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AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF THE Times of Queen Elizabeth.

The Wonderful Flower of Woxindon,

By Rev. Joseph Spillman, S.J.

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CHAPTER XXX. CONTINUED. — Providentially for me, their attention was diverted to the management of their boat. But another peril now presented itself. The tide was ebbing fast, and the rush of the water through the arches of the bridge caused a dangerous eddy below the piers. Into this I was drawn, and carried under, no less than three times, my shoulder being also struck violently against the stonework of the bridge. To get free cost me a hard struggle, and when I regained the surface, and struck out into smoother water, it was only to encounter fresh dangers. Exactly in front of me was the barge of the river-guard, lighted up with cauldrons of burning pitch. I was perceived, so there was nothing to be done but to dive beneath the vessel. I drew a deep breath, invoked the aid of the Blessed Virgin and plunged downwards; when I rose to the surface, the barge was a considerable distance behind, and the boat of my pursuers a good way off. My strength was however exhausted, I could only drift with the stream and in my helplessness was almost tempted to give myself up to the officers. But the hangman and the galleys rose up before me, and I resolved to make one more effort to save myself.

I was in the neighborhood of St. Catharine's wharf, and it occurred to me that I might reach Bill Bell's house. Summoning all my powers, I managed with great difficulty, to swim across the Thames. Despair gave me strength, and guided by the light in the attic where the sick girl lay, I reached the old tenement, and clung to the wooden posts on which it was raised. But even then I was in an evil plight. To call for help would have brought the watchmen to the spot and led to my capture; the only alternative was to hold on, no easy matter in my exhausted condition, until such time as I could attract the notice of the inhabitants of the house. Presently my situation became intolerable; the time as it crept by, appeared to me an eternity; my senses began to fail, my head swam; the rushing of the water deafened and bewildered me. In fact, when the bell of St. Paul's tolled midnight, I felt that before another hour had passed, I should have to appear before the judgment seat of God. Suddenly, however, the strange singing in my ears changed into the regular splash of oars; a strong hand laid hold of me, and a lantern flashed full into my face.

"Mr. Windsor! For God's sake, can it be you?" a voice exclaimed, and two sturdy arms lifted me into the boat. Who spoke to me, and what I answered, I knew not until afterwards, for I immediately lost consciousness. When I came to myself, I was lying in a dark, narrow, chamber, of which I could touch the walls on each side. My first thought was that it was a prison cell.

CHAPTER XXXI.—When I called out the guard of Chartley Castle at midnight, and went through the face of surrounding the Mayflower, and demanding admission in the Queen's name in order to arrest Mr. Edward Windsor on a charge of high treason, the individual in question had, naturally, long since made good his escape. I feigned astonishment, and announced my intention of sending horsemen in pursuit of him at daybreak. They were to go to the Wash, but a countryman told us that he had seen the doctor riding in an opposite direction, southwards on the road to London. The thought struck me at once; the foolish fellow, instead of providing for his own safety, has made an effort to save his confederates! This must not be permitted, for I considered it probable that one of them, Savage, at any rate, would attempt something desperate against the Queen, so as not to sacrifice his life to no purpose. So I took horse immediately, that I might acquaint my uncle as speedily as possible with what had occurred, although I had no doubt that in the meantime Babington and his associates would have been apprehended.

All the next night I was in the saddle, the night which witnessed Windsor's adventurous flight on the Thames. Towards mid-day I reached London, half dead with fatigue and smothered with dust. Without waiting to change my clothes or take any refreshment, I hastened to my

uncle. His reception of me was by no means encouraging. "So you have escorted Windsor hither yourself," he said. "It would have been better to have remained where you were, and awaited further directions, because we shall have to make a domiciliary visit to Chartley one of these days, before that Stuart woman hears of the failure of the plot."

"You are mistaken, uncle," I replied with some embarrassment, "I have not brought Windsor. He slipped through my fingers, and I am told he took the road to London." Walsingham changed color, and looked at me as I had never seen him look before. For several minutes he did not utter a word; at last, with forced composure, he said: "How so, Windsor slipped through your fingers! We had better not ask how that happened, or I might have to acknowledge your inefficiency to Burghley and the Queen, not to mention worse consequences. Now I understand how it was that Babington and nearly all his fellow-conspirators escaped arrest yesterday evening. One of my agents told me Windsor came to the Paris Garden and warned his friends, but I swore at him for a fool. He was right, after all! And for this we have to thank your extraordinary sagacity!"

