

THE WONDERFUL FLOWER OF WOXINDON.

An Historical Romance of the Times of Queen Elizabeth.

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CHAPTER I.—(Continued.)

Whilst walking home down the hill, therefore, we discussed the manner in which the plan could be carried out. The Archduchess said that as our respective narratives would mutually complete one another, we three, Brother Anselm, my wife and myself, should meet together and severally narrate the story of the events in chronological order, as they took place. It was with this object that she had invited the Capuchin Brother to come up to the Castle with Father Guardian on the morrow. After our conference it was to be my part, for as much as Providence had gifted me with a good memory and a rapid pen, to commit to paper what had been related, and at the next meeting to read it over, for correction and amplification. After that it should be neatly transcribed in an elegant book, which she would order from Brussels.

This arrangement was accordingly carried out, only as Father Guardian was of opinion that it would be out of keeping with the simplicity of the life of a Capuchin to be a daily visitor at the Court, our conferences were for the most part held at the neighboring seat of Count R. Liano, who kindly placed at our disposal a room entering into the grounds of the mansions. There, or when the weather permitted, sitting under the benches and elms of the meadow adjoining the garden, and not far from the monastery, we reciprocally related our respective reminiscences, almost exactly as they are transcribed in the following pages.

It appeared to me, recalling the comparison made by the Archduchess between my day of life and the day then drawing to a close, that an account of that day, the one on which I received the commission to write this history, would form the fittest prologue or introduction to my narrative. I have therefore laid it before the reader. I shall now turn from the present, from the peaceful repose of a quiet country life, and think myself back into the troubled past, the scenes of strife and bloodshed of some thirty years ago, amid which my Providence be my guide!

CHAPTER II.

It is exactly thirty years ago this spring, that the wonderful flower, which my dear grandmother imagined to be a portent of happiness to us, may even a revival of religion in this land, blossomed in my parents' house. "A! a! that flower, far from being a harbinger of joy, was the forerunner of the ruin of our house, and of a fierce outburst of persecution against our Holy Faith. But perhaps if it brought sorrow here, it brought the promise of felicity hereafter."

Before telling the story of this flower, I must say a few words about our dear old home. It was an estate called Woxindon, not far from Harrow-on-the-hill, about 12 miles from London; somewhat farther, that is, than our own Torrvenon is from B-nesse, and separated from it by a wood. St. John's Wood, just as we were shut off from the capital by the forest of Audeghem. From our watchtower we could look over the tops of the trees and descry the grey wall and gloomy turrets of the Tower on the other side of the city. Whenever wind and weather permitted, my dear grandmother, leaning on my sister Anne's arm, or on mine, used to ascend the winding stairs leading to the flat roof of the turret. There, looking across to the Tower in the far distance, we would kneel down and recite a prayer for many Catholics and priests, venerated Confessors of the Faith who were immured in its darksome dungeons. There were always about fifty there; with a large proportion of those who were personally acquainted, for Woxindon was known to friend and foe, as the principal place of refuge for priests in the neighborhood of London, in fact in the south of England. Seldom did a month pass without one receiving a domiciliary visit, generally at night, from Topcliff and his myrmidons, who turned the castle upside-down, palled down partitions and broke through walls, only to go away at last, cursing and swearing at the facility of their quest.

Topcliff was a thoroughly low bad man, a Paritan in whose veins ran adder's poison, possessed not by one, but by a legion of devils breathing hatred against the Papacy. The mere sight of him made me shudder; not so my light-hearted sister Anne, who mocked and derided him, although my father repeatedly forbid her to do so. At the close of one of his fruitless searches she came forward and courted him, asking sarcastically when we might expect

the great pleasure of another visit from his Honor, the Chief Master-Jailer? She would be glad to know, in order that some fitting preparation might be made to receive him, by the erection of a triumphal arch, something in the form of a gallows, perhaps. Thereupon Topcliff cast a vicious glance, like a poisoned arrow, at the girl, saying: "You will not have much cause to rejoice, my young lady, when I come again. I hope ere long, with the help of God, to wed you and a good many more inmates of this penal den to the hangman's rope."

