inner ward, over the Tower Green, and at last paused before an embattled structure of the time of King John, just opposite the great keep, or the White Tower. Ascending the circular stairway, he unlocked the double doors that led into the tower, and they passed into a large, low-roofed dark apartment that

held a very scanty array of furniture. Then he withdrew, the bolt clasped, the chain clanged, and Francis was left alone.

A sense of desolation swept over the girl as the full realization of the situation burst upon her, and the blackness of despair filled her soul with anguish. She was alone. She had no one to lean upon. No ear to which she could impart her sorrows. Her mother a prisoner like herself. Her father—a fugitive wandering she knew not whither. As the bitterness of her lot assailed her in all its force she could no longer control herself but gave way to a passionate burst of grief. She looked at the stone walls by which she was 244 enclosed, the massive iron-girded door and the hopelessness of her situation bore with crushing weight upon her.

There was no eye to see, no longer need for control, and she gave vent to her despair unrestrainedly. At length the fountain of her tears was dry, and becoming more composed she sought to regain her fortitude.

“I have done no wrong,” she said aloud. “No wrong? Was it wrong to give those letters to Mary? But my father bade me. My father! Ah, no word of that must pass my lips. Cruel and unjust he hath been, but never shall word or act of mine bear witness against him. I must fortify my soul for I fear that I will be questioned.”

Her foreboding proved true. Early the next morning the door leading into the chamber was opened, and Sir Francis Walsingham with two others entered. Francis’ heart sank at sight of them, but she nerved herself for the ordeal.

“Good-morrow, Master Stafford,” said the secretary

courteously. “We give you good-morrow.” 245

“Good-morrow, Sir Francis. And to you, gentlemen, good-morrow,” returned she.

“My lad,” said Walsingham not unkindly, seating himself before her, “thou art charged with a heinous crime, and methinks that thou art too young to be concerned in such weighty matters. Therefore, am I with these lords, come to examine thee somewhat anent it.”

“With what am I charged, sir?” asked Francis.

“With that most atrocious of all crimes,—treason,” was the reply.

“My lord, I meant not to be guilty of treason against the queen,” said the girl earnestly. “If aught that I have done seemeth so in her eyes, believe me I pray you, when I say that it was not so intended.”

“I do believe it,” answered the secretary. “I think that thou hast been made use of by others to further design of bold and unscrupulous men. Didst thou ever meet with Anthony Babington?”

“Yes, Sir Francis.”

“Where?”

“Once at Salisbury, and once in the forest as I left London.” 246

“What passed at those meetings?” Walsingham drew closer, expecting from the girl’s demeanor to find ready answers to his inquiries.

“I cannot tell you, sir, of the nature of the first,” answered Francis. “I will gladly do so of the second.”

“Relate it then.”

“He was trying to make his escape when his design

upon the queen became known. He sprang upon me when I was unaware, seized the bridle of my horse, and demanded that I give the animal to him."

"Which you refused?"

"Which I refused to do, sir."

"Did he recognize you?"

"Yes."

"And you him?"

"Yes, Sir Francis."

"Did you know that he was trying to escape from arrest?"

"Yes;" answered Francis again.

"Then why did you not let him have the horse?" queried Walsingham.

"Because I wished to reach my father," replied the girl simply. 247

"But why did you want to reach your father?" and the secretary bent forward. "How knew you that he was in danger?"

"Why, I heard you tell the queen that you were going to arrest him, and I wished to warn him."

"Thou heardst me tell the queen?" cried the minister in surprise. "Boy, how couldst thou? We were in the queen's own chamber. How couldst thou hear it?"

"I went there to seek a favor from Her Majesty, and awaited her coming upon the balcony outside the window. When the queen entered, the vice-chamberlain, Lord Burleigh, my Lord of Leicester, and yourself were with her. I feared then to come into the room. Thus I could but hear all that passed.

When I found that my father was in danger I left the balcony and the palace as quickly, determined to warn him of his peril."

"Then you knew that he was concerned in the plot to kill the queen?" and Walsingham eyed her keenly.

"He was not," cried the girl eagerly.

"Then why should he flee?" asked the 248 merciless inquisitor. "No peer of the realm hath aught to fear if he be innocent of foul design."

Francis was so disconcerted by this question that she did not attempt to reply, but looked at him hopelessly.

The wily minister saw her confusion and pressed his advantage.

"Thou needest not to answer, boy, on the condition that thou tell to me all that passed the first time that you saw Babington."

"I cannot do that, sir."

"'Twill be the better for thee," warned the secretary. "We have knowledge that thou and thy father did meet with Babington at an inn in Salisbury. For thine own sake, thou wouldst best reveal what took place. Reflect! Thine own safety depends upon it."

"I will not tell, Sir Francis," returned Francis bravely.

"Have a care, boy. There are ways of extorting confessions from unwilling lips."

"I do not misunderstand your meaning," returned the girl with white lips, "but I cannot tell."



"I WILL NOT TELL, SIR FRANCIS"

249

"What did your father when the proposition was made to kill the queen?" asked Walsingham so suddenly that Francis was caught unawares.

"He would have naught to do with it," answered she

promptly, glad to speak in his favor. “He rejected it with horror.”

“Ah, ha! he did know of it!” ejaculated the secretary. “Thou hast betrayed thyself. Come! Let us have the full particulars.”

“Sir,” said Francis, perceiving the snare into which she had fallen, “I am unable to meet your craft with like guile. Therefore question me no further. I will say no more.”

And despite all attempts to trip her into answering, she maintained an obstinate silence with regard to all their questions.

“Let us leave him,” said Walsingham at length. “Obdurate lad, thou wilt regret thy stubbornness ere long. There are other means of dealing with such spirits than gentleness. We will return ere long, and if thou art still of the same mind, thou shalt taste them.” And he withdrew, leaving Francis to face this new trial.

CHAPTER XXIV

A FRIEND IN NEED

It was with much apprehension that Francis awaited the return of the secretary. Stories that she had heard

regarding the tortures inflicted upon prisoners in the Tower came to her mind with such vividness and force as to cause her soul to sicken with fear.

"I must not think on them," she said, trying to drive this terror from her mind. For diversion she arose and examined the inscriptions in the room. "How many there have been before me!" she mused gazing at the coats of arms and other devices with which the walls were covered. "What melancholy memorials of illustrious and unfortunate people! Here is the name of the Earl of Arundel."

She looked long and earnestly at the autograph of that unhappy nobleman, Phillip Howard, Earl of Arundel, who was beheaded for aspiring to the hand of Mary Stuart. 251 This name was written boldly over the fireplace, and the girl turned from it with a sigh as the thought occurred to her that all who were connected in any manner with that ill-starred princess must meet with some untoward fate.

She passed with a shudder from the next inscription bearing the recent date of 1582, which read:

"Thomas Miagh which liethe here alone
That fain wold from hence begone
By torture straunge my trouth was tryed
Yet of my liberty denied;"

for that "torture straunge" suggested thoughts of too painful a nature to dwell upon. The next bore the date, "Anno D. 1571, 10 Sept., and read:

"The most unhappy man in the world is he that is not patient in adversities; for men are not killed with the adversities they have, but with the impatience they suffer."

And so she went from one to another, marveling at the resignation, patience and endurance breathed by many of the inscriptions, and shuddering at the thought of those 252 “straunge tortures” which were hinted at by others.

Three days elapsed. On the morning of the fourth day, as Francis sat listlessly awaiting the coming of her jailer with her noonday meal, which was the only diversion that her prison life afforded, the door opened to admit, not her keeper, but Sir Francis Walsingham and two warders. Every particle of color left her face at sight of him, and she uttered a silent prayer for help as she arose in response to his greeting.

“Well, young master, I hope that I find you in a more amiable frame of mind to-day?” half questioned, half asserted the secretary.

“Sir,” replied she, “I am of the same opinion as heretofore. I confess that if to carry letters to Mary, Queen of Scots, be treason, then am I guilty of rebellion against the queen’s highness. Therefore, adjudge me guilty, and give me, I beseech you, a speedy death. But, if the word of one who stands in peril of life may be taken, I solemnly declare that my father is innocent of all design of harming the Queen of England.” 253

“That declaration, boy, will not save him,” replied Walsingham sternly. “By not revealing the conspiracy, if he knew of it, he acquiesced in it. His first duty was to his sovereign. I now ask you for the last time with gentleness, in the name of the queen, did he know of it?”

Francis remained silent.

“’Tis enough,” said the minister sternly. “’Tis the law

that he who refuses to answer a query put in the queen's name, may be questioned in a far sharper manner. Bring him along, wardens."

"There is no need," said Francis with dignity as the two advanced toward her. "I will attend without force."

The wardens bowed and opening the door of the chamber, ushered her into the corridor. Traversing this for a short distance they came to a flight of steps which they descended. Here they were confronted by a strong door which one of the men opened. It admitted them to a dark, narrow passage of considerable extent so far as could be discerned. After pursuing a direct course for some time they came to an opening on the left, into which 254 they struck. This hall was so narrow that they were obliged to walk singly. The roof was clustered with nitrous drops and the floor was slippery with moisture.

Francis did not know what part of the Tower she was in but she had heard that the whole substructure of the fortress was threaded with subterranean passages which led to different parts of the edifice. This particular one was contrived in the thickness of the ballium wall which led from Beauchamp Tower to Develin Tower. On either side of the corridor was a range of low, strong doors which gave entrance to dungeons, and horrible thoughts of what the inmates of these noisome cells must endure flashed across the girl's mind, rendering her faint and sick.

At the end of the passage was an open door leading to a small circular chamber which the four entered and the door was closed. Francis gave one quick glance around her and her senses reeled for the room was one of the torture chambers of the Tower.

On the ground was a large brazier beside which lay an immense pair of pincers. In one corner stood a great oaken frame about 255 three feet high moved by rollers. This was the rack. Upon the wall hung a broad hoop of iron opening in the centre with a hinge—a dreadful instrument of torture called the Scavenger's daughter. The walls and floor were covered with gauntlets, saws and other implements of torture, but the rack caught and held her eyes with terrible fascination.

Walsingham seated himself at a small table upon which were writing materials, and turning to Francis said earnestly,

"Gaze about thee, boy, and reflect upon what thou seest. There is yet time to tell all that thou knowest. Think well ere thou dost doom thy tender limbs to the rack."

