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"Mr. St. Barbe, you must know that all these tricks and stratagems to which diplomatists like your uncle have recourse, I loathe from my heart; for I loathe the precepts of the Gospel, which says: Let your speech be yea, yea; no, no; and that which is over and above these is of evil." But we also read in the Scriptures: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." And this text reconciles me to the wily ways, whereby it is proposed to ensnare this woman for the furtherment of the pure Gospel, of which she is so stiff-necked an opponent. For I consider her to be as full of guile as any of the serpents the Papists have ever bred! So let this Gifford come, and see what he can accomplish, but let him beware of foul play! I shall keep a strict eye upon him, and shall run both him and her through with my sword, if he turns traitor. She shall not escape from my guardianship alive, unless the devil flies away with her to his own place."

Sir Amias said these last words in so spiteful a manner that a cold shiver ran over me. For some time he continued his denunciations of idolatry, similar in most respects to those uttered by the Jewish prophets of old. Presently, having vented his spleen, he came and sat down beside me, and, at my request, began to talk about his prisoner. She would not be persuaded, he said, to join the household at their devotions, nor would she listen to the pure word of God from the lips of the zealous and God-fearing preacher Bitterstone, who held forth to the effect people of God, for half an hour every evening, as the Spirit moved him. Instead of that, she and her attendants, with the secretaries Nau and Curle, knelt before a crucifix or an image of the Madonna, and pattered out the rosary, or some cursed idolatrous nonsense. She would only too gladly have the abomination of the mass, if he would let one of the priests of Baal come under her roof; hitherto he had succeeded in preventing that, although to his great astonishment the Queen, who was unfortunately not altogether innocent of a leaning to Popery, had granted permission to his prisoner to have one of these servants of the devil about her. Then he begged me not to repeat what he had let slip in the heat of his just wrath, for not very long since, Elizabeth had condemned one John Stubbs to have his right hand chopped off by the hangman, for over-great freedom of speech when expounding the Gospel. With regard to Mary Stuart however, her bitterest enemy must admit that apart from her former crimes and her persistent adhesion to Roman errors, she was not so bad after all. She displayed in general far more patience than he would have thought possible in such a child of hell, and she even made a show of Christian charity, for he had overheard her praying for the Queen, and also for herself. He did not allow himself to be deceived by appearances, for he knew full well that the devil can assume the form of an angel of light, and that true beliefs are the only solid ground of justification. Instead of that she trusted to good works, according to the Popish teaching, as I should see in the afternoon, when she distributed her daily alms to the beggars who came from all the country round to Chartley, as they used to do in the old Popish times, to get the doles given away at the funeral of some person of standing in the country, to release his soul from purgatory.

We were still conversing in this way we heard the sound of wheels in the courtyard and a clamour of voices. My companion ran to the window and exclaimed: "Here is the man we want, the very fellow your Gifford, or whatever his name is, spoke of." I too went to the window, and looking out, I saw a heavy wagon drawn by two horses crossing the courtyard. On the driver's seat was an immensely corpulent man, resembling in shape the beer barrels with which the dray behind him was loaded.

"That is Tommy Bulky, the 'honest brewer,' on whom Gifford put his finger," Paulet said to me. "He brings over the beer from Burton every Monday, and I think he is just the man to answer our purpose. We must go down to the porter's lodge to speak to him, for such a barrel

as he is cannot well be got upstairs." This was apparent enough from the difficulty the good man had at alighting from the wagon. The servants brought a short pair of steps of solid oak, part of the side of the wagon was removed, and Tommy advanced one of his legs of elephantine thickness, encased in dirty leathern breeches, placing it cautiously on the topmost step of the ladder. Although I was in no merry mood, I could not forbear laughing as I watched him, and even the features of my morose companion relaxed into a smile, as he compared the "honest brewer" of Burton to the obese king of Amalek.