Such was the cruel threat he flung at us as he rode off with his followers. And, sad to relate, the very next time he succeeded in capturing Father Thompson, or Blackburn (the name of his native town under which he sometimes passed) as he stood vested at the altar, delivering a stirring discourse upon the Holy Souls, for it was All Soul's Day, 1588. At the time we could not conceive how Topcliff had contrived to surprise us; later on we discovered, to our sorrow, that a wretched traitor had given him the sign, by means of a cloth hung out of a window, and had also left a side door unbarred, so that the pursuivants were in the house, before the priest could slip into his cleverly contrived hiding place. You should only have heard the cries and lamentations of us women on the one hand, and on the other the mocking laughter of those devilish bloodhounds, as they pounced upon their prey. My father happened to be absent just then, so the sheriff's officer took my uncle Robert, the supposed master of the house, away to the prison with the good priest, who gave us his blessing as he went, though his hands were tied together. My sister Anne made no courtships and so mocking speeches this time.

From that day forth our grand mother went more often than ever to the top of the watchtower to pray and look towards the tower of London, where the good priest was imprisoned, and Newgate, where her son Robert languished in confinement. And, truth to tell, I must confess that to my youthful impatience her prayers seemed terribly long. My eyes used to follow the long band on the Thames, as it flows by Whitehall, Westminster, with its desolated abbey, Chelsea and Putney, where the river loses itself amongst the green hills of the west. Beautiful Woxindon! the beloved scene where my happy youth was spent! How picturesque the little village of Harrow, and the little church with its ivy clad walls and tower, looked nestling on the gentle slope of the hill opposite to the castle! There the ancestors of our race were interred, from Godala, who received Woxindon in fee from Richard II., down to my grandfather, who died before the end of the reign of Queen Mary, by the Puritans called Bloody (a name befitting far better her sister Elizabeth). He was laid solemnly to rest in consecrated ground; the

Stop the Blight

It is a sad thing to see fine fruit trees spoiled by the blight. You can always tell them from the rest. They never do well afterwards but stay small and sickly.

It is worse to see a blight strike children. Good health is the natural right of children. But some of them don't get their rights. While the rest grow big and strong one stays small and weak.

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last of the Bellamy's, alas! who will have this final consolation, in England, at least. For when my dear mother died, six years ago, we buried her in our garden. Far, far away over the hills one saw the fertile, undulating plains of Middlesex, dotted about with farms and hamlets innumerable, with noblemen's seats, towns and villages, woods and meadows, stretching away until even my sharp eyes could no longer distinguish them in the blue haze of the horizon. In the East, St. John's Wood shut off the prospect. Among the green tree-tops, at no great distance rose the so-called "Old Castle." This was a huge ruined stronghold, formerly the residence of our ancestors, until it was destroyed in the Wars of the Rose; and Woxindon was built on a more accessible spot. Not only on the east side did the lofty beeches and oaks reach almost to the walls of our garden, but on the south and west also. Our grounds, with their shady walks, neatly trimmed hedges, verdant lawns, gravelled paths, fountains and terraces bespoke both the wealth and the taste of the owner. The Bellamy's of Woxindon always ranked among the richest landed proprietors of Middlesex aristocracy.

How happy our life might have been in the stately manor house of our beautiful estate, had it not been for the cruel persecution, which in increasing ferocity from year to year hung like a black cloud over its towers and smiling gardens. Already father found it almost impossible to pay the enormous fines imposed by Parliament, not merely for bearing mass, but for non-attendance at the Protestant service. These were increased nearly every year, and really amounted to hundreds, even thousands of pounds. To meet these demands, one piece of land after another had to be mortgaged or sold to the Pages, my grandmother's nephews, who, for the sake of temporal advantage, acting against their conviction and conscience, had conformed to the new religion. This gave my father much sorrow and anxiety, inasmuch that he repeatedly asked different priests, whether, in order to avert the ruin of the whole family, it was not permissible occasionally to assist at the Anglican services, thus conforming outwardly whilst still protesting inwardly. But every conscientious priest made the same reply, that such a thing could not be sanctioned by any means, since to be present at the Anglican service was considered by our antagonists as a sign of apostasy from the Catholic faith. His pious mother, too, entreated him rather to sacrifice his property to the last farthing, than be false to his creed. Thereupon he called us all together one day in the upper room which was used as an oratory, and explained to us clearly the state of circumstances. He then bade us on the following morning, after due deliberation and earnest prayer, give him our opinion as to what course ought to be pursued.