The perspiration started forth in great drops upon the girl's forehead. Her trembling lips could scarcely frame her utterance as she answered:

"Do to me as ye list, Sir Francis. I will not speak further concerning my father."

With an exclamation of impatience the secretary made a sign. From behind a stone pillar there stepped forth a man at whose appearance Francis could not forbear a scream. He was tall and very attenuated, clothed 256 wholly in black. His face thin and sinister was of a pale sickly color while his eyes, black and glittering, held the gaze with a basilisk glare. He was the sworn tormentor of the Tower.

Francis shrieked at sight of him, striving in vain to control her terror. Just as the torturer reached her side the door was flung open and a warder,

accompanied by Lord Shrope, burst into the room.

“Sir Francis, Sir Francis,” cried Lord Shrope in agitated accents, “for the love of mercy, forbear!”

“My lord,” cried Walsingham starting up, “what means this intrusion?”

“It means, sir, that for thy honor’s sake, for the love which thou bearest thine own fair daughter, I implore you to desist. Wouldst thou subject a maiden to the rack?”

“A what, my lord?” cried the secretary aghast.

“A maiden,” repeated Lord Shrope. “Francis Stafford is not the son but the daughter of Lord Stafford.”

“Then, in the name of St. George, why this disguise?” asked the secretary. 257

“Tell him, child,” commanded the nobleman, but Francis clung to him convulsively, unable to speak. Seeing her condition, Lord Shrope related the matter hurriedly, concluding with:

“I knew that you knew not her sex, Walsingham, so I sought you to inform you anent it. Learning that you had come here, and fearing that this step would be taken, for well do I ken the stubbornness of the girl where her father is concerned, I hastened hither.”

“But, my lord, if this act be foregone how shall we proceed? Thou knowest well all evidence that can be obtained anent every one implicated with that ‘bosom serpent, Mary,’ should be gotten wil or nil.”

“My Lord of Burleigh is seeking you,” said Lord Shrope. “He reporteth that Babington hath made full confession, and hath thrown himself upon the mercy of the queen.”

“Say you so?” Walsingham started for the door, and

then paused. “Thy services will not be needed to-day,” he said to the tormentor. “As for thee,” turning to Francis, “thy sex protects thee from torture, but in 258 sooth I wonder that one so young should be so staunch.”

“Wouldst thou have a daughter speak aught that would go against her father?” asked Francis finding her voice at last. “Nay; ’twas cruel to expect it even though I were in truth my father’s son.”

“Yet still it hath been done,” answered the secretary.

“Perchance thou wilt be more fortunate than I in informing Her Majesty of the matter,” suggested Lord Shrope. “Thou hast her ear.”

“True, my lord; yet what would it avail? The queen is not disposed to be lenient now since the design upon her life was so nearly successful. She would grant the maiden proper attire, I trow, but no more.”

“I do not wish other garb than this,” interposed the girl. “None shall give it me save my father.”

“Then must the matter drop,” said Walsingham. “Damsel, I will speak to the lieutenant of the Tower, and thou shalt have other lodgings but more clemency thou must not expect.” 259

“I crave none, sir,” answered Francis.

“My lord, will you come with me, or go with the girl?” queried the secretary.

“With you, Sir Francis. I dare not stay,” whispered Lord Shrope. “Later, if I may, I will see thee, child. It would not do now.”

And with a friendly pressure of her hands he followed after the minister while Francis was conducted back to her prison.

260

CHAPTER XXV

A GREAT SORROW BEFALLS FRANCIS

And now began a weary time for Francis Stafford. Some hope had crept into her heart after she had seen Lord Shrope, but as the days went by and she heard nothing from him she felt once more friendless and hopeless.

At first her jailer would have nothing to say to her and brought her food and drink, maintaining the strictest silence. As the girl became pale and worn from her confinement he softened visibly. So much so that Francis began anew her pleadings with him to give her some tidings of her mother.

“It is forbid to talk much with prisoners,” said the man gruffly, yet not unkindly, “but I see no harm in telling thee that thy mother hath been moved nearer to thee.”

“Nearer?” cried Francis joyfully. “Oh, good warder, pray you, where?”

“She hath been taken to the Bell Tower which lieth directly south of this tower,” answered the keeper. 261

“So near?” murmured Francis. “That is welcome tidings, good jailer. Prithee tell me but one thing more. How bears she the confinement?”

“Nay, master; that I cannot answer. I am not her keeper, and therefore know naught of her condition.” This he said compassionately for it was known to the

warder and other officials of the Tower that Lady Stafford was failing fast under her imprisonment which was the reason of her removal to other quarters.

Not being aware of this fact Francis felt happier at the near proximity of her mother, and applied herself earnestly to the books which the jailer had brought at her solicitation.

“How Hugh Greville would rejoice could he but know what pleasure these give me,” she murmured one day looking up from the volume she held in her hand. “And truly I never knew before the delights to be found in learning. If I continue I may become as learned as Lady Jane——Marry! was she not confined in this very room?”

Rising hastily she went to the wall that lay between the two recesses upon the left-hand 262 side of the chamber and looked at the name carved there: IANE.

“Whom could it mean but that unhappy lady,” she mused. “Perchance it is her spirit that haunts this gloomy abode and inspires me to studious thoughts. It must be that she too was immured in this room. If my grim keeper prove amiable I will ask him.”

But the keeper soon deprived her of this comfort, small though it was.

“Nay;” he said in answer to her inquiry. “The Lady Jane was not kept here. That was written by either her husband or one of his brothers who were imprisoned in this place. Know you not that only male prisoners are incarcerated in the Beauchamp Tower? Look about at those inscriptions, and thou wilt see that none of them belong to women—save and except that one.”

"True;" said Francis meditatively. "I had not observed that."

She relapsed into thought and the keeper withdrew. Francis cared no more for the signature. It had been something of a solace to think that she was occupying the same room as that used by the hapless Jane; so 263 small a thing does it take to comfort one in such circumstances.

"I'll carve my own name," she resolved suddenly. "And then there will be one woman amongst them."

Taking her dagger from her belt, for that had been left to her, she began to cut her name as best she could upon the stone. It was an interesting occupation, and she was amazed to find how quickly the time sped while she was so engaged. The keeper smiled when he found her so intent upon her self-imposed task that she did not heed his entrance.

"They all do it," he remarked grimly. "Albeit thou hast waited longer than some. But eat, my master. There will be time and to spare for finishing."

"You speak truly," assented the girl almost cheerfully for the mere distraction of her thoughts served to raise her spirits. "Truly; and for that cause I will teach my hand to move more slowly so that it will take a long, long time. And I trow it will for the stone is very hard."

But despite her best efforts the name grew all too quickly, and, as many another had 264 done before her, she grieved when her toil was ended.

FRANCIS STAFFORD,

1586

was the inscription which she had carved below that

of IANE. A feeling of deep depression now took possession of her that even her books failed to dispel.

“If I could but see my mother,” she said pleadingly to the jailor. “Do you not think, good sir, that I might? Let me speak to the lieutenant. Surely he will not refuse me!”

“Thou mayst see her soon,” said the jailor with such a note of kindness in his voice that she looked up startled. “Meseems there is some talk of permitting it.”

“Is there aught amiss?” asked she tremblingly.

“Nay; why should there be?” queried the keeper evasively. “This day perished more of the conspirators against the queen. Making fourteen in all.”

“Was my father among them?” Francis gasped rather than asked the question. 265

“No, boy; he hath not been apprehended, and it is thought that he hath escaped into France.”

“Oh, if it be in truth so. I care not then for aught else,” murmured Francis.

“Then rest in peace; for of a certainty he hath not been taken, and thou wilt have dire need for all thy fortitude,” and with these mysterious words he hastily quitted the room.

“What meant he?” asked Francis apprehensively. “What could he mean? What could befall me now? Perchance he meant that life would be demanded next. But no; the veriest wretch hath time given for preparation. Then why not I?”

She paced the floor restlessly unable to rid herself of the misgivings that were creeping over her. It was

customary for the warder to lock her within one of the small cells that adjoined the larger chamber for greater security at night, but as the usual time passed and he did not come her uneasiness increased.

At last the key grated in the lock, and the door swung open to admit the lieutenant of the Tower and a warder.

“Be not alarmed, master,” said the lieutenant 266 courteously. “We are come to take thee to thy mother.”

“What hath happened? Why come you at night to take me to her?” demanded Francis.

“Be brave, and I will tell thee. Thy mother hath not been well for some time and is failing fast. We fear that she will not live much longer. For that cause, and because it is her desire, are we taking thee to her. Nay; there is no time for lamentation now, boy. Bear thyself like a man.”

For a moment Francis leaned on him heavily almost stunned by the information.

“Courage, lad. Far better death than the slow lingering of years in these grim walls. Many have entered here younger and fairer than she, and endured worse than death in a lifetime imprisonment. Grieve not, but the rather rejoice that she will be freed from sorrow.”

“Peace!” cried Francis, her soul full of bitterness. “Peace! and lead me to my mother.”

The lieutenant, without further speech, led the way across the Tower Green to the southwestern angle of the inner ballium where his 267 own lodgings adjoined the Bell Tower. Kept a close prisoner for more than two months, at another time Francis

would have been overpowered with joy at finding herself once more in the open air. But now the breeze fanned her cheeks unnoticed. She followed after the warder, who lighted the way with a torch, seeing and heeding nothing.

The short distance was soon traversed. Entering the lieutenant's lodgings they passed into a long gallery leading in a westerly direction and were soon in the upper chamber of the Bell Tower. This was the room occupied by Elizabeth at the time of her incarceration during her sister Mary's reign. That it had been the abode of royalty was the last thought that occurred to Francis Stafford. It held but one thing for her, which was the emaciated form of her mother who lay upon the bed.

With an exclamation of joy Lady Stafford tried to hold out her hands to her daughter, but dropped them weakly on her breast. Too moved to speak Francis could only clasp her close as if she could never let her go.

"My daughter! My daughter!" murmured 268 the mother feebly. "At last I have thee, hold thee again!"

"My mother!" uttered the girl brokenly. "My mother!"

"Does she wander?" whispered the lieutenant to the physician. "Didst thou hear her say 'daughter'?"

"Yea; but her mind is clear. She is weak but not distraught." And the physician looked at the dying woman earnestly.

"Will she last long?" queried Sir Michael, the lieutenant, and the physician answered slowly:

"Nay; her life may go out at any moment."

