

THE WONDERFUL FLOWER OF WOXINDON.

An Historical Romance of the Times of Queen Elizabeth.

BY REV. JOSEPH SPILLMAN, S. J.

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CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued)

He then went up to Anne, who was sitting apart, and talked some time to her. At first she seemed inclined to stand out, but presently she gave way, and he brought her to me. I shook hands with her, and seeing that she was in tears, I bade her keep up her spirits, for all would go well. Then she began to sob convulsively, declaring that her people never would forgive her the grief she had occasioned them. My only answer was to lay her hand on my arm and lead her upstairs into Uncle Bellamy's presence.

"Here is Anne," I said as we entered "heartily sorry for the rash step she took, which her youth and inexperience may well excuse." The young lady tried to throw herself at her uncle's feet, but he caught her in his arms and clasped her to his breast, soothing and caressing her in one breath, while she sobbed violently, accusing herself in the bitterest manner. I could not look on unmoved, so I left the room, and only returned half an hour later, giving her time to recover her composure before bringing Babington to the scene. When at last I took him up, we found uncle and niece sitting together at the window, through which the moonlight now streamed into the apartment, for the storm was over, and the clouds were dispersed. I acted as mediator, but I saw it cost Bellamy a struggle to lay his hand in that of the thoughtless youth, who had violated the rights of hospitality, and brought additional grief on an already suffering household. But he overcame himself manfully, and spoke kindly to Babington, calling him "nephew."

I was heartily glad of this, and felt I could now die in peace, if we were really to lay down our lives that night. For as nothing more wretched than hatred and strife, so nothing is more comforting and encouraging than the reconciliation and reunion of those who have been at variance.

In the meantime midnight had come and we waited in anxious expectation the dreaded signal of attack. The most extraordinary reports had, during the last half hour reached us; some persons asserting positively that gangs of hired assassins were assembled in readiness in St. Paul's churchyard at Charing Cross, on Tower Hill, at London Stone, and that the Catholics were all to be driven onto London Bridge, thence to be precipitated headlong into the river. Others, on the contrary, declared it was all an idle rumor, only set afloat for the purpose of driving Papists to desperation.

Some of Walsingham's emissaries had been heard to make the announcement in one or other of the taverns and wine shops of the city, which they frequented; hence it might safely be concluded that there was no truth in it, otherwise the Chief Secretary's agents would not let it get about beforehand. This reason had great weight with me; yet it was with no little trepidation that I listened for the stroke of midnight. At length it rang out from a neighboring church tower; a moment more, and with beating hearts, we heard it slowly toll out from St. Paul's. But the last stroke died away, and neither the great bell nor the Tower guns gave forth a sound. We breathed more freely. "It was a cock-and-bull story, after all," said I. "Do not make too sure of that," remarked one of my companions. "The signal may yet be given."

Ten more minutes passed; and then we determined to send Bill, and his boy, Johnny, out to get tidings. The bolts were cautiously drawn back, the door was opened, when we caught the sound of cries in an adjoining alley. The door was instantly closed again, and all exclaimed "They are coming!"

"Tis but a few revellers getting home from 'The Jolly Sailor,' half sea over," said Bill. "Let me go out."

After a little more discussion we ventured upon opening the door again, and Bill and the boy issued forth to learn the real state of affairs. On their return they said there were a great many people in the streets and squares, all talking of a massacre that was to be, and of a hostile invasion; but nowhere were any armed men to be seen, neither on Tower Hill nor at Charing Cross, nor at St. Paul's.

"Only an idle scare again this time, thank God," said Babington, who with the others, had come down to the lower room before midnight.

"But how long are we to endure this intolerable tyranny on the part of the Queen's ministers? We all know that quite recently Lord Burghley was heard to declare, he would bring matters to such a pass that in a short time Catholics should be reduced to such a state of desti-

ty that they should be unable to assist one another, and would be thankful to feed swine if thereby they could find husks to assuage their hunger?"

