

WHEN KNIGHTHOOD WAS IN FLOWER

Or, The Love Story of Charles Brandon and Mary Tudor, the King's Sister, and Happening in the Reign of His August Majesty King Henry the Eighth

By EDWIN CASKODEN [CHARLES MAJOR]

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(Continued.)

But the winning of Jane was not so easy a matter as my vanity had prompted me to think. I started with a handicap, since Jane had heard my declaration to Mary, and I had to undo all that before I could do anything else. Try the same thing yourself with a spirited girl, naturally laughter lov-



"Don't believe one word she says! Simple and coy, if you think it a simple undertaking. I began to fear I should need another antidote long before I heard her sweet soul-satisfying 'yes.' I do not believe, however, I could have found in the whole world an antidote to my first dose."

In the course of my talk with Brandon I had, as I have said, told him the story of Mary, with some slight variations and coloring, or, rather, discoloring, to make it appear a little less to my discredit than the barefaced truth would have been. I told him also about Jane, and, I grieve and blush to say, expressed a confidence in that direction I little felt.

It had been perhaps a year since my adventure with Mary, and I had taken all that time trying to convince Jane that I did not mean a word I had said about her mistress and that I was earnest in everything I said to her. But Jane's ears would have heard just as much had they been the pair of beautiful little shells they so much resembled. This troubled me a great deal, and the best of hope was that she held me on probation.

On the evening of the day Mary came home to Greenwich, Brandon asked: "Who and what on earth is this wonderful Mary I hear so much about? They say she is coming home today, and the court seems to have gone mad about it. I hear nothing but 'Mary is coming! Mary is coming! Mary is coming!' from morning until night. They say Buckingham is beside himself for love of her. He has a wife at home, if I am right, and is old enough to be her father. Is he not?" I assented, and Brandon continued: "A man who will make such a fool of himself about a woman is woefully weak. The men of the court must be poor creatures."

He had much to learn about the power of womanhood. There is nothing on earth, but you know as much about it as I do.

"Wait until you see her," I answered, "and you will be one of them also. I flatter you by giving you one hour with her to be heels over head in love. With an ordinary man it takes one-sixtieth of that time. So you see I pay a compliment to your strength of mind."

"Nonsense!" broke in Brandon. "Do you think I left all my wits down in Suffolk? Why, man, she is the sister of the king and is sought by kings and emperors. I might as well fall in love with a twinkling star. Then, besides, my heart is not on my sleeve. You must think me a fool—a poor, unworldly, simpleton like—like—well, like one of those nobles of England. Don't put me down with them, Caskoden, if you would remain my friend."

We both laughed at this sort of talk, which was a little in advance of the time for a noble, though an idiot to the most of England was a noble still, God created and to be adored.

Now, when Mary returned the whole court rejoiced, and I was anxious for Brandon to meet her and that they should become friends. There would be no trouble in bringing this meeting about, since, as you know, I was upon terms of intimate friendship with Mary and was the avowed and, as I thought, at least hoped, all accepted lover of her first lady in waiting and dearest friend, Lady Jane Bolingbroke. Brandon, it is true, was not noble, not even an English knight, while I was both knighted and noble, but he was of as old a family as England boasted and near of kin to some of the best blood of the land. The meeting came about sooner than I expected and was very near a failure. It was on the second morning after Mary's arrival at Greenwich. Brandon and I were walking in the palace park when we met Jane, and I took the opportunity to make these, my two best loved friends, acquainted.

"How do you do, Master Brandon?" said Lady Jane, holding out her plump little hand, so white and soft and dear the last day or so from Sir Edwin, but had begun to fear he was not going to give me the pleasure of knowing you. I hope I may see you often now and that I may present you to my mistress."

of a few words Jane said her mistress was waiting at the other side of the grounds. I that she must go. She then ran off with a laugh and a courtesy and was soon lost to sight behind the shrubbery at the turning of the walk.

In a short time we came to a summer house near the marble landing, where we found the queen and some of her ladies awaiting the rest of their party for a trip down the river which had been planned the day before. Brandon was known to the queen and several of the ladies, although he had not been officially presented at an audience. Many of the king's friends enjoyed a considerable intimacy with the whole court without ever receiving the public stamp of recognition socially which goes with a formal presentation.

The queen, seeing us, sent me off to bring the king. After I had gone she asked if I had ever seen the Princess Mary, and Brandon told her Lady Jane had said she was at the other side of the grounds. Thereupon her majesty asked Brandon to find the princess and to say that she was wanted.