As in a dream Francis heard both questions and answers, but did not comprehend their import. Presently her mother spoke:

“Francis, I am dying.”

“Nay;” broke from the girl passionately. “Not now, mother. Not when we have just found each other again. You must not, shall not die.”

“Hush, child! We must not spend the time in woe. I want you to promise me that never again will you be connected with plot against the queen. Promise me.” 269

“She hath killed thee,” burst from Francis wildly. “Killed thee, my mother, and driven my father forth a fugitive. Oh, I hate her! I hate her!”

“Hush, oh hush!” wailed the mother, a look of fear crossing her face as the lieutenant and the physician started forward at the girl’s words. “Good masters, heed her not. She is distraught with grief. I—Francis ——”

She threw out her arms and strove to clasp her daughter, but they fell to her side. A swift pallor spread over her face, a gasping, choking sound rattled noisily, and she was dead. For a moment the girl seemed dazed by what had happened, and then she threw herself upon her mother with a wild shriek.

“Mother, mother, speak to me!”

“Thy mother is dead,” said the physician trying to draw her away.

“Touch me not,” she cried in frenzied accents turning upon him so fiercely that involuntarily he recoiled. “Minion! leave me. Leave me with my mother.”

"That may not be, my child," said the physician gently noting the wild light of her eyes. "That may not be. The queen——" 270

"The queen?" cried the girl shrilly. "Yes; the queen! England's great queen! Oh, she is truly great! 'Tis a crime to be fairer than the queen! Ha, ha! a great queen! Truly a great queen!"

"Girl or boy, whiche'er you be, cease such words," commanded the lieutenant sternly. "Thou utterest treason."

"Treason? Ay, sir, treason! Treason for thee, but not for me. I claim no queen but Mary of Scotland. I ——"

"Mary of Scotland hath been condemned to death. She will be executed as soon as Elizabeth signs the death warrant."

"To die?" shrieked the girl. "Mary to die! If Mary must die, then shall Elizabeth also. Nay; stay me not! I go to kill the queen!"

She drew her poniard and made a dash for the door; but the lieutenant caught her ere she reached it.

"Unhand me, varlet," she panted. "Ye shall not stay me from my purpose."

"Girl, do you utter such words in the presence of the dead? Look on thy mother and say if still thou dost hold to thy design?" 271

He turned her forcibly toward her mother's form on the couch. Francis pressed a hand to her brow as though bewildered, and then as if drawn by that still calm face drew closer, and gazed steadfastly upon it. The sweet sereneness of the dead calmed her. Presently a sob convulsed her frame, and flinging

herself upon the body she burst into a passion of weeping.

“Let her weep,” observed the physician. “’Tis all that hath kept her from becoming completely distraught.”

“I will send a woman to her,” said the lieutenant. “The girl, if so she be, and no boy would rave so, hath been too long alone. We are but rude nurses for such sorrow. Truly it grieves me that one so young should meet with so much of misery.”

And he left the apartment.

272

CHAPTER XXVI

A FELLOW PRISONER

A merciful illness prostrated Francis for many weeks, and when at length she crept slowly toward health, the winter had passed and spring was abroad in the land. Her convalescence was tedious, owing to a settled melancholy utterly unlike her usual buoyant disposition, which had taken possession of her. Upon one point only did a gleam of her native spirit flash forth. This was when Mrs. Shelton, the wife of one of the keepers, brought her the apparel suitable to her sex.

“Nay; vex me not with them, good mistress,”

exclaimed Francis. "'Twas by my father's command that I donned this attire, and, by my faith, I will exchange it for no other until he bids me."

"That may be never, Mistress Stafford," retorted the woman impatiently. "Thou mayst never see him again."

"Then will I wear it to my grave," was 273 Francis' answer. "I am fixed in this resolve, Mistress Shelton, and naught can turn me from it."

"As ye please then," quoth the dame. "Full surely thou art as stubborn a lady as it hath ever been my hap to see. But if ye will not, ye will not;" and she took the garments away.

Francis now occupied her mother's apartment in the Bell Tower, and because of this fact found a curious contentment in it.

"It may be that her spirit lingers here loth to leave me alone," she thought, and she took to watching for a sign that such was the case.

She was roused from this dangerous train of thought by Mrs. Shelton appearing before her one day with a basket of figs. The girl uttered an exclamation of delight at sight of them, so small a thing does it take to arouse interest sometimes.

"For me?" she cried. "Whence came they? Who could have sent them?"

"Ask me not, mistress. I know naught of them save that they came from without the gates of the Tower. Sir Michael searched the basket, and as there was nothing but the fruit, he let it pass." 274

"Who could have sent them?" murmured Francis, again in ecstasy. It was so sweet not to be forgotten.

To know that some one still remembered her. “Could it be my father? Nay; he would not dare. Lord Shrope? Yea; it must have been he. Good, kind friend that he is!”

From this time forward her recovery was rapid. And when the following month brought a bouquet of sweet smelling flowers, the third, a basket of cherries, her joy knew no bounds. Thereafter no month went by without some token reaching her from that unknown person who seemed so full of sweet remembrance of her.

“Now blessings be upon his head who hath so much of thought for me,” she exclaimed rapturously as a guitar took the place of fruit or flowers. “No more shall I be lonely with such companion.”

And so with books, guitar, and an occasional walk in the gardens of the lieutenant where she went to take the air, Francis passed her time not unhappily. She was upheld by the thought that she was not forgotten. Thus summer passed into fall; fall into winter, and 275 winter in turn gave way to spring, to that memorable spring of 1588 when all England was stirred by the rumor of the threatened invasion of Spain. At this time the gifts to Francis ceased, and such an important part of her existence had they become that their stoppage grieved her more than the threats of the invasion.

Books and music lost interest, and she took to watching the comings and goings of prisoners through the grated loop-hole overlooking the south ward through which all personages must pass to reach the Garden Tower which was over the principal entrance to the inner ward. One day while thus engaged she uttered an ejaculation and bent forward to take a nearer view of a prisoner who was

just brought within by way of the Byward Tower through which lay the main gate to the Tower. This was used from Tower Hill and by royalty when the Tower was used as a castle.

“What is it, deary?” asked Mrs. Shelton, who was in the chamber.

“Edward Devereaux,” answered the girl excitedly. “Now why hath he been sent here? 276 Gramercy! methought none of the pages stood higher in the queen’s favor than he.”

“’Tis past knowing,” remarked the woman in a matter-of-fact tone. “He who stands high with the queen to-day, to-morrow may be beheaded on Tower Hill. Marry! ’tis better to be one of the people, for they are held dear by the queen. Beseems that Her Grace cares naught for the courtiers. They are always being sent here, either to be held in durance for life, else to be beheaded. I am glad that I am not of the court.”

Francis did not heed her words, but was so excited at beholding a face that she knew that she leaned forward as far as she could, calling loudly:

“Edward! Edward Devereaux!”

The youth looked up, but the girl was uncertain as to whether he saw her or not. Mrs. Shelton hurried forward at the sound of her voice.

“Child!” she cried pulling her forcibly from the window, “dost want to be taken elsewhere and lodged? There are other towers far gloomier than this, and if thou carest not to taste their shadows thou wilt be more circumspect.” 277

“Thy pardon, mistress,” said Francis recovering her self-possession. “I meant not to transgress, ’tis the

first time since I saw my mother that I have looked upon a face that was known to me. I could not but greet him, e'en though he be mine enemy."

"Thine enemy?" said the woman curiously. "How now, mistress? Tell me the tale. 'Twill speed the hour and, forsooth, there is need of entertainment here."

Thus adjured Francis related the story of the shooting of the deer; the incident of the duel; spoke of the enmity that had always existed between the families of Staffords and Devereaux; narrated how Edward had favored her when the Lady Priscilla Rutland had stolen her hair; concluding with:

"Therefore, thou seest, good Mistress Shelton, that there can be naught but enmity betwixt us twain. He hath done me service, 'tis true, and otherwise is a proper youth, I dare say. Yet still he is mine enemy."

"'Yet still he is mine enemy,'" mocked Mrs. Shelton. "Marry, girl! 'Tis marvelous hate that thou showest when thou dost call to him when he hath been brought into 278 durance. 'Yet still he is mine enemy.'" She laughed.

"Make merry, an ye will, mistress," said Francis, "but still is it as I tell ye."

"There, child! I meant not to vex thee," appeased the woman who had grown fond of Francis, so long had she been in her keeping. "I must learn more of the lad."

"Do find why he hath been committed," cried the girl eagerly. "I can but wonder at it. Hath he too been engaged in treasonable enterprise——"

"Nay;" interrupted Mrs. Shelton, "for then he would have entered under the tower of St. Thomas through the Traitor's Gate."

In a few days she reported to Francis that the charge against him was a nominal one. He seemed to be committed only to be restrained of his liberty and was given the privilege of the Tower, wandering through the wards at pleasure save only that he could not pass the outer walls of the fortress.

And so it happened one day that when Francis, attended by Mrs. Shelton, was taking the air in the lieutenant's garden Edward Devereaux chanced to be walking there also. 279 Seeing them he doffed his bonnet and approached, deferentially speaking to Mrs. Shelton:

"Gracious madam, may I be permitted to speak with your charge?"

"It is not the custom for one prisoner to hold converse with another, young sir," replied Mrs. Shelton. "But, as ye are enemies, I will indulge thy request, albeit ye speak that I may hear all."

"I thank you, madam, for your courtesy," replied the youth bowing. "Mistress Francis, how fare you?"

"Well, Master Devereaux," answered Francis. "That is," she added, "as well as one may fare who rests under the displeasure of the queen."

"You say truly," sighed Devereaux. "Yet, me thinks that to be under the queen's displeasure brings not more ill than to stand high in her grace."

"What mean you, Master Devereaux?"

"Why, truly, you lie under her ill will, and so abide in this grim fortress; while I, who am her favorite page, do dwell in the same place." 280

"But wherefore?" asked Francis. "Of what crime hast thou been guilty?"

"None, Francis. Save and except that I wearied of the court and its vain pleasures. I would play a man's part as did Sir Phillip Sidney. There was a man, noble, chivalrous and brave! Ready to adventure all things, yet he was the flower of courtesy! He was my example. I wished, like him, to achieve renown, and so when the news came that the Armada was about to embark from Spain, I asked her leave to go with Drake, who was to set sail for Cadiz to obstruct the Spanish fleet's progress. She refused to let me go, and so I ran away to Plymouth, where was my Lord Howard in charge of our ships there awaiting the coming of the enemy. But the queen held me in so much favor that she feared for my safety, and so sent after me, and had me conveyed hither to remain until the danger be over. Gramercy!" he broke forth his lips curling with scorn, "am I to stay here mewed up like a girl when every son of England should be in arms against the Spaniard?"