It would have been pardonable, if on such an occasion as this, a few words had been let drop, which the myrmidons of the law would have reckoned as treasonable. Yet such was the timidity and apprehension continually felt at that time by Catholics, that, although we English are wont to pride ourselves on our love of liberty, not one of those present ventured to utter a syllable against Burghley and his associates, in answer to Babington's indignant outburst.

At last one and another slipped away to their own homes, after thanking the worthy hostman for the shelter he had afforded them, and leaving a substantial proof of their gratitude behind them. When the excitement was over, I inquired after his sick daughter; he said she was not as well as she had been, he had taken her to a neighbor's house for the night, for the sake of greater quiet. I promised to visit her as soon as possible, and Bill rowed us back to our dwelling, where we were glad to take a few hours rest before a new day brought us fresh cares and fresh anxieties.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The sun already stood high in the heavens when we met for breakfast. Then for the first time I noticed that the roses on Anne's cheeks had faded sadly during the past weeks. Not only did she look ill, but there was a strange restlessness about her that I did not at all like; she seemed unable to sit still; her fingers were always at work on something, and in talking she passed from subject to subject incessantly. Yet she would not allow that there was anything the matter with her, only she had slept badly, she said. All would be well if only she could be assured through uncle Remy of her grandmother's and sister's forgiveness. Consequently I told both Bellamy and Babington that the very best thing far her would be to pass a few weeks in the seclusion of Woxindon; in fact her health required it. The former said directly that he would take his niece back with him, and the latter, after some persuasion on our part, gave his consent. We agreed, however, that Uncle Remy should go down first and apprise his mother of our intention, and that Anne should follow under our escort on the morrow. Woxindon would only be a halting place for me on my way back to Chartley.

Bellamy set off betimes on his homeward ride, and Anne, at my suggestion, retired to rest awhile, to make amends for the preceding night. I availed myself of the opportunity thus afforded me, to question Babington about Savage and his murderous project.

He told me he had made the man's acquaintance through Pooley, who displayed the greatest sympathy for the Queen of Scots, and had disclosed to Babington many of Walsingham's secrets. I here made the remark that he ought to be careful how he trusted Pooley, for a man who is not true to his master will not be true to his friend. Babington answered that he had taken the precaution to make inquiries through Nan, of Mary Stuart herself, to whom Pooley had referred him, as to whether the man was trustworthy, and had had the most satisfactory assurances in reply. For himself he was more and more convinced that Walsingham was desirous that Mary should be set at liberty, and that was why he had appointed me as her physi-

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den. He believed too that it was with Walsingham's consent that Pooley told him what he did, albeit he was obliged to appear to know nothing whatsoever of our plans.

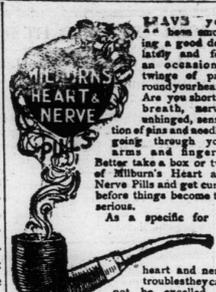
"I was introduced to Savage some two months back," he continued, "in the 'Paris Garden,' as being a wonderful good shot. I pique myself on being no mean proficient in that line, but on competing with him, I found that my skill was nothing in comparison with his. Pooley left us together, and we were joined presently by Gifford, whom the French ambassador has entrusted us with the task of conveying all our correspondence to the Scottish Queen. He told me that Savage was the very man for us; he was a zealous adherent of the Catholic cause, and would gladly join our conspiracy. I therefore invited the sinister-looking man to my rooms, saying I wanted to show him some new pistols of Spanish workmanship and to speak a word with him in confidence. He came, and over a bottle of choice Alicante, his tongue was loosed. What was the use, he said, of complaining about the sad condition of Catholics in England? The time has come to act; the Pope himself had declared that Anne Boyle's daughter was not our rightful sovereign. I reminded him of the disastrous answer that the blow had been struck in the wrong place. 'A single bullet from the mouth of this pistol in the heart of the right individual would rescue England from the shameful tyranny of this bastard, and our holy faith from being trampled on by the heretics.'