In going down to the porter's lodge we found our man sitting on a bench, still panting and puffing from the exertion of alighting from the wagon. His fat arms were propped upon the table, and he wiped the perspiration from his brow with his apron as he greeted the knight respectfully, and gave me a searching look from under his bushy eyebrows. I saw in a moment that the fellow was a sly dog. Sir Amias told him I was nephew to Secretary Walsingham, and had come down from London about a little business. The brewer gave me another sharp look with a rather unceremonious nod, and continued to wipe his bald head. Sir Amias then sent the porter over to the "Mayflower," a tavern in the vicinity, where Gifford, who must have got there by that time, was to lodge, with orders to bring him over at once.

Meanwhile the "honest brewer" had recovered his breath. After he had taken a long draught out of a huge tankard that stood on the table, he said, as he wiped the foam from his beard: "I was once in London, sir, I shall never go there again. Bad beer there, sir, vile stuff, not fit for a Christian to drink. Before I had drank a dozen mugs of it, I had the gripes, as if I had the devil himself inside me. I warrant you, sir, I had to pay more for physic than for my victuals that time. Men who brew such ale ought to be drowned in their own vats, that would serve them right. Pure Gospel and good beer, I say. But it appears in these days, the purer the doctrine, the worse the beer, although my good master here will not have that it is so. Our Burton ale is still excellent, sir, mine is at any rate. But the ditchwater they drink in the country round has so brought down our prices that upright folk will soon have to beg their bread, as sure as my name is Tommy Bulky."

Then I said that the Burton ale was renowned for its excellence all over England, and I was sorry that he and his brother-brewers did not make the business answer well. On that account I was all the more glad to be able to put him in the way of getting a little money. On hearing this, he set down the tankard which he was in the act of carrying to his lips, and listened to me attentively. In a few words I told him about the matter; that my uncle had discovered a conspiracy of some young Popish gentlemen, who wanted to carry on a correspondence with the captive Queen of Scots, and who had fixed upon him for their middle man. Here the brewer interrupted me by bringing his fist down upon the table with such violence that the tankard was nearly upset. Did he, he asked with an oath, look like one who would be a traitor to the Queen? If the Papists required such things of him, he would stand in their heads with his fist as if they were rotten casks.

I had some trouble to pacify him, and make him understand what it was, I meant. It was not the conspirators themselves who had fixed upon him, but one whom Walsingham had got in among them to act as a decoy bird and who knew that the honest brewer could be thoroughly relied upon. Did he now catch my meaning? Bulky only replied with a sly wink and a low whistle. If he managed the affair successfully, I continued, Walsingham promised him a bounty of £10, for the payment of which Sir Amias would be witness and surety. How much he should demand from the other parties, from the Queen of Scots' secretary, on the one hand, and from the Popish gentlemen on the other, I should leave to him, as I did not doubt he would know how to bleed them both freely. The only stipulation to be made was that all should be arranged

so craftily that both the conspirators and the inmates of the castle should fall into the trap, and should be convinced that he was dealing with them in good faith. Moreover, it was agreed that all the letters before being given to the Queen's secretary or delivered to the Popish gentlemen, as the case might be, should be left for one night with an agent of Walsingham's, who would lodge near his brewery at Burton.

After I had clearly explained everything to him, and even at his request given him my instructions in writing, with my own signature and that of Paulet attached to them, the honest brewer declared himself ready to do our bidding, and swore upon the Bible, that he would carry it out exactly, and give up all the letters confided to him. With a well satisfied smile he pocketed the gold piece I gave him into the bargain, emptied the tankard at one draught, and said: "Gentlemen, it is a fine thing when one can serve the Gospel and Her Majesty the Queen, whom God preserve, and do oneself a good turn at the same time. May the devil fetch me bodily—not a very easy task with a man of my weight by the bye—if I do not prove worthy of my Lord Secretary's trust!" Having given utterance to these forcible words, my man rose to his feet, not without an effort, and prepared to depart. We told him he had better wait a few moments longer, as we wanted him to make the acquaintance of the men with whom he would have to consult and combine. So he dropped down on the bench again, saying we could imagine that he could not bear standing, and begging that he might have a second tankard of ale, as there was not a more thirsty soul than himself. Ere long Gifford and Philipps made their appearance, and the three strange comrades soon came to an understanding.