"But are the Spaniards coming, in truth, Edward?" 281

"So rumor hath it, Francis. 'Twas said that they have set sail already, but I know not the truth of the matter."

"Thou art not much changed," said Francis presently.

"But thou art, Francis. Thou art taller, and thinner; yea, and paler," observed Devereaux with such a note of compassion in his voice that Francis flushed. The youth noted her annoyance and added quickly: "And still do you wear the dress of a page? Fie, Francis! art so enamored of male attire?"

"Nay; Master Devereaux," replied Francis. "I marvel that I tell thee why I do so, seeing that it concerns thee not, but I wish not to don my maiden dress until

my father bids me. How long that will be, I trow not, since I have heard naught of him since I came to this place."

"Thy father dwells in France. He with some others of the conspirators succeeded in escaping to that country."

"And Lord Shrope? How is he? Fain would I know, for truly he hath been mine only friend in this dire time of need." 282

"Lord Shrope hath been in the Netherlands for nigh two years past, Francis."

"Marry, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Shelton. "Then it could not have been he who sent thee all those things."

"No; who, who could it have been? Methought in all England I had no friend but him. Would that I knew the donor's name that I might cherish it forever."

"'Twas thine enemy, Francis. Oh, stupid girl, where are thine eyes! See, his looks betray him," laughed Mrs. Shelton.

"Was it thou, Edward Devereaux?" demanded Francis.

"Well, what if it were thine enemy, Francis? What then? Wouldst still cherish his name?"

"Surely it was not thee, Edward Devereaux?"

"It was even I, Francis Stafford."

"But why, why?" asked she in bewilderment. "You are mine enemy and the son of my father's enemy. Why then shouldst thou show such favor to me?"

"I robbed thee of that deer, Francis. 'Twas fitting that I should amend the theft if possible." 283 A merry

twinkle crept into Edward's eye. "And thou hast still to forgive me the blow I struck thee in our encounter."

"I should thank thee, Master Devereaux," said Francis constrainedly. "I do thank thee from my heart, though I see no cause yet for thy action. At another season perchance I may be able to thank thee in manner more befitting the courtesy. I thought it from a friend, and it grieves me that I find it otherwise. Pray you pardon me that I can do no more than say, I thank you."

"'Tis enough," answered Edward. "At another season perchance thou mayst find it in thy heart to say, 'Ned, I forgive thee the deer; I forgive thee the blow that thou gavest me, and I forgive thee that thou art mine enemy.'"

"It may be," said the girl coldly. "Come, good mistress, 'tis time that we did go in. And so fare you well, Master Devereaux."

"Fare you well, mistress," answered Devereaux courteously.

284

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ESCAPE

Frequently after this Francis saw Edward Devereaux in the garden, but she preserved such a distant demeanor toward him that the youth did not dare to address her.

“Fie upon thee, lady bird,” chided Mrs. Shelton. “Is it thus that thou dost requite such favor? Thou dost not deserve to be remembered.”

“But I thought that the gifts came from Lord Shrope,” said Francis. “And they are from mine enemy.”

“But they served the self-same purpose, chuck, as if they were in truth from him. Did they not rouse thee from thy depression? I tell thee that I have been long in these grim walls, and I have seen men of high degree forgotten and forsaken by friends. They have remained here years without one token from without. Thou hast been favored to no small extent, and now thou dost repine and 285 will not touch thy guitar because, forsooth, ’twas sent thee by ‘thine enemy.’ Marry! Pray Heaven send me such enemies!”

“It may be that I have been somewhat ungracious,” said Francis penitently. “If thou wilt permit, good mistress, I will tell the lad so. But I wish it had been my Lord Shrope.”

“Out upon thee for such a wish, child! Marry! to desire to be remembered by an old man rather than by a young, handsome——” she laughed and added slyly, “enemy. Were he not in the queen’s favor thou couldst not have liberty to speak with him, and thou art foolish to let slip such opportunity for converse. The queen may repent her of his imprisonment at any time, and then thou mayst never see another to hold communion with.”

“Am I always to stay here, Mrs. Shelton?” asked Francis wistfully. “Though in truth were I to be freed

I would not know where to go. Still 'tis hard to be shut up within this dreary place."

"I know not, child."

"Why have I not been brought to trial?" continued the girl, "Others were tried and 286 sentenced and met their doom, while I linger on, not knowing what my fate is to be."

"I know not," answered Mrs. Shelton again. "Question it not, girl. There are those here who have lain for years in like uncertainty, and will so wait until death releases them."

"And their lot will be mine," observed the maiden mournfully. "Happy were they who met death on the block! I am so young and so strong. 'Twill be long ere the tomb claims me. And to look forward to all those years—oh, 'tis hard, hard!" She paused for a time, and then went on pathetically: "I dreamed of the fens and the wildwood last night, mistress. Methought the breeze came fresh from the distant sea. I felt its breath upon my cheek. I heard the sound of the horns, and the bay of the hounds as they were unleashed for the chase. I mounted my palfrey, and dashed in pursuit of the dogs. I rode as ne'er I rode before. On and on! and then, as the clamor of the hounds told me the game was brought to bay, I reached for my bow, and—touched the walls of my prison. Then I awoke. It was all a dream," she ended with a sob. 287 "All a dream, and I shall never ride in the forest again."

"There, sweetheart! think no more on it," soothed Mrs. Shelton. "Come! let us go down to the bonny laddie who, even if he be thine enemy is more real than dreams."

Francis composed herself and followed the woman

into the garden where Edward Devereaux already wandered. As she answered his greeting with a slight smile the youth ventured to enter into conversation.

“Hast heard the report?” he began eagerly. “’Tis said that the Spanish have been driven back to their coasts by a storm, but are again preparing to sail for England. Oh, for a chance at them! If I could but once take a Don by the beard I would content me to stay in these walls forever.”

“Say not so, Master Devereaux,” said Francis. “’Tis a dreary place, and hadst thou been here for nigh two years as I have been thou wouldst not utter such things. ’Tis dreary—dreary!” She sighed heavily, and despite herself a tear rolled down her cheek.

“How now, Francis,” cried Devereaux touched by her distress. “Thou with the 288 megrims? Why, Francis, ’tis unlike thy spirit!”

“I had a dream,” said Francis striving to repress her tears, “and it hath made me long for liberty.” And she related it to him.

“I wonder not at thy longing,” said the lad. “I too desire with all my heart to be free. And,” he lowered his voice and glanced about for Mrs. Shelton but she was busied over some plants, and out of earshot, “and I intend to be soon.”

“What!” cried Francis, her grief forgotten, looking at him with eagerness.

“Not so loud,” cautioned Edward. “I mean to escape, Francis, and to go to Lord Howard to help fight the Spaniards.”

“Oh, Edward,” breathed the girl, “take me with you.”

“Nay; I cannot. Thou art but a girl, and the risk

would be too great. I have the freedom of this inner ward, but there still remains the outer ward and the moat, which, as thou knowest, is on all sides of the Tower, and on the south there is the Thames also. The hazard would be too great."

"Nay, nay," pleaded Francis, her soul on 289 fire at the mere mention of escape. "Do take me."

"But what couldst thou do even were we to succeed?" demanded Devereaux. "Where couldst thou go?"

"To my father in France," replied Francis.

"Nay; but"—began Devereaux again when the girl caught his hand and held it tightly with her own.

"I will not let thee go until thou dost consent," she cried with some of her old wilfulness. "Oh, Edward, do say yes."

Devereaux looked at her thin hands, her face so pale and worn, so different from its former sauciness, and all the chivalry of his nature rose up.

"When thou dost speak so, Francis," he said gently, "I can deny thee nothing."

"And thou wilt?" cried she with shining eyes.

"Yea, Francis; but consider well the danger. If we fail it may mean death."

"We will not fail," declared the girl with positiveness. "If we do, is not death better than imprisonment? I promise that I will kill at least one Spaniard." 290

"I will hold thee to that vow," laughed Devereaux. "But thy woman comes, Francis. I will inform thee of the plan when I fix on one. Fare you well."

"Fare you well," returned Francis.

"Thine enemy's converse hath done thee good," commented Mrs. Shelton waggishly on their return to the upper chamber of the Bell Tower.

Francis looked at her a moment and then said with dignity:

"I had forgot that he was mine enemy, mistress. Besides, I may have been somewhat unmannerly in my treatment of Master Devereaux, and it behooves me as a gentlewoman to make other recompense for his courtesy."

"And say you so, Francis?" laughed Mrs. Shelton who considered the affair great sport. "Belike it be no unpleasant duty. But there, child! 'Tis little of entertainment thou hast, so make merry with the lad for I fear that he will not remain here long."

"I fear so too," answered Francis, and in her heart lay the unspoken wish that not only Devereaux's time but her own might be short.

The days passed and Edward Devereaux 291 had not yet matured a scheme for their flight. June waxed and waned, and July was upon them. Then one day, when the girl had almost despaired of hearing him speak of the attempt again, Devereaux said to her in a low tone:

"Art thou willing to make the effort to-night, Francis?"

"To-night?" cried Francis thrilling at the thought. "Yea; to-night, Edward. But how?"

"Does Mrs. Shelton stay in your chamber at night?"

"Not now. Not since I recovered from mine illness."

"And is there not a flight of steps leading to the

roof?"

"Yes;" replied Francis surprised. "How knew you that?"

"Easily. The alarm bell of the fortress stands on that roof, and there must of necessity be communication from the inside as well as from the outside. Besides all the other towers are so connected. Thou knowest that my lodging is the uppermost story of the Bloody Tower where tradition hath it that the 292 two princes of York were murdered by Richard of Gloucester. I have found that between the outer wall of the Tower and the chamber there is a passage communicating with the top of the ballium wall to the west. Along that I will proceed until I reach the roof of the Bell Tower where I will make fast the rope for our descent. After we are down we must make use of our wits to pass the gate in the Byward Tower and so reach Tower wharf where friends will await us with a boat. There is no moon, and the darkness will favor the plan. There are secret passages which lead out of the Tower but these I have been unable to discover. They are known to but few and those few are incorruptible. The passage leading to my lodgings is all that I have knowledge of, and I had much ado to find that, and to obtain the rope."