I could no longer fail to understand his meaning, and upon my honor, I did my best to dissuade him from attempting such a crime. All was in vain. He is firmly convinced that he is chosen by Heaven to be an instrument of its vengeance, and the liberator of the Church of God; and would gladly die the cruellest death if he could only first succeed in inflicting on Elizabeth the fate she deserves." "He told me," Babington continued, "that he was a soldier of fortune who had served for several years in the Netherlands. Having lost family and home and property in the religious wars, nothing remained to him but his sword; and he thought he could not employ it better than by fighting against the heretics under Parma. Embittered by brooding over his misfortunes, and exasperated by certain Scottish comrades in the camp, who reproached the English Catholics for their cowardice in submitting to be tyrannized over by a woman, he had become possessed with the idea that to take the life of one who used her power to such ill purpose, and who bad, in fact, no right claim to the sceptre she wielded, would be a good and laudable action, which Heaven would approve. He related to me that, on one occasion, after long hesitation, he distinctly heard a voice bidding him do the deed he contemplated; and that many remarkable coincidences had confirmed him in his resolution. Finding all persuasions powerless to deter him from the deed, what was I to do?" "Inform against him instantly," Tichbourne answered.

"I could not bring a man to the gallows, for what he told me in confidence," Babington rejoined. "I did threaten him with it, but I saw from the strange, wild look in his eye that if I persisted, he would not scruple to take a speedy means of preventing betrayal. So I changed my tactics, and suggested another argument; had it not occurred to him, I said, that the assassination of Elizabeth, so long as Mary Stuart was in the power of her enemies, would provoke her immediate death at the hands of her warden, by way of reprisal; and thus he would destroy a life he meant to spare, and defeat the hopes of all of us Catholics? This staggered him for a time; then he said: 'God can protect her; I must keep my oath.' Nothing remained for me but to reveal to him, after swearing him to secrecy, the existence of our association for the liberation of the Queen of Scots, the arrangements for which were so far advanced, that we might reasonably hope to execute our project before many weeks had elapsed. Finally I induced him to give me his word of honor that he would do nothing until Mary Stuart had been removed to a place of safety. That is all that I have had to do with Savage."

Tichbourne and I could not but approve of Babington's conduct in regard to this affair. We resolved that Savage's project should not be mixed up in any way with ours, nor should he be admitted into our association. Not a word should be said about his proposal at our meeting that evening; above all, there was not to be a hint of it in any communication to the captive Queen. I then talked about my sojourn to Chartley, and my royal patient, describing her gentleness and patience in such eloquent language, that my hearers were quite touched. Before separating, we promised to be at the "Blue Bear" in St. Giles in good time that evening. (To be continued.)

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They are hauling in the buckwheat From the field upon the hill, And the swollen stream is roaring O'er the dam below the mill; The ripened nuts are falling, And the hungry peacock's calling.

For the breakfast that the gander grabbed away, While the squirrels gayly chatter, As if nothing were the matter, And the gobbler's getting fatter Every day.

The colts are in the pasture And the cows wind o'er the lea; All the swaying limbs are naked Where the green leaves used to be; The housewife, all a-flutter, Stirs the bubbling apple butter, With the wood smoke in her nostrils and her eyes;

On the line the wash is gleaming, On the steps the dog is dreaming, And, above, a hawk is screaming As it flies!

The glossy quail is resting On the weather-beaten log, And the hunterman from the city Stumbles down through brake and bog; Over roots and over boulders, With a pair of shining shoulder, He goes trudging with his fifty-dollar gun,

Always to his purpose cleaving Never halting, never grieving, But contentedly believing It is fun.

The farmer's rosy daughter Helps the busy hired man; They are husking corn as blithely And as briskly as they can; They are very near together As they husk and wonder whether There are red ears they shall chance to find or not;

She is looking out to see one, He is hoping he may "tree one," But there doesn't seem to be one In the lot.

A subtle charm enfolds them As they tear the husks away; There is music in the cackle Of the hen up in the bay; Now she hears his exclamation And is full of perturbation, For at last—at last—the lucky ear is found!

Flashes mount into their faces, He the happy chance embraces— And she giggles as he chases Her around.

O the farmers lot is bappy, And the farmer's dreams are sweet, If there's money in his pockets And his bins are full of wheat— Free from all the city's clamor He may live denying grammar, And the leaves that fall serve not to make him sad!

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