I may as well here mention briefly the manner in which the honest brewer proposed to lay his tools. He was not only a brewer by trade, but an accomplished cooper, and could both make and mend his barrels and casks. Gifford knew this, and he therefore asked him if it were not practicable to make a false bottom to one of the barrels, so that a flat tin case, containing the letters wrapped in parchment, could be slipped into the empty partition. Nothing could be simpler, Bulky answered; adding that he could insert a spring in one of the staves exactly opposite to the vent-hole, which would enable the false bottom to be opened, and the letters put into, or withdrawn from the receptacle. I was astonished at Gifford's device, and the readiness with which the brewer took it up.

"There is only one difficulty that I see," he said at length. "Ifow is Nau, the Queen's secretary, to be induced to the construction of the new cask, which I will make by next Monday?"

"That is easily arranged," I replied. "You have only to write on a piece of paper a few words to the effect that the Queen's friends have found a means of conveying secret intelligence to her and of learning her wishes, and telling them to press the middle stave or the barrel, where there is a spot of tar. The master brewer must contrive to slip the paper into the hand of the servant who takes the cask, and all will go smoothly, for Sir Amias will wink at it."

In reality all did go smoothly with our plan, and I feel myself to have been an accomplice in the treachery, and in its fatal consequences. May God in his mercy pardon me.

CHAPTER XV.—The hope that the scheme which we had just been concocting would prove a sure and speedy means of bringing his prisoner to the block, put Sir Amias in the best of humors. He entertained me right royally at dinner, regaling me, not only with the excellent Burton ale, but with a bottle of choice wine, wherein to drink Her Majesty's health and destruction to all her enemies.

Presently he said that it was now time, if I wanted to see the Queen of Scots amongst the beggar-folk. Of course I was anxious to see her, whom from my tenderest years, I had been taught to regard as the arch-enemy of the word of God. Paulet conducted me into another apartment, whence a view of the court-

yard was to be obtained. The outer gate was closed, and guarded by a few armed men. On the steps leading to a side door in the opposite wing of the building a considerable number of poor and afflicted were congregated. Cripples were there, resting on their crutches; sufferers pale and emaciated, displaying hideous sores, and clothed in scanty and ragged garments. There were about half-a-hundred of them, and Paulet told me there were four times as many waiting outside, but he did not allow more than four dozen to be let in, and they were watched, lest they should bring in, or carry away any messages. Then he fell to abusing the whole pack of mendicants, declaring they would all return to the abomination of Popery to-morrow, for the sake of the monks who gave victuals to them daily at the monastery gates.

While he was discoursing after this fashion, the bell in the turret struck three. At the first stroke, the mendicants began to bestir themselves; they pressed towards the side door, which was opened almost immediately to give egress to a queeny figure, habited entirely in black, with a white widow's veil. She was accompanied by one or two waiting women. The people flocked around her with respectful familiarity. "There she is," said Paulet, the one in black with the veil; that is the Jezebel, and many Jezebel's fate be hers!

I cannot say that I was inclined to echo the wish of my Puritan host. There was in my nature too much of human kindness, despite my early training and teaching, to allow me to look unmoved upon the spectacle before me. Mary Stuart appeared far from well; it was not without difficulty that leaning upon a stick and the arm of one of her attendants, she descended the stone steps, and seated herself upon a chair which her Secretary Mr. Nau placed for her. She then threw back her veil. Her countenance had been robbed of its bloom by long years of captivity; it was pale, almost swollen, and apparently slightly swollen. Yet I thought I had never gazed on features so beautiful and so dignified; they bore the stamp of gentleness and serenity; the expression of her large dark eyes was kindly in the extreme. A benign smile played about her lips, which were almost colorless, while with her own hand she distributed her alms to each applicant in turn; she seemed to know them all, and had a friendly word for every one. To some she gave money, more or less according to their needs, from a purse which her Secretary held for her; to others she gave a loaf of bread from a basket carried by one of her maidens.

"At one time," remarked Sir Amias, "she attempted to teach the children the soul-destroying doctrines of Antichrist, and make them pray to the Virgin and the Saints. But I put a stop to that, and she does not dare now to infect the souls of the people with that poison."

"She does not seem in good health," I observed. "Her complexion is bad, and she looks as if she were suffering."