"But the sentinel, Edward? There is always one stationed by the bell."

"Leave him to me, Francis," said Devereaux evasively. "Do you fear to adventure it?"

"Nay, Edward. I rather rejoice at the opportunity for action."

"Then await my coming. And to-night 293 the die will be cast. Liberty and England, or imprisonment

and death! All depends upon this throw. Do you fear, Francis?"

"No;" answered she proudly. "I am no weakling that I should fear. Dost thou not know the motto of the Staffords: À l'outrance? (To the utmost) I am a Stafford. Therefore will I dare to the utmost."

"Well said, mistress. If my courage fail me thou wilt inspire it anew. So fare you well until night."

They parted, and Francis returned to her chamber to await the coming of the darkness with what patience she could. The hours went by on leaden wings. At last the portal leading to the roof was opened, and Edward Devereaux's voice sounded in a low whisper:

"Francis!"

"I am here," answered the girl thrilled by the call.

"Then come!"

Gladly she obeyed, and ascended the short flight of steps, and soon stood beside the form of Devereaux on the roof.

"The sentinel," she whispered.

"Lies there," and Devereaux pointed to a 294 dark figure extended at full length beside the belfry. "Mind him not. We must hasten. Here is the rope. Descend, and loose not thine hold of it until thy feet have touched ground as thou lovest life. Remember the fate of Griffin of Wales."

Francis grasped the rope and swung herself clear of the belfry. For a moment she swayed dizzily, then the rope settled, and steadying herself by means of the roughened surface of the old walls she slipped quickly to the ground. The Bell Tower consisted of only one story above the ground one so that the feat

was not so difficult as it would have been from any of the other towers. Giving a tug to the rope in token that she had reached the ground in safety she waited Devereaux's coming with palpitating heart. In a few moments he was beside her.

For a second they stood silently, but no sound from the battlements above betokened that their flight had been discovered. Grasping the girl's hand Devereaux drew her quickly across the outer ward into the shadow of the Byward Tower through which was the principal entrance. This was guarded by a 295 burly warder whom the youth could not hope to overcome by strength, so he resolved upon a strategy. With a low breathed injunction to Francis he bent over, and ran at full tilt into the man as he came toward them, hitting him, as he had foreseen, directly in the stomach and upsetting him. With a roar and a shout the guard sprang to his feet just as they darted past him. The drawbridge leading across the moat was closed, but, nothing daunted, the two leaped over the railing into the moat below.

The sentinels on the battlements of the tower heard the splash and instantly gave the alarm. The bell rang; lights flashed along the ramparts, and numerous shots were fired into the moat after the fugitives. The moat was wide and deep, and Francis whose physical vigor was undermined by her long confinement, felt her strength failing.

"Leave me, Edward," she gasped. "I can hold out no longer. Save thyself!"

"Never!" came from Devereaux valiantly, and he supported her with his arm. "Lean on me. The wharf is not far distant. Courage!" 296

As they neared the other side a low whistle sounded,

which the lad answered in like manner. Then indistinctly the form of a man became visible on the opposite bank. Again the whistle came, and a line was thrown out to them. This Edward grasped, and they were soon towed to shore, and pulled from the water.

“We must hasten,” said the man who had come to their assistance. “The whole garrison is aroused.”

With all the speed they could muster they hurried to the Tower wharf where a boat was in waiting.

“Devereaux,” said a man grasping the hand of the youth, “is it thou?”

“In very truth ’tis I, Walter. And right glad am I to be here. But hasten, beseech you. I would not be retaken for all the wealth of Spain.”

The boat shot out from the wharf into the river, and passed swiftly down the stream.

297

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE THREE VOLUNTEERS

Some distance down the river a vessel lay at anchor. To this the boat made its way and lay alongside. Devereaux, the young man whom he had called Walter, and Francis scrambled aboard, and the

wherry put off. The sails of the ship were raised, and, as she glided swiftly toward the open sea, Devereaux gave a shout of exultation.

"Now for Plymouth and the Dons," he cried gaily. "Oh, Francis, is it not glorious to be free?"

"Yes;" replied Francis, scarce able to speak so overcome was she by her emotion.

"And as soon as we touch Plymouth thou canst take passage in another vessel for France."

Then indeed did the girl turn upon him with flashing eyes.

"France?" she cried. "Go to France while England is in danger? Never! Never! At 298 Plymouth do I stay, Edward Devereaux, with the fleet. I am resolved to meet the Dons as well as thou."

"But, Francis, thy faith! 'Tis the same as the Spaniards! Thou canst not meet them."

"'Tis true that I am Catholic, but still am I not born English? Never would I see alien foot tread English soil, be the intruder of whatever faith he may."

"And there spake a true Englishman," said he whom Edward had called Walter. "So spake Charles Howard, Lord High Admiral of the navy. And so also hath spoken every true Englishman of Roman Catholic faith. Who is thy friend, Edward? I was surprised to find that another accompanied thee in thy flight from the Tower."

As Devereaux opened his lips to reply, Francis touched his hand warningly and answered for herself.

"I am Francis Stafford. I was imprisoned in the Tower charged with treason to the queen, though of

that I am innocent."

"Well, Master Stafford, prove thy mettle at this, England's time of need, and it may be that England's queen will overlook thy past transgressions. 299 I am Walter Mildemay, kinsman of Edward Devereaux, and a true subject of the queen's majesty, save and except for abetting the rescue of Edward Devereaux. For that I hope to make my peace with the queen if we meet the Spaniards."

"Hath their ships been sighted yet, Walter?" asked Edward.

"Nay; but they watch for them hourly as they have been doing for days. 'Twill surely not be much longer till they come."

The summer's sun was casting its lengthening shadows across the quiet harbor of Plymouth as the little vessel containing the three, Walter Mildemay, Edward Devereaux, and Francis Stafford, anchored not far from the town. A boat put off, bearing the three named to the place where they had been informed Admiral Lord Howard was.

It was the memorable evening of July 19, 1588, and an exciting game of bowls was being played upon the green back of the Pelican Inn known to every officer of Her Majesty's navy. Standing round the bowling alley were a group of men watching the game with interest. Lord Howard of Effingham, the Lord 300 High Admiral of England; Sir Robert Southwell, his son-in-law, the captain of the Elizabeth Joncas; Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Richard Grenville; Martin Frobisher and John Davis; John Hawkins and his pupil, Sir Francis Drake, the vice admiral of the fleet.

The three paused as they entered this illustrious group. Sir Walter Raleigh was the first to spy them.

"Ha, my apt pupil of the sword!" he cried. "Why came you hither?"

"We are come to join the fleet," answered Francis boldly.

"Lord Howard, here be three more volunteers," cried Raleigh. "Verily it beseems that all of England's sons have come forth for the fight."

"And they have done well," answered the deep voice of the noble admiral.

"'Come the three corners of arms,

And we shall shock them! Nought shall make us rue,

If England to herself do rest but true.'

So says that knave—Will Shakespeare. Edward, thou here again? I thought the queen held thee in durance?" 301

"She did, my lord admiral," returned Devereaux. "But think you that I was to be mewed up like a girl when England had need of me? I trow not!"

"Spoken like a true Englishman, boy, save the slur upon the girl. Know, Master Edward, that so enthusiastic are women and girls that if we men wax faint hearted in the strife English women and English maidens will take up the battle for their country."

"I crave pardon, my lord. Such speech was unworthy an Englishman when the proof is by his——"

"I am Francis Stafford, my lord," interrupted the girl, knowing full well what Edward was about to say. "My father and I were accused of treason to the queen when Anthony Babington conspired against her life. I escaped from the Tower in company with

Master Devereaux. Do not, I beseech you, say me nay when I plead for place with you. I would fain prove that I am a true and loyal subject of Her Majesty."

"And thou shalt be given the opportunity, lad. And thou, young sir," to Walter Mildemay, "art thou escaped from the Tower also?" 302

"Nay, sir; I am but accessory to their flight," replied the young man.

"The saints preserve us!" ejaculated his lordship piously. "Now Heaven send the Dons soon else I shall have such a storm about mine ears as never wind did raise."

At this moment an old sailor burst into the midst of the group.

"My lord, my lord!" cried the weather-beaten old salt to the lord high admiral, "they're coming. I saw 'em off the Lizard last night; they're coming full sail, hundreds of 'em a darkening the waters!"

A cheer rose from the lips of the men; a spirit of excitement stirred every heart. Nay; not every breast, for Sir Francis Drake, the vice admiral, said coolly to his chief as he hurled the bowl along the smooth, worn planks:

"There will be time enough to finish the game, and then we'll go out and give the Dons a thrashing."

And now the beacon lights flashed the news from hilltop to hilltop, and on to London, and thence northward to the Scottish borders, and westward throughout Wales until 303 every village and town of every shire in England thrilled with the tidings. Forgetful of religious dissensions, of feud, and of private wrong, all Englishmen arose as one man to repel the invading foe.

Amidst all the confusion incident to the announcement of the old seaman, Devereaux drew Francis aside and whispered entreatingly:

"Francis, I implore thee to remain here. 'Tis not seemly that thou shouldst board ship. There will be fighting, and——"

"And thou wouldst have all the glory, Edward Devereaux," cried the girl unjust as she often was when indignant. "Dost thou think that I fear? What hath life to yield that would equal the sweetness of striking one blow for England? Think you an English girl cannot fight as well as an English lad?"

"Nay, nay, Francis; but for my sake——"

"For thy sake?" echoed the girl in surprise. "Why should I stay for thy sake? Come! we lose time."

304

CHAPTER XXIX

A BRITOMARTE OF THE ARMADA

The call was sounded. It rang through every ship like a trumpet note and every man sprang to his duty.

"On to the Dons! No Spanish Inquisition!" was the watch-cry of the English navy, and with great difficulty, for the wind was against them, they steered for the open sea.

It was not until the next day that they came within sight of the Armada. The most powerful fleet that had ever been known since the beginning of time. Blest by the pope, sent forth amid the prayers and the fastings of the people, the fleet had been cleared of every unclean thing, for haughty England who styled herself the mistress of the seas was to be humbled upon her own element and made to yield her lands to the foreigners.

The great Spanish ships, built high like castles and towers, stretched in the form of a 305 crescent measuring at least seven miles from horn to horn. They came slowly on, and, although under full sail, yet as though the winds labored and the ocean sighed under the burden of it, says Camden. When they reached the open channel Lord Howard discovered his policy to his men.