This we did, and the result was that all unanimously declared they would rather, like good Lady Tregian, who was then under our roof, beg their bread from door to door throughout the length and breadth of the land, even in foreign lands, too, than even outwardly and in appearance only forsake and deny the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. The example of the good old Eleazar in the time of the Maccabees, who preferred to die a cruel death sooner than even seem to have transgressed the law of God, was set before us by our good Bartholomew, (or Barty, as we called him for brevity's sake). He was a child like, simple soul, whom the country people termed silly, but who certainly was wise in the sight of God. He related this history from Holy Scripture with pious fervor; it was the longest speech I ever heard from his lips, and touched us all profoundly, so that the tears came into our eyes. Father's youngest brother Jeremy, too, (Remy we called him) declared himself ready to quit his father's house for the sake of the Faith. Uncle Remy loved a joke, even about serious matters, so being a short, stout man, he announced his intention, seeing that he had weight enough to carry without the addition of a beggar's sallet to cross the Channel and enter the Duke of Parma's Light Cavalry, provided Queen Elizabeth was pleased to lay hands on Woxindon.

On hearing that, my sister Anne broke out laughing: "Uncle Remy in the Light Dragoons!" she exclaimed, "why he weighs twenty-five stone! I shall follow the regiment, too, to see such a wonderful sight." Then suddenly turning grave, she added: "There is no need to ask Mary and me. We would rather die a thousand times over than deny our Faith."

Of course I agreed to that heartily, though I did not add that the mere thought of leaving Woxindon made me cry. My little brother Frith, too, looked up gravely from under his clustering curls, and said he would not mind going begging in the least; only he should ask the Queen to let him have his pretty grey pony with him, so that grandmother, who could not walk far, might ride on it, as he had seen the gypsies doing, when they passed by the castle a few days ago, with horse and cart and dancing bear. Grandmother praised her little pet for his thoughtfulness and rewarded him with a picture of Our Lady.

(To be continued.)

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IMPENDING DEATH.

BY ARTHUR BARRY.

Though oftentimes in meditative mood

On death and all its adjuncts I have dwelt,

Rehearsed mine own last hour the while I knelt

In solitary prayer, or found me food

For gravest thought before the sacred

Rood

Whereon the Saviour died, my soul ne'er felt.

Before to-day how swift it may be dealt.

The stroke all mortals shun, though none elude,

Exulting in the plenitude of life,

I sped me 'gainst the Autumn's bracing breath,

My teeming brain with varied projects rife,

When, lo! a crashing shock, and concrete Death

Stood o'er me imminent. One gasping cry

To Mary—then Death swerved and passed me by.

—Ave Maria.

F. E. B.

We heard a man say the other morning that the abbreviation for February—Feb.—means Freeze every body, and the man looked frozen in his ulster. It was apparent that he needed the kind of warmth that stays, the warmth that reaches from head to foot, all over the body. We could have told him from personal knowledge that Hood's Sarsaparilla gives permanent warmth, it invigorates the blood and speeds it along through artery and vein, and really fits men and women, boys and girls, to enjoy cold weather and resist the attacks of disease. It gives the right kind of warmth, stimulates and strengthens at the same time, and all its benefits are lasting. There may be a suggestion in this for you.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

"If you knew my wife you would think she is one woman in 50,000," said one citizen to another. "And if you could hear my wife talk you would think she was 50,000 women in one," replied the other.

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Some people are like clock—they are always going and never get anywhere.

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"Entirely so."

"Well, now, I want to ask you something—not professionally, but as a plain, everyday man. Who do you honestly think stands the best show for getting the property?"

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"Yes," replied the judge, "and I regret to say I found it guilty."

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"I had no energy and was in a miserable state of health. Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills, which I got at Richard's Drug Store here, changed me from a condition of misery to good health. They built up my system, strengthened my nerves, restored brisk circulation of my blood, and made a new man of me. I heartily recommend them to any one suffering from the after effects of Grippe, or any other severe illness."

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