Brandon started off and soon found a party of girls sitting on some benches under a spreading oak, weaving spring flowers. He had never seen the princess, so could not positively know her. As a matter of fact he did know her as soon as his eyes rested on her, for she could not be mistaken among a thousand. There was no one like her or anything near it. Some stubborn spirit of opposition, however, prompted him to pretend ignorance. All that he had heard of her wonderful power over men and the servile manner in which they fell before her had aroused in him a spirit of antagonism and had begun to make him distrust her beforehand. He was wrong in this, because Mary was not a coquette in any sense of the word and did absolutely nothing to attract men except to be so beautiful, sweet and winning that they could not let her alone, for all of which surely she had a right to be proud.

She could not help that God had sent fit to make her the fairest being on earth, and the responsibility would have to lie where it belonged—with God. Mary would have none of it. Her attractiveness was not a matter of volition or intention on her part. She was too young for deliberate coquetry, though it often begins very early in life, and made no effort to attract men. Man's love was too cheap a thing for her to strive for, and I am sure her heart she would infinitely have preferred to live without it—that is, until the right one should come.

The right one is always on his way and, first or last, is sure to come to every woman—sometimes, alas, too late—and when he comes, he is late or early, she crowns him, even though he be a lowly peasant. Blessed crown, and three blessed blessings—else there were fewer coronations.

So Brandon stirred this antagonism and determined not to see her manifold perfections, which he felt sure were exaggerated, but to treat her as he would the queen, who was black and leathery enough to frighten a satyr, with all respect due to her rank, but with his own opinion of her nevertheless safely stored away in the back of his head.

Coming up to the group, Brandon took off his hat and, with a graceful little bow that let the curls fall around his face, asked, "Have I the honor to meet the Princess Mary among these ladies?"

Mary, who I know you will at once say was thoroughly spoiled, without turning her face toward him replied: "Is the Princess Mary a person of so little consequence about the court that she is known to a mighty captain of the guard?"

He wore his guardman's doublet, and she knew his rank by his uniform. She had not noticed his face.

Quick as a flash came the answer: "I cannot say of what consequence the Princess Mary is about the court. It is not my place to determine such matters. I am sure, however, she is not here, for I do not see her."

He gave a gentler answer to a message from the queen. I shall continue my search. With this he turned to leave, and the ladies, including Jane, who was there and saw it all and told me of it, awaited the bolt they knew would come, for they saw the lightning gathering in Mary's eyes.

Mary sprang to her feet with an angry flush in her face, exclaiming: "Insolent fellow, I am the Princess Mary. If you have a message, deliver it and be gone." You may be sure this sort of treatment was such as the cool head of Brandon would repay with usury; so, turning upon his heel and almost presenting his back to Mary, he spoke to Lady Jane:

"Will your ladyship say to her highness that her majesty the queen awaits her coming at the marble landing?"

"May I ask your ladyship further to say for me that if I have been guilty of any discourtesy I greatly regret it. My failure to recognize the Princess Mary having been allowed to back in the light of her countenance, I cannot be light of the fault lies at my door, and I hope for her own sake that her highness on second thought will realize how ungentle and unkind some one else has been." And with a sweeping courtesy he walked quickly down the path.

"The insolent wretch!" cried Jane. "He ought to hold papers on the pillory," said another.

"Nothing of the sort," broke in sensible, fearless little Jane. "I think the Lady Mary was wrong. He could not have known her by inspiration. 'Jane is right,' exclaimed Mary, whose temper, if short, was also short-lived and whose kindly heart always set her right if she but gave it a little time. Her faults were rather those of education than of nature. 'Jane is right,' it was when I desired. I did not think when I spoke and did not really mean it as it sounded. He acted like a man and looked like one, too, when he defended himself. I warrant the pope at Rome could not run over the man with impunity. For once I have been right in my own mind, full of manliness. I saw him in the state of a week ago, but the king said his name was a secret, and I could not learn it. He seemed to know you, Jane. Who is he? Now tell us all you know. The queen can wait."

And her majesty waited on a girl's curiosity.

I had told Jane all I knew about Brandon, so she was prepared with full information and gave it. She told the princess who he was, of his terrible duel with Judson, his bravery and adventures in the wars, his generous gift to his brother and sisters, and, lastly, "Sir Edwin says he did not read man in the court and the bravest, truest heart in Christendom."