They were not to come to close quarters with the

towering, unwieldy galleons, but to pour broadside after broadside into them at a distance and to bide their opportunity to fall upon them. Nearer and nearer drew the two fleets, the Spanish preparing to begin the action at daybreak. But at two o'clock the gibbous moon arose in a clear sky and showed to the astonished Spanish the English fleet lying in their rear just out of cannon shot.

The next morning Lord Howard, sending before him a pinnace called the Defiance, provoked the fight by discharging a piece of her ordnance and presently out of his own ship, called the Ark Royal, thundered upon a Spanish craft which he supposed was that of the Spanish Admiral, Medina Sidonia, but which proved to be that of Alphonso de Leon.

At the same time Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher 306 fell terribly upon the rear which was valiantly commanded by Juan Martinez de Recaldo. The English invaded, retired, and re-invaded them from every quarter with incredible celerity. The Spanish captain general was nonplused. The English ships ran in, doing as much damage as possible without coming to close quarters, while his lumbering craft were useless to chase and cripple so agile an enemy. The great galleons and galleasses of Spain towered beside the English ships like "Flemish dray horses beside light Arabian coursers."

Fiercer waxed the fight. Recaldo finding his vessel much battered, rejoined his chief with difficulty and Medina re-collecting his scattered vessels held on his course. For two hours the fight continued, and then Lord Howard thought best to retire to await the coming of other ships which had not yet left the harbor.

Flushed and elated with the victory, with not a single

vessel and scarcely a man lost, the English exulted that the great Armada which had been devised to strike terror into their hearts was not so invincible after all. 307

"Is it not glorious, Edward," cried Francis Stafford from a coil of rope upon which she had thrown herself. "How the Dons flew! Oh, 'tis enough to stir a stone to enthusiasm!"

"'Twould be glorious, Francis, were it not for thee," answered the youth. "The thought that thou art here hampers my every action, and always am I looking to see that thou art safe. Would thou wert in England; even in the Tower so that thou wert not here."

"And wherefore? Do I not bear myself as becomes an English lad?" cried Francis. "In all the wide world there is no place that I would rather be than upon the deck of the Ark Royal. So from henceforth speak no more of this. And, Edward, drop no hint of my sex to any. Wherefore should not an English maiden espouse the cause of her country as well as an English youth? Thou seest that there are lads here as maiden like in appearance as I. Give no thought to me, I beseech you."

"I will speak of it no more, Francis," rejoined Devereaux. "And yet I would that thou wert not here."

The girl turned from him impatiently, and 308 hastily joined a group of which the admiral was the centre; for Lord Howard had taken them upon his own vessel.

The next night the air was stormy and the night dark. The English fleet was startled by an explosion on one of the Spanish ships and soon the flames were seen to spring high into the air. But other ships went

to her aid and the fire was soon quenched, but the principal galleon of Seville commanded by Pedro de Valdez collided with another vessel and, her foremast being broken, was forsaken and became a prey to Sir Francis Drake.

Dark as the night was, Lord Howard on the Ark Royal, accompanied by two ships only—the Mary and the Rose—hotly pursued the Spaniards. The rest of the English fleet lay still because Drake had neglected to carry a lighted lantern in the poop of his vessel as had been commanded.

At break of day, having a prosperous north wind, the Spaniards bore down upon the English, but the English, to take advantage of the wind, turned westward. And then began a series of maneuvres in which each fleet contended to deprive each other of the benefit 309 of the wind. The contest did not last long and before noon the English having slipped between the Armada and the land bore down upon them right before the wind.

And then began a fierce fight which was waged with varying success. For, while in one place the English valiantly rescued the ships of London which were hemmed in by the Spaniards, in another Recaldo, being in danger, was disengaged with no less resolution by the Spaniards. Never before was such lightning and thunder of artillery heard, most of which, notwithstanding, went vainly from the Spanish, flying clear over the English ships. Only Cock, an Englishman, died gloriously in the midst of his enemies upon his own small bark.

The English ships being of lesser build than the Spanish invaded the Spaniards with great dexterity and having discharged their ordnance withdrew into the open sea and leveled all their shot with a certain

and successful aim at the ponderous Spanish vessels.

And still the English admiral thought it not best to grapple and risk the fortune of a hand-to-hand fight. For the enemy had a 310 strong and well appointed army aboard which he lacked, and, their ships standing higher than his own vessels, threatened nothing less than certain destruction to those fighting them from below. This was the most fierce and bloody skirmish of all, though it only resulted in the capture of one huge galleon and a few small craft by the English. There was a mutual cessation of hostilities for all the next day for the wind fell dead and each fleet was compelled to drift idly with the tide.

The calm was still unbroken when the next day dawned, the twenty-fifth day of the month sacred to St. James, the patron saint of Spain. A small galleon of Portugal called the Saint Anne being unable to keep pace with the rest of the fleet was set upon by a number of small English craft, seeing which three of the great galleasses rowed furiously to her aid. Lord Howard's Ark Royal, the Golden Lion of his brother, Lord Sheffield's Bear, and others towed by fisher boats met them with such salvos of shot that, had not the Spanish fleet come up to rescue them, they would have shared the fate of Valdez. After this time the galleasses would not fight again. The 311 wind sprang up by noon and the fight became general. All afternoon it raged, and then, terribly battered, the Armada would fight no more; but, "gathering into a roundel" set all sail for Calais, where Medina hoped to find a force from the French to help him and then to Dunkirk to join with Parma and the great flotilla of the Netherlands.

And so with a full southwest wind the Spanish fleet

went on, the English fleet following them. It was determined not to attack them until they reached the straits of Calais, where Lord Seymour and William Winter would join the navy.

Meantime Lord Howard conferred Knighthood upon John Hawkins, Martin Frobisher, Thomas Howard, Lord Sheffield and Roger Townsend for valor and fortitude. And now from every bay and harbor of England there put forth numbers of small craft hired by the youth of England, who hastened to join themselves to the fleet, for the Spanish fleet, though battered and dispirited, was not yet broken, and should it be joined by the forces which Medina expected all would indeed go ill with England. 312

The Armada anchored in Calais Roads and within cannon shot of it lay the English fleet. The next day being the Sabbath both fleets observed the day with appropriate services, the loud chants of the Spaniard mingling strangely with the hymns of the English.

Francis Stafford, wearied and fatigued, retired to the cabin and, finding it deserted, swung a hammock in one corner and clambering into it was soon fast asleep.

“I tell thee, Drake,” ’twas the voice of Lord Howard that awakened her, “the queen must have been inspired to invent so ingenious a device. If it succeeds——”

“It will succeed, my lord,” interrupted Drake positively, “That is if there can be found men who will adventure it. But it will take cool heads and stout hearts and an absolute fearlessness of danger. I think I know two men who will go but there must be others.”

Instantly the girl sat upright in the hammock.

“My lord,” she cried, “send me.”

Lord Howard and Sir Francis Drake started in astonishment. 313

“Boy, I thought thee asleep,” cried the admiral. “How long hast thou been awake?”

“But just to hear you say that you needed men for some service,” answered Francis, springing lightly out of the hammock.

“I said men, not boys,” said Drake smiling.

“Speak not so, Sir Francis,” reproved the admiral. “The lad hath borne well his part though he is so slight and maiden-like.”

“And there is this to be considered,” went on Francis eagerly. “I have escaped from the Tower. My father, as ye know, is an exile. What lies before me but imprisonment, or that worse than death, exilement from my native land. ’Twere better to send me whatever may be the hazard than others who can illy be spared.”

“Listen, boy, and thou shalt hear what the enterprise is. I trow that it will quell even thy brave spirit, burning though it be with valor. This night some of our ships covered over with rosin and pitch and filled with sulphur, gunpowder and other combustibles, are to be sent into the midst of the Spanish, fired and set adrift amongst them. ’Tis fraught 314 with great danger and peril to the lives of those who adventure it.”

“Still let me be one of them,” pleaded the girl earnestly.

“There is much in the lad’s favor,” said Drake meditatively. “He speaks truth when he declares that

it would be best to send one who lies under the queen's disfavor than another."

"Yes; and if successfully performed it may bring him pardon. Elizabeth cannot but look with favor upon those who help to carry out a project devised by herself. Drake, I give my consent for the lad to go."

"Perchance Edward Devereaux——" began Francis and then paused. What right had she to bring another into peril that might result in loss of life? But Lord Howard laughingly said:

"Another youth, Sir Francis, who burns to distinguish himself."

"Then let him have his chance," was the vice-admiral's reply. "You and I would have jumped at such opportunity, my lord."

"Go you then, Stafford, to Master Devereaux and tell him privately of the enterprise. 315 'Twill be naught against him if he chooses not to accompany the expedition. If he should so select, come to me, both of you."

Francis eagerly sought young Devereaux. It so chanced that he stood for the moment apart from his fellows. Joining him she said in a low tone:

"Edward, do you wish to adventure a most perilous undertaking?"

"Marry! Francis Stafford! how canst thou ask such question? Thou knowest that I burn to do something. It chafes me to be so inactive while in such near distance lies the Spaniard."

"Then hearken! This night ships besmeared with pitch and rosin and filled with combustibles are to be sent into the midst of yon fleet. Two men are already

chosen to guide them thither, and thou and I can accompany them also. But the admiral bids me say that it may be dangerous."

"Huzzah!" pealed forth from the lips of the youth like the blast of a trumpet.

"Hush!" whispered Francis. "He desires it not to be made public. Come to him."

She could scarce keep pace with his eagerness 316 as he bounded before her into the presence of the English commanders.

"I thank you, my lords," he said bowing to them, "for this opportunity. When shall we be off?"

The two men could not forbear a smile.

"There is no hurry, Devereaux," said Lord Howard. "It will be after night falls before the ships are started. Art sure that the peril is well understood? It may be that you will not come back."

"It may be so, sir," answered the young man. "Sir Francis or any one of us may be taken in the next engagement. But who would preserve life if by giving it he may keep England and England's queen from the invader?"

"Spoken like a true Englishman, lad," cried Drake heartily. "Now, my lord, these two will return with me and, in God's name, with my two Devon men we shall this night so put upon the Spaniards as they shall ne'er dream of setting foot on English soil again."

"Go," said the lord admiral placing an arm about the neck of each. "Go, my lads. My hopes and prayers go with you. And 317 should aught happen to ye, the queen shall know that ye died in her service. And so

fare you well."