"I will tell you the truth, uncle," I answered. "Windsor had saved my life two or three days before, at the risk of his own, and so—" Walsingham silenced me with a gesture. "I want to hear nothing more," he said. "You have let Windsor escape; if that were all, I should not take it to heart. But now Babington and almost all the others have got away! I do not know how to tell the Queen of the conspiracy, on which as you know, depended the success of a political intrigue of great importance. If I cannot succeed in capturing the ring-leaders, at least, it will be my ruin with the Queen. Her thirst for vengeance is unquenchable. In that respect she is a true daughter of Henry VIII. Besides, I have drawn considerably upon my own private means to bring this scheme to the hoped for issue. It cuts me to the heart that you, of all people, should be the one who is mainly, if not entirely, to blame for its miscarriage. But that is always the result, if one allows one's feelings to get the better of one's judgment."

He dismissed me very coldly. I went to Pooley, and from him I heard the following details. As soon as the Queen's letter was in Walsingham's hands, he gave Topcliffe instructions to keep a constant watch on the conspirators, but not to apprehend either of them, lest this should alarm the others. The arrest of Captain Fortescue, or rather the mistake on the part of the sheriff's officer. Babington had, in consequence of it, gone to Walsingham, ostensibly to discover whether the arrest had any connection with the conspiracy, or whether it was because Fortescue's real calling had been found out. He hoped in reality, by this bold step to dissipate any suspicion Walsingham might entertain towards him, as he imagined he had done on a former occasion. But the astute Secretary of State again deluded the young man entirely, so that he was completely unconscious of the snare that was closing him in its coils. He and his confederates accepted in all good faith Pooley's invitation to a banquet to be held in the Paris Garden. Guards were posted at the entrances, and on the arrival of the last of the guests, Tichbourne, Pooley was about to give the concerted signal for their arrest to his satellites, when Babington spoke and hastily went out. As he left behind him his sword and cloak, Pooley imagined he was gone to order some particularly choice wine; but finding he did not return, he went after him. Just at that moment Tichbourne made a sign to his associates; the guard attempted to seize him, but he gave them the slip, and got off, as did all the others except Savage who was very violent, and Tilney, who really had little to do with the plot, and certainly was not one of the ring leaders. Happily Tichbourne was taken somewhat later in a boat on the river; another of the confederates who was seen with him in the boat, apparently had fallen into the river and been drowned. That man was

presumed to be Windsor. If so he had lost his life in a generous attempt to save his friend.

The next day I was told that Topcliffe was about to search the dwelling of a boatman named Bell, in the neighborhood of St. Catharine's wharf. Bell himself was in the Tower, on suspicion of having aided in Mr. Bellamy's escape from the Clink, but Topcliffe head that Windsor was in the habit of going there frequently, and thence he surmised that, if he had swam to shore, he might have taken refuge there. I determined to make one of the party. "I believe it will be a bootless errand," Topcliffe declared. "For if the man jumped into the river above the bridge, ten chances to one he was sucked under by the current just below. But we must never lose the occasion of a domiciliary search, for if one does not find the prey one is chasing, one may perhaps light on some other bird. In this way I have got hold of many a Romish priest, of whose existence I was not aware."

The house we were approaching was such a rickety, tumble-down concern, leaning over the water to such an extent, that it was not without trepidation that I entered it. After we had knocked repeatedly, the door was opened to us by a young man, who seemed greatly alarmed, when Topcliffe expounded to him the penalties of harboring traitors. He told us his father was in prison, and his sister lay at the point of death. This was no answer to Topcliffe's questions, but it accounted for the young fellow's agitation. I begged my companion not to press him too hard, but to search the house as he proposed. Beginning at the basement, which swarmed with ferocious rats, so that no one dare enter without a light and a stout cudgel, every corner and cranny was duly examined. At length we mounted the ladder which led to the attic, but before we could enter the garret, the young man entreated us to desist from disturbing his sister's last moments. Topcliffe, considering that only as a subterfuge, instantly wrenched open the door of the apartment. I followed him into it, and there in fact on a pallet by the window lay a young girl in her last agony, painfully gasping for breath. When she perceived us, she made a movement, as if to forbid our approach; "Away," she murmured, "leave me in peace. I believe all the teachings of the Catholic Church; I hope for pardon through the merits of Christ and the intercession of Mary; I love God with my whole soul."