After Jane's account of Brandon they all started by a roundabout way for the marble landing. In a few moments Brandon saw the king's party ward them down the path he had followed, who had delivered his message and continued his walk. When he saw whom he was about to meet, he quickly turned in another direction. The Lady Mary had seen him, however, and told Jane to run forward and bring him to her. She soon overtook him and said:

"Master Brandon, the princess wishes to see you," then maliciously: "You will suffer this time. I assure you she is not used to such treatment. It was glorious, though, to see you such an affront to me. I usually smirk and smile foolishly and thank her when she smiles them."

Brandon was disinclined to return. "I am not in her highness' command," he answered, "and do not care to go back for a reprimand when I am in no way to blame."

"Oh, but you must come. Perhaps she will not scold this time." And she put her hand upon his arm and laughingly drew him along. Brandon of course had to submit when led by so sweet a captor—anybody would. So fresh and fair Jane and lovely was Jane that I am sure anything masculine must have given way.

Coming up to the princess and her ladies, who were waiting, Jane said, "Lady Mary, let me present Master Brandon, who, if he has offended in any way, humbly says for pardon." That was the end of the matter. Brandon had no notion on earth of doing, but he it go as Jane had put it, and this was his reward:

"It is not Master Brandon who should sue for pardon," responded the princess. "It is I who was wrong. I am ashamed of what I did and said. Forgive me, and let us start anew." At last she stepped up to Brandon and offered him her hand, which he, dropping to his knee, kissed most gallantly.

"Your highness, you can well afford to offend when you have so sweet and gracious a talent for making amends."

"A wrong acknowledged," as some one has said, "becomes an obligation." He looked straight into the girl's eyes as he said this, and his gaze was altogether too strong for her, so the lashes fell. She flushed and said, with a smile that brought the dimples:

"I thank you. That is a real compliment." The laughingly: "Such better than extravagant comments on one's skin and eyes and hair. We are going to the queen at the marble landing. Will you walk with us, sir?" And they strolled away together, while the other girls followed in a whispering, laughing group.

Was there ever so glorious a calm after such a storm?

"Then those mythological compliments," continued Mary. "Don't you dislike them?"

"I can't say that I have ever received many, none that I recall," replied Brandon, who bowed again to Jane.

A tinker's dam is a wall of dough or soft clay raised around a spot which a plumber in repairing, desires to flood with solder. The material of this dam can be used only once and is thrown away after this very temporary purpose of usefulness. Hence the proverb: "Not worth a tinker's dam," which through misunderstanding, has been converted into profanity by the addition of a final n.

don, with a perfectly straight face, but with a smile trying its best to break out.

"Oh, you have not? Well, how would you like to have somebody always telling you that Apollo was humpbacked and misshapen compared with you; that Endymion would have covered his face had he but seen you, and so on?"

"I don't know, but I think I should like it from some persons," he replied, looking ever so innocent.

This savor of familiarity after so brief an acquaintance and caused the princess to glance up in slight surprise, but only for the instant, for his innocent look disarmed her.

"I have a mind to see," she returned, laughing and throwing her head back as she looked up at him out of the corner of her lustrous eyes. "But I will pay you a better compliment. I positively thank you for the rebuke. I do many things like that, for which I am always sorry. Oh, you don't know how difficult it is to be a good princess!"

And she shook her head with a gathering of little trouble and a little foreboding, as much as to say, "There is no getting away from it, though." Then she breathed a soft little sigh of tribulation as they walked on.

"I know it must be a task to be good when everybody flatters even one's faults," said Brandon and then continued in a way that I am free to confess, was something priggish. "It is almost impossible for us to see our own faults even when others are kind enough to point them out, for they are right ugly things and unpleasant to see."

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quickly up to the serious face, but the answer came that you shall not. But here is the queen, and I suppose we must have the benediction." Brandon understood her hint, that the preaching was over, and, taking it for his dismissal, playfully lifted his hands in imitation of the old bishop of Canterbury and murmured the lines of the Latin benediction. Then they both laughed and courtesied, and Brandon walked away.

CHAPTER IV. A LESSON IN DANCES.

LAUGHED heartily when Jane told me of the tilt between Brandon and Princess Mary, the latter of whom was in the habit of saying unkind things and being thanked for them.

Brandon was the wrong man to say that to, as Mary learned. He was not hot tempered—in fact, just the reverse—but he was the last man to brook an affront and the quickest to resent in