"Fare you well," answered they both and followed after Drake to his own boat—The Revenge.

About two o'clock Monday morning eight ships smeared all over the outside with pitch and rosin, their ordnance loaded with stones and bullets and filled with sulphur and other materials suddenly combustible glided out from among the English fleet and took their way silently toward the Spanish ships lying so serenely at anchor. The night was cloudy. The moon was late in its last quarter and did not rise till morning. The darkness favored their enterprise. The wind blew in long, low gusts from the westward which drove them full upon the Armada. Presently as the dark forms of the ships bore full upon the Spanish vessels a tiny spark of light gleamed like a twinkling star at the stern of the boats. For a second it wavered and flickered and then in a moment more a red glare lighted up the heavens and cast a lurid glow upon the two fleets, the cliffs of England and the sea and 318 showing plainly two boats—with Young and Prowse, the two men of Devon in one; Francis and Edward in the other.

With a rush and roar the flames leaped madly from stem to stern and up through all the rigging sending out great tongues of fire forward, backward, sideways threatening total destruction to anything that came within their reach.

"Pull, Francis," cried Devereaux bending with desperate strength to the oars. "Pull for your life."

The girl obeyed with a will. And now from the ships of Spain there went up a fearful cry. A panic seized upon them at sight of those awful burning vessels. They cried out that not only was there danger of fire

but that they contained deadly engines also. Everything was in confusion. Panic-stricken they weighed anchor, cut their cables, hoisted their sails and struck for the open sea, every ship afoul of her neighbor. A huge galleass had her rudder broken and drifted helplessly with the tide.



"PULL, PULL FOR YOUR LIFE!"

319

With shouts and cries of joy the English fleet sailed after the Armada. Meantime the small boats pulled hastily for the nearest English vessel, but so suddenly did the Spanish scatter, and the English change to

take advantage of their flight, that the position of the boats became dangerous in the extreme: for what with the high wind, the burning ships, the rolling of the deep, the helter-skelter flight of the Armada and the pursuit of the English their position was, to say the least, precarious.

Devereaux changed the course of his boat several times, but as he was borne in spite of himself among the Spanish vessels he cried despairingly to Francis,

“It is of no avail, Francis. We must die.”

“Look!” was the girl’s reply.

Full well upon them bore a galleon, The Saint Matthew.

“Dogs of heretics,” cried the commander from the poop of the vessel, “die!”

“Ned, dear Ned!” shrieked Francis, throwing herself upon him, striving to shield him from the bullets and arrows that rained about them. The lad gave her one look, and opened his lips to reply when, with a shout of wild joy from the sailors, The Revenge glided in 320 between the frail bark and her towering foe.

“Heave ho,” cried Francis Drake in stentorian tones. “Lie to, my lads. Did’st think we’d leave such likely lads to perish? Nay; below with ye,” as they were pulled on deck. “Ye have done your part. The rest of us will now bear the brunt of action.”

And the English fleet swept on to deal the final blow to His Most Catholic Majesty, Philip of Spain’s, Invincible Armada.

321

CHAPTER XXX

PARDON AND HAPPINESS

The final blow which sent the Armada flying northward had been given. With not a single ship taken and but one, the small bark of Cock, lost, and not more than sixty men killed, the English fleet sent up a pæan of joy, and drew up for conference before following further the fleeing enemy.

"Ye two," said the lord admiral to Francis and Devereaux, "seeing that ye lie under Her Most Sovereign Majesty's displeasure, shall bear to her the tidings of our victory. None deserve it more, and, please God, by so doing ye shall win pardon from her. As for me I shall on after the Spaniard as long as provisions and ammunition will permit."

And so it came about that Francis and Devereaux proceeded to the camp at Tilbury, where the queen was at this time. She was dining in the tent of Lord Leicester, the lieutenant general of the land forces, herself being 322 the generalissimo, when they arrived. There were present, beside the queen and the earl, Sir Francis Walsingham, who had come down from London for conference with the queen; Hatton, the vice chamberlain, the young Earl of Essex who, despite his inexperience, had been made the captain-general of the cavalry, and Lord Shrope, who had hastened to return to England upon hearing of his country's peril. Francis flashed a glance of joyful recognition at him, but was deterred from

other greeting by the presence of the queen.

Elizabeth had risen at their approach, and when the girl beheld her high pale forehead furrowed by lines of care, the lofty features sharpened by anxiety, she felt her heart glow toward her sovereign and the last feeling of animosity which had lain so long in her heart faded away never to return. It was therefore with a sincere feeling of reverence that she knelt before Elizabeth, who had shown herself at this time to be a true daughter of the lion-hearted Plantagenets.

“Ye bear messages from the lord admiral,” cried the queen somewhat anxiously. “Rise, 323 Edward Devereaux, and deliver thyself of them.”

“Most gracious madam,” said Edward, rising gracefully, “the strength of the enemy is broken. Dispirited and distraught they fly before the lord admiral. Madam, the Armada is no more. Here are letters writ by Lord Howard, in which he gives the victory in detail.”

“Now God be praised,” ejaculated the queen, “but this is news indeed. My Lord of Essex, do you spread the tidings throughout the camp that my loving people may rejoice with me. Thy indulgence, Master Devereaux, while I peruse my Lord Howard’s dispatches. Retain thy place that I may confer with thee later.”

Rapidly she glanced over the epistles, and then turned to the assembled lords.

“My lords,” she cried, “behold these lads! They have borne themselves with signal valor during the meeting with the Spaniards. They two, in company with two others of whom more anon, set fire to the ships which brought fear and panic into the fleet of

the enemy. Which same device was recommended 324 by us to the lord admiral. Speak, Edward Devereaux! What reward dost thou wish for thy service?"

"Thy pardon, Most Gracious Lady, for breaking the bounds in which you placed me."

"Ah, Ned, Ned," said Elizabeth with that archness which, despite her fifty-five years, she continued to employ, "didst thou not know that thy queen placed thee there for thy safety?"

"True, madam;" assented Devereaux. "But not the strongest dungeon of the Tower should have held me in durance when thy person, and my country were in danger."

"Thy silvery tongue no less than thy service doth well incline me to thy will, Ned," said she graciously. "Thou art forgiven. And thou?" she added turning to the kneeling girl. "Art thou not that Francis Stafford lately concerned in plot against our person?"

"I am that most unhappy being, madam," said Francis, rising and looking the queen steadfastly in the face. "I throw myself upon your mercy, Your Majesty, and crave forgiveness. My only plea for so great a fault 325 is, that at that time I had not been brought near your person and knew you not. Had I known you I would never have transgressed. Do with me as you will. Return me to the Tower, or use your pleasure upon me in any fashion as seemeth best to you, only forgive me."

"Hast thy father schooled thee to speak thus?" demanded the queen.

"My father? Nay; I know not where he is. I have not seen him since I entered the Tower nearly two years

ago," answered the girl.

The queen said something in a low tone to Lord Shrope. That nobleman immediately left the tent, and all eyes centred expectantly upon the queen. Francis looked at her with a growing anxiety as she remained silent. Was she going to remand her to the Tower? Were not her services deserving of some recognition? What was meant by that continued stillness? The queen stood regarding her with those keen, piercing eyes whose fires age had not dimmed, and Francis met her gaze with a sort of fascination, her eyes dilated, her lips parted as she waited the issue. 326

Presently Lord Shrope reentered the tent and with him there came one at sight of whom Francis gave a great cry.

"My father!" And not even the presence of the queen could prevent her from running forward to embrace him. Her father gave no sign that he knew of her presence, but advancing to where the queen stood, knelt before her saying:

"You sent for me, Your Grace, and I am here."

"My Lord Stafford," said Elizabeth affably, "thou knowest that when thou didst present thyself before us, beseeching us to permit you to be of service in defending our person, that we agreed that time should prove thy worth. My lord, thou and thy son have redeemed yourselves nobly in our eyes. Rise, my lord! You are restored to your right of blood and to your property. Thy son also hath our full and free forgiveness."

"Madam, thou art graciousness itself," said Lord Stafford kissing her hand. "I do repent me of all my transgression against you, but from this time forth,

my queen, by the grace of God, you will have no stauncher 327 subject than William Stafford. As for my daughter——"

"Thy daughter?" cried Elizabeth. "Thy daughter? What mean you, Stafford?"

"He means, Your Highness," cried Lord Shrope, "that his son is not a boy, but a girl."

"Hold thy tongue, Shrope!" commanded the queen sharply. "Thy wits are addled. Who is there who will read the riddle clearly? Thou, Francis Stafford?"

But Francis, utterly miserable in that her father took no notice of her, was sobbing bitterly and therefore could not reply.

"Let me read it, Your Majesty," said Lord Stafford, and receiving consent he related the whole story from the time of her coming to Stafford Hall, concluding with,

"I know not, Your Highness, why she doth continue to wear the garb unless from dire perversity——"

"Nay;" cried Francis, her spirit asserting itself. "'Tis because 'twas at thy bidding that I donned it, and I vowed never to remove it until thou didst bid me so to do. Oh, would that I had perished in battle ere thy hardness 328 toward me should pierce me with such agony!" And she again gave way to her grief.

"Why, what hath she done, my lord?" asked the queen curiously.

"She betrayed my trust, Your Grace," answered Lord Stafford.

"Nay, Stafford," exclaimed both Walsingham and Lord Shrope together. "You wrong the girl."

"Wrong her?" asked Lord Stafford eagerly. "Speak,

my lords! If ye can convince me of that ye shall remove all that my heart holdeth of bitterness. I long to take her to my breast again, but I would not so long as I believe that she betrayed trust."

"She would not betray thee, Stafford, even when threatened with torture," spoke the secretary. "My Lord Shrope can bear witness to the truth of what I speak."

With a bound Lord Stafford reached the weeping girl and caught her to him.

"My daughter! My daughter!" he cried. "Can you ever forgive me? Say that you forgive me."

"And you do believe in me?" questioned 329 Francis clinging to him convulsively. "Say that you do, my father."

"I do, I do, my child."

"My lord, we will permit you to retire until you are calmer," came from the queen.

"Thank her, Francis," said Lord Stafford leading the girl forward. "Thank our gracious queen who hath shown so much of kindness to us."