Topcliffe changed color; he glanced around and his practised eye detected the possibility of space between the wall at the back of the bed and the sloping roof, which might serve as a lurking place. But, accustomed though he was to scenes of bloodshed and butchery, he could not endure to find himself in presence of the king of terrors in a lonely garret, and therefore relinquished to me the task of examining the chamber. While he waited outside, I spoke a few words to the dying girl. I observed that she pressed to her lips a small silver crucifix which I was certain I had seen in Windsor's possession, when at Chartley. Looking closely at the wall, I saw plainly that it was merely a partition, in fact the traces of a small door were discernible in the woodwork. There was little doubt that Windsor had escaped a watery grave, that he was there within a few feet of me. My pulses throbbled fast; once more I had to decide whether I should deliver him up to justice or place myself in a most dangerous position. I had given him his life once — if he chose to risk it again, it was his own responsibility. While I was thus debating within myself, the sight of the dying girl turned the scale in Windsor's favor. I thought when my last hour came, I should not regret having shown mercy; nay, on this alone my hope of obtaining mercy would depend.

Young Bell, who stood beside me, watched with trembling anxiety my scrutiny of the partition wall behind the bed. It also caused evident uneasiness to the dying girl; she clasped her hands beseechingly, and endeavored to speak. But the effort was too much for her; her head sank back upon the pillow, and with the holy name of Jesus on her

lips, she drew a deep breath and expired. Her brother fell on his knees by the bedside, sobbing aloud; I too knelt and breathed a silent prayer for the departing soul. Then I covered the pallid countenance with a linen cloth, and led the weeping boy from the chamber. Having satisfied Topcliffe's inquiries, I left the house with him. "Take my word for it, Windsor is at the bottom of the Thames," he remarked as the door closed behind us.

CHAPTER XXXII. — It was not long before tidings were brought to us that Babington, on leaving the Paris Garden, had run to Lambeth, where he crossed the river, and had betaken himself to Westminster, to the lodgings of his friend Gage. There a change of clothes was given him, and thence, with three others who joined him, he made his way under cover of night to St. John's Wood.

"They have gone to Woxindon!" I exclaimed. Topcliffe was of the same opinion. A troop of constables immediately prepared to start; I was to accompany them, at my uncle's wish, as he thought it was an opportunity for me to remove the unfavorable impression made by Windsor's escape. Topcliffe took with him some well-trained blood-hounds. "This time," he said, "I mean to revenge myself on these Bellamys, who have so often made a fool of me." As he uttered these words, he looked almost as fierce as the dogs he held in leash.

Half of the company had orders to guard the approaches to the manor-house; the other half proceeded with us to the ruin, where the search was to begin. As we drew near, we saw in the twilight, the figures of a man and a woman walking along the path which led from the ruin to the house. On the dogs being let loose, they instantly rushed in that direction. The woman screamed with terror. "For God's sake, Remy!" we heard her exclaim, "the devil's hounds, that attacked Frith!"

"These are no supernatural dogs; be still, and they will not hurt you," the man replied. "In the Queen's name, hold!" cried Topcliffe, advancing out of the shade of the trees. "Surrender, or these beasts shall tear you to pieces!"

"So it is you, Master Topcliffe! Is this a fresh device on your part to frighten women and children, taking a quiet stroll in the evening!" the man answered with the utmost composure. Topcliffe replied with an oath, any means were right for persons guilty of high treason, like him and his niece, who, it was well known, harbored and supported godless conspirators who plotted against the Queen's sacred majesty.

"It is false!" shrieked the woman, who clung to Mr. Bellamy's arm. "It is false! Babington never did—!" Bellamy bade his niece hold her tongue. But the warning was too late. Topcliffe exclaimed in triumph: "Aha! Babington! Hear how they betray their own secrets! Quite right, Babington is the one we have come to find, he and some others. Tell me this moment where these fine fellows are, for, as sure as my name is Topcliffe, if you do not deliver them up at once, you shall be cleared out of this Popish nest one and all, from the old witch down to this saucy maiden, with whom I have a long account to settle!"