"Yes, yes," he replied, stroking his grizzled beard, "that comes from confinement and want of exercise. When she was at Tutbury, sir Ralph Sadler used from time to time let her go out heron-hawking. Now I keep her much stricter. Since Christ-mas she has never once been beyond these walls, and the apartments are rather stuffy, and not over well heated. I had instructions too from the Privy Council not to provide a very generous table for her. At one time I thought she had dropsy, and would not live long. But now that the weather is improving, it seems almost as if she were getting well again, like a bird after moulting. In fact she may live to spite me and other people for a good many years to come, if the executioner does not make short work with her. She uses a stick because of rheumatism, for the dampness of the old stone walls has got into her joints, so that she moans at night with the pain, and much I doubt whether she will get rid of it in the summer. Her hair has turned very grey this winter, though she is only forty-four years of age. I believe the cause of that is her grief about the King of Scotland, her son, who foresook the Popish errors and made himself Elizabeth's ally, without stipulating for his mother's release."

While Paulet was talking, I could not take my eyes from the royal lady. As I watched her giving bread to the hungry with loving condescension, the thought occurred to me that in the great day of reckoning our Lord would say to her: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, ye did it to me." However I instantly repelled the idea as a temptation of the devil, so difficult is it to overcome the prejudices early instilled into one.

When half-past three struck, she forthwith rose, and supported by

Nau and her maidens, slowly ascended the steps. At the door she paused, and turning one more towards the recipients of her bounty, took leave of them with a courteous inclination of the head, and disappeared from view. It surprised me that the mendicants let her depart in silence; no one uttered a word of thanks, except one or two children who were instantly hushed by their elders. My companion divined my thoughts, and in answer to them said that formerly there was such a clamor of thanks and blessings, that he had made a strict rule that any one who said a word aloud should never be admitted again into the courtyard. That had been effectual, he said, in making them all as mum as fishes.

I made no rejoinder to the knight's remarks. The struggle had already commenced in my heart between divine grace and deep seated prejudice, and it was with me as it is with everyone who strives to close his ears to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. I felt strangely dissatisfied and embittered, and could bear no longer to remain in the castle of which the royal lady, the sight of whom had had so powerful effect upon me, was an inmate. So I told Sir Amias that I must go as far as Redworth or Rugby that evening, as I had to be back in London betimes the day after next, and asked him to order my horse to be brought round. He sent polite messages to my uncle, and promised to despatch a messenger on horseback as soon as there should be intelligence of any importance to communicate. He also undertook to look narrowly after Gifford and the brewer. Thus I rode away from Chartley with disquiet in my soul.

Walsingham received me most kindly, and rubbed his hands together delightedly when I gave my report. Then he said it was high time that I should put in an appearance at Court for a few days, to pay my devoirs to Her Majesty, and recall myself at the same time to Miss Cecil's remembrance. He gave me some useful hints, as to what I should say and what I should leave unsaid. I was not to breathe a word about Babington's plans and our counter-plans; but I was to pay the most barefaced compliments to the Queen about her wit and her beauty; it was incredible what an amount of flattery she would swallow. With Miss Cecil, who was of a graver disposition, I could get on very well, but with the Queen, I was much too guarded in my speech; I ought to imitate Sir Christopher Hatton, Sir Walter Raleigh, and other courtiers, and so on.

Accordingly early the next morning I repaired to Richmond, where the Court then was. In the ante-room I found a number of young noblemen, who greeted me most courteously. They had heard that I had only recently arrived from Paris, and I was overwhelmed with questions about the French Court and all manner of things. Happily for me, the great folding doors leading to the Royal apartments were soon rolled back; two of the Queen's body-guard carrying halberds, commonly called beef-eaters, from their attendance at the buffetier, or sideboard, placed themselves in the entry; the groom of the chambers with his silver staff called for silence, and announced that Her Majesty would shortly appear. The courtiers ranged themselves on each side of the room, and in a few moments the Queen entered, with Lord Burghley at her side.