"There, sweetheart!" said Elizabeth as Francis with streaming eyes tried to articulate her gratitude. "'Twill suffice for the present. We like thy spirit, and later will receive thee into service near us. When thou hast donned thy maiden attire we would see thee again. Though, by my faith, if all men would honor the garb as thou hast done, there would be few knaves in the kingdom."

"And this is Mistress Francis Stafford?" cried Edward Devereaux as, two days later, Francis stood on the

banks of the river watching the queen as she embarked for London. “Upon my word, Francis; thy attire well becomes thee.”

“‘Hast thou found me, oh, mine enemy?’” 330 quoth the girl gaily turning a bright face toward him.

“Thine enemy, Francis?” said the youth reproachfully. “I thought that that had passed. After all that we have been through together thou shouldst not call me so.”

“And art thou not mine enemy?” asked she archly. “Nay;” as a pained look crossed his face, “I know that thou art not.”

“And neither art thou mine,” asserted Edward. “Ah, Francis, may not we two bury that old enmity by a union of our families in us? If thy father give consent wilt thou agree also?”

“If my father consent, then so will I also, Edward,” spoke the girl softly, adding saucily—“’tis the only way that I’ll ever get that deer’s horns.”

STORIES FOR GIRLS

BETTY WALES, FRESHMAN. By MARGARET WARDE. Illustrated by EVA M. NAGEL. “Every nice girl likes college, though everyone likes it for a different reason,” says one of the college girls in this delightful story, and the same thing might be said of the book. Betty and her chums get all the good and all the fun out of their freshman year at college. In its course are some triumphs, little and great,

friendships made and marred, a few heart-burnings, and many an honest hard-won happiness. The girl who has been to college will wish she were back among them, and the one who is going will find herself eager to be with such as Betty and her friends, and to do as they do.

EARNING HER WAY. By MRS. CLARKE JOHNSON. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. A charming story of an ambitious girl who overcomes in a most original manner many obstacles that stand in the way of securing a college course. While many of her experiences are of a practical nature, and show a brave, self-reliant spirit, some of her escapades and adventures are most exciting, yet surrounding the whole there is an atmosphere of refinement and inspiration that is most helpful and pleasing.

HER COLLEGE DAYS. By MRS. CLARKE JOHNSON. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. This is a most interesting and healthful tale of a girl's life in a New England college. The trustful and unbounded love of the heroine for her mother and the mutual and self-sacrificing devotion of the mother to the daughter are so beautifully interwoven with the varied occurrences and exciting incidents of college life as to leave a most wholesome impression upon the mind and heart of the reader.

CLOTH BINDING ILLUSTRATED EACH

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

923 ARCH STREET PHILADE

STORIES FOR GIRLS

TWO WYOMING GIRLS. By MRS. CARRIE L. MARSHALL. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. Two girls, thrown upon their own resources, are obliged to "prove up" their homestead claim. This would be no very serious matter were it not for the persecution of an unscrupulous neighbor, who wishes to appropriate the property to his own use. The girls endure many privations, have a number of thrilling adventures, but finally secure their claim and are generally well rewarded for their courage and perseverance.

THE GIRL RANCHERS. By MRS. CARRIE L. MARSHALL. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. A story of life on a sheep ranch in Montana. The dangers and difficulties incident to such a life are vividly pictured, and the interest in the story is enhanced by the fact that the ranch is managed almost entirely by two young girls. By their energy and pluck, coupled with courage, kindness, and unselfishness, they succeed in disarming the animosity of the neighboring cattle ranchers, and their enterprise eventually results successfully.

IN DOUBLET AND HOSE. By LUCY FOSTER MADISON. Illustrated by CLYDE O. DELAND. A story of the time of Queen Elizabeth. The heroine and her family favor the claims of Mary of Scotland to England's throne. During a visit of Elizabeth to the home of the heroine's parents, the queen becomes displeased, and as a punishment, orders the girl to attend her at Court. Her adventures there and the incidents which lead to her confinement in the Tower of London, her escape therefrom, and final

restoration to favor with the great Queen, form a most interesting narrative.

CLOTH BINDING ILLUSTRATED EACH

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

923 ARCH STREET PHILADE

STORIES FOR GIRLS

A DAUGHTER OF THE UNION. By LUCY FOSTER MADISON. Illustrated by CLYDE O. DELAND. A story of the Civil War in which the interest centers about a brave young girl who is sent by her father from New York to New Orleans as a bearer of important messages. Aided by Admiral Farragut she delivers these after running the Mississippi blockade. Later she is forced to leave New Orleans and is captured and held a prisoner at Vicksburg until its surrender to General Grant.

A COLONIAL MAID OF OLD VIRGINIA. By LUCY FOSTER MADISON. Illustrated by CLYDE O. DELAND. The heroine, while yet a motherless babe, is adopted by a wealthy planter of Virginia. At an early age she evinces a strong love for the cause of the colonies, while her uncle and his family are ardent adherents of the King. Her many deeds of heroism carry her to Philadelphia during its occupancy by the British, thence to Valley Forge, the Wyoming massacre, and finally to the surrender at Yorktown.

A MAID AT KING ALFRED'S COURT. By LUCY FOSTER MADISON. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. This is a strong and well told tale of the 9th century. It is a faithful portrayal of the times, and is replete with historical information. The trying experiences through which the little heroine passes, until she finally becomes one of the great Alfred's family, are most entertainingly set forth. Nothing short of a careful study of the history of the period will give so clear a knowledge of this little known age as the reading of this book.

CLOTH BINDING ILLUSTRATED EACH

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

923 ARCH STREET PHILADE

STORIES FOR GIRLS

A MAID OF THE FIRST CENTURY. By LUCY FOSTER MADISON. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. A little maid of Palestine goes in search of her father, who for political reasons, has been taken as a slave to Rome. She is shipwrecked in the Mediterranean, but is rescued by a passing vessel bound for Britain. Eventually an opportunity is afforded her for going to Rome, where, after many trying and exciting experiences, she and her father are united and his liberty is restored to him.

THE WHIRLIGIG. By EVELYN RAYMOND. Illustrated

by RUTH ROLLINS. She is called "The Whirligig" because she is so apt to be blown about by her emotions. It is not until she goes to live with an old aunt and uncle and is thrown upon her own resources, that she develops a steadier and stronger character. She is a great comfort to the elderly people, and at a time when the whole village is threatened with a flood, she rides down the valley and warns the people of their danger. She is a very natural, lovable girl, and the story ends all too soon.

A YANKEE GIRL IN OLD CALIFORNIA. By EVELYN RAYMOND. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. A young girl, reared among most delightful surroundings in Vermont, suddenly discovers that, owing to a clause in her father's will, she must make her future home with relatives in the lower portion of old California. No more interesting experience could come in the life of any bright, observing girl than that of an existence in this semi-tropical region, with its wealth of Spanish tradition, its glorious climate, and its abundance of flowers and foliage.

CLOTH BINDING ILLUSTRATED EACH

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

923 ARCH STREET PHILADE

STORIES FOR GIRLS

A QUAKER MAIDEN. By EVELYN RAYMOND.

Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. A young girl reared in all the simplicity of a Quaker family is suddenly transported to the home of a wealthy cousin. She is at first greeted with derision, but gradually her unfailing gentleness and sterling character win the respect of her cousins, and at a time of financial disaster she becomes the reliance of the entire family.

A DAUGHTER OF THE FOREST. By EVELYN RAYMOND. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. The heroine of this unusual tale resides with her uncle on an island in the backwoods of Maine, and her exciting adventures, her unique animal pets, her rescue of her father from unlawful imprisonment, all combine to form a story of exceptional interest and merit. Considerable information concerning animal and plant life is interwoven with the story.

MY LADY BAREFOOT. By EVELYN RAYMOND. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. A beautifully told story of the trials of a little backwoods girl who lives in a secluded place with an eccentric uncle, until his death. The privations she undergoes during his life-time, her search for other relatives, her rather uncongenial abode with them, her return to her early home to acquire her uncle's estate, and thus to enjoy a useful and happy life, form a most interesting narrative of a girl whose ruggedness and simplicity of character must appeal to the admiration of all readers.

CLOTH BINDING ILLUSTRATED EACH

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

923 ARCH STREET PHILADE

STORIES FOR GIRLS

THE LITTLE LADY OF THE FORT. By ANNIE M. BARNES. Illustrated by HELÈNE WOOD. A dramatic story dealing with the struggles of the early French and Spanish settlers for supremacy in the Carolinas. The heroine is an only daughter of the French commandant and is enticed from the fort and held captive by the Spaniards. Her release is finally effected by a young Spaniard whom she befriended, but not until after she has endured many severe trials.

THE FERRY MAID OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE. By ANNIE M. BARNES. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. An heroic little Georgia girl, in her father's extremity, takes charge of his ferry, and through many vicissitudes and several impending calamities, succeeds in carrying out her purpose of supporting her invalid parent and his family. The heroine's cheerfulness and hearty good humor, combined with an unflinching zeal in her determination to accomplish her work, show a character which cannot fail to appeal to young people.

DOROTHY DAY. By JULIE M. LIPPMANN. Illustrated by IDA WAUGH. This is a most interesting story of a bright and spirited young girl whose widowed mother remarries. The impulsive girl chafes under the new relationship, being unwilling to share with another the bounteous love of her mother which she had learned to claim wholly for her own. By the exercise of great tact and kindness, the obdurate Dorothy is at last won over, and becomes a most

estimable girl.

CLOTH BINDING ILLUSTRATED EACH

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

923 ARCH STREET PHILADE

Additional Transcriber's Notes:

The following changes, shown in brackets, were made to the origina

Page 30: "My mother, there is something that I would fain ask. [add mark at the end of the sentence]

Page 86: More than ever, my father, Never have I [changed comma

Page 138: and Frances noted with dismay [Francis]

Page 141: The lord chamberlain turned to Frances [Francis]

Page 155: with true page-like officiousness, proferred [proffered]

Page 209: her face softening at the apellation. [appellation]

Page 214: With a loud laugh at his discomforture [discomfiture]

Page 306: The great galleons and galleases [galleasses]

Page 318: A huge gallease had her rudder [galleass]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK IN DOUBLET AND HOSE: A STORY FOR GIRLS ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg License when you share it without

charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project

Gutenberg™ License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg License terms from this work,

or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project

Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability

to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR

IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is synonymous with the free

distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 41

Watchung Plaza #516, Montclair NJ 07042, USA, +1 (862) 621-9288. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the

solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate.

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.