"Have the goodness to call your dogs off first, they will drive my poor niece mad," Mr. Bellamy replied. I supported this request, and the two brutes, growling and snarling, were again held in leash by their master. A worse brute than they?

"Now," he demanded, "make short work of it, and show me where Babington and his confederates are."

"What reason have you to think I know their hiding place?" Bellamy asked.

"That tall-tale let it out," answered Topcliffe.

"How so?" Bellamy rejoined. "My niece only declared it was untrue that her husband had designs on the Queen's life."

Babington's wife and cousin will tell us many a tale, when they are on the rack in the Tower. Handcuff them both; find a pretty pair of bracelets for Miss Bellamy, or rather Mistress Babington's little wrists, and watch both prisoners well. Now let us go to the old tower yonder; it will go hard with me if I do not unearth the whole batch, for what else would these two want wandering here at nightfall, if the dear husband and friends were not close by? So keep a sharp look-out; lest all have their weapons ready, and our dogs will soon scent out the foxes."

Sentries were accordingly posted all round the old castle; torches were kindled, and a great fire made of brush wood, so that the place was almost as light as day. The red flames lit up the ivy-covered walls and threw into relief the thick stems of the old trees surrounding it.

"Now," said Topcliffe, addressing his party, "not so much as a rat can leave these walls without being seen. Have your pistols ready; shoot every one down who tries to escape, but not otherwise, for it would be a pity to deprive the hangman of a job in disposing of these Popish traitors." He then led the bloodhounds in leash around the principal ruin. They had not gone more than half-way, sniffing the ground, when they began to bay, and dragged violently at the cord, which held them in, leading us to the foot of the tower, where thick undergrowth and broken masonry filled up the moat. They stopped at a slab of stone in the wall, barking loudly and tearing the earth with their paws.

Topcliffe bade two of his men hold the dogs off; the stone was then removed, and an aperture disclosed, through which it was possible to crawl on one's hands and feet. Into this Topcliffe shouted, calling upon Babington and any others who might be within, to come out at once to answer before the Privy Council on a charge of high treason, otherwise the bloodhounds should be let loose, who would rend them to pieces.

For a few moments not a sound was heard in the vault to which the opening gave admittance. Then voices were heard in hasty consultation; and someone said: "Let your dogs loose, Master Topcliffe; I will shoot them down one after another, and if I must fall, I shall hope to send you and some of your satellites, to appear with me before the tribunal of God, to answer for all the bloodshed and cruelty which you have shown to us harmless Catholics!"

Topcliffe gnashed his teeth with rage. "All you cursed Papists together are not worth the life of one of my dogs," he exclaimed. I will show you how we smoke such vermin out of their burrows. Pile up the brushwood before the hole, and set fire to it!"

Quickly a heap of dry sticks was raised before the opening; in another moment it would have been ablaze, had I not begged for a brief respite, while I addressed the fugitives in the vault, exhorting them in God's name to submit to their fate, which after all might not be hopeless. At any rate, if they must die, they could prepare themselves to appear before God in a more Christian manner than was possible now.

My words were not without effect. We heard them consulting together, then a voice responded: "We surrender, but I hope we shall receive the treatment due to us as gentlemen, and that our friends will not be molested."

I would have agreed to this, but Topcliffe interposed, saying he would hear of no conditions; Babington and all his confederates must bear the consequences of their misdeeds. There was nothing to be done, but for the unfortunate conspirators to emerge from their place of concealment. Babington came first; he seemed greatly cast down and distressed on account of having brought this trouble on his friends, yet maintained a dignified demeanor. It was impossible not to feel sorry for the handsome young man, as he stood holding out his hands for the handcuffs to be put on his wrists. His hands were pinioned behind him, and fetters, fastened together with a short chain, were also put on his feet. The same was done in turn to each of the others; Barnewell, Donne, Gage and Charneck. One could not help commiserating these misguided young men, all of whom, with the exception of Charneck, a weather-beaten, gray bearded veteran, who had served with Savage under Parma, were in the first bloom of early manhood. They all met their fate with unflinching courage; not a word of complaint escaped their lips.

Before quitting the spot, a close inspection was made of the vault, to ascertain that no confederates were remaining therein. Nothing was found save a basket, which bore the Bellamy's name and armorial bearings, afforded fatal evidence that the inhabitants of Woxindon had supplied the outlaws with food, thus

rendering themselves amenable to the law as accessories to the crime of high treason. Topcliffe, highly elated at the success of his searches, was in the best of humors; he indulged in a series of low jests at the expense of his unhappy victims, which his men received with roars of laughter.