Elizabeth walked with her head more than usually erect, without taking the arm of the Lord Treasurer, as was her wont. This was a sign that she was not in the best of tempers; the peculiar expression on Burghley's countenance, and the evident perturbation of the two maids of honor who carried her long train, confirmed my suspicion. But Elizabeth was every inch a queen.

Her rich apparel, consisting of a dress of crimson velvet slashed with black, with a stomacher heavy with gold and silver embroidery and laden with jewels, over a green petticoat, also elaborately adorned, well became her commanding figure. With a proud, almost defiant look, she passed between the rows of obsequious courtiers. Involuntarily my thoughts recurred to the scene I had witnessed three days before at Chartley. I contrasted the elegant form, clad in simple black and leaning on a stick surrounded by a crowd of ragged mendicants, with the haughty Sovereign in whose presence I stood. But I had little leisure to make comparisons. Elizabeth advanced with a firm step, addressing an observation to one or another of the courtiers, more often a word of sarcasm or reproof than of kindness or encouragement. Whoever she spoke to immediately fell on his knees. This was a new custom introduced by Elizabeth; the English nobility, accustomed to a certain freedom in their relations to their monarchs, were now obliged, with certain exceptions, to assume this humble at-

titude when speaking to the Queen. On reaching the place where I stood, Elizabeth paused, and exclaimed, "What marvel is this! Here is Walsingham's nephew, concerning whose diplomatic astuteness such wonderful, and probably exaggerated reports have reached us, actually at last conferring on us the honor of his presence!"

I dropped on my knee, and begged for forgiveness, alleging that Her Majesty's service had till then prevented me from seeking the light of her countenance, whose youthful bloom and beauty was enhanced rather than diminished by the lapse of time since I last beheld it. I blush to recall the incense of flattery which I burnt at the altar of a woman already over fifty years of age; but I only carried out my uncle's injunctions, and employed the phrases he suggested. Thus I went on to say that what was said at the French Court appeared to be true, namely, that the gods had given to Her Majesty the ambrosia of perpetual youth as the reward of virginity, since no natural means could avail to preserve her beauty thus undimmed by the hand of years.

She laughed and said I had learnt in the school of Catharine de Medici to make pretty speeches, and I must not think she believed a word of my flatteries, neatly turned though they were. Or perhaps Walsingham himself had taught me my lesson?

I answered (God forgive me) in the words of Holy Scripture: "Sapiens es sicut angelus Dei!" Nothing escapes Your Majesty's penetration! True it is that my uncle spoke in similar terms of Your Majesty's almost superhuman beauty, but now my own eyes tell me that far from saying too much, his expressions fell short of the truth.

A murmur of approval and assent ran through the assembled bystanders. The Queen gave me a gracious pat with one of the gold tassels hanging from her girdle, saying, "Rise up Master St. Barbe, and follow us in the hall of audience. We must have some conversation with you."

It was plain that the Queen's vanity was tickled, and it has always been a puzzle to me, how a rational being, perfectly aware of the falsity of these flatteries, should still take pleasure in them. Many an enviable glance was directed towards me, as I followed in the Queen's train. Amongst the maids of honor, I saw Miss Cecil. Our eyes met; I fancied I read in her glance something of annoyance, if not of scorn on account of the flatteries I had been uttering. The contemptibility of such hollow sycophancy was borne in upon me forcibly, and I felt heartily ashamed of myself.

While this was passing in my mind the Queen had entered the audience chamber with her suite, and taken her seat on a gilt arm-chair, beneath a canopy of blue damask, the back of which was decorated with the royal arms and surmounted by a crown. On her right stood Lord Burghley; on her left the Lord Chamberlain. Besides myself a few of the nobles and ladies of the Court had the honor to be present at this audience, when various petitioners made their requests to the Queen. I do not remember what the petitions consisted in; they were of the nature usually asked of crowned heads. Elizabeth refused some with bitter irony; others she granted; almost invariably, she listened favorably to the application of Catholic nobles who having apostatized, asked for a share in the property of other members of the family, confiscated on account of the owner's adhesion to his faith. But these favors—the reward of apostasy—were often accorded grudgingly and scornfully, as one might throw a dox a bone and give him a kick at the same time.

(To be continued.)

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