I left the myrmidons of the law to their unseemly mirth, and approached the little group of prisoners, amongst whom Bellamy and his niece were included. The former, a stout, elderly man, called by them Uncle Remy, was endeavoring, together with Babington, to soothe the young gentlewoman, who seemed in a paroxysm of despair. "It is all my fault, all my fault!" she repeated. "My folly, my disobedience, has brought this misery on our house! I persuaded Babington to plan the release of the Queen of Scots, though Father Weston dissuaded him so strongly from the enterprise! Here, at the top of yonder tower, I promised him my hand, if he would carry it out. Here, at this very spot, I met him clandestinely, again and again, though poor grandmother strictly forbade it, as she had every right to do! And now a just Providence has decreed that on this same spot he and I should be arrested. Would that we two were the only ones! Alas! a whole number share our lot, and my dear uncle amongst them—alas, alas, it is all my fault!"

To hear her lament thus pitifully was enough to move a heart of stone. She would not listen to her husband, when he assured her that before he ever saw her, he had pledged himself to deliver Mary Stuart from prison. "If I had entreated you, you would have desisted from this wretched project," she bewailed. "Nothing was irrevocably decided then. Instead of that, I urged you on; it is my fault, my fault!"

Her uncle's attempts to console her were equally inefficacious. "Nonsense, darling," he said, "do not fret in this way. They will do nothing dreadful to me. What have I done? Only fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, and surely our friends, the Puritans, who make such a fuss about the Gospel, will not hang me for that. No, depend upon it, instead of putting a halter round my neck for my charity, they will put a ribbon round my knee, and I shall be a Knight of the Garter in my old age!"

Thus the kindly old man sought to divert his niece with a joke; but it was of no avail; she continued to sob convulsively, exclaiming again and again: "It was my fault, my fault!"

Soon Topcliffe and his men, who had been feasting upon the provisions found in the hiding place, called upon us to proceed to the house. Our miserable work there was soon done. Mr. Bellamy's brother, a good-natured, harmless, but weak-minded individual, met us at the gate, to learn the cause of the disturbance. He was immediately arrested. Topcliffe furthermore gave orders to rouse the old lady, who had already retired to rest, being somewhat indisposed, since he meant to take her to London in custody at once. Thereupon I protested against such unwarrantable and needless cruelty, but in vain; the man told me he was master, and Walsingham had warned him not to heed my scruples and sensibilities. He intended to carry off the whole Woxindon brood to the Tower forthwith; he could not journey dawn again from London for the sake of an old hag, who was just as bad as the rest. I offered to stay behind and escort the aged lady to London on the morrow; but Topcliffe only grew more irate, and declared she were not down stairs and ready to start in a quarter of an hour, he would drag her out of bed with his own hands. So the old serving woman was sent up to dress her mistress and bring her down into the hall.

Meanwhile Topcliffe called for wine for his men, and the hall soon resounded with uproarious songs and shouting. Topcliffe himself lighted a torch, and ordered Babington's wife, who seemed quite spent with grief and terror, to conduct him, manacled as she was, over the house. I followed, in the hope of acting as her protector. First of all he demanded to be shown to a chamber at the top of the house, in which her father had died, she would know which he meant. On reaching it, he commended a close examination of the walls, striking them with a small hammer that he took from his pocket. The young lady meanwhile went and stood beneath a singular plant, which hung down from the principal beam of the ceiling. Wiping away her tears and ceasing her lamentations, she began to smile, and to count the branches of the little plant. On each of these hung a single ripe, red berry.

(To be continued.)

STANTIAL

MEMORIAL

all has been given to each of the Immaculate on, Penacook, N. H., Rev. T. P. Linehan of ry's Church, Bidde- his brother, the Hon. man of Penacook. It June 30, by Bishop chester, and the ser- cession was delivered John J. Ryan of St. Cambridge. The in- "Catholics of Pena- first bell, in mate- n of God, in form the man. I have been the honor and glory memory of my par- n. John Cornelius Li- Rev. Timothy Patrick named for John and Linehan. His duty, as to call you to entertain the priest. to continue his work ospitality. When you om in kindly remem- their souls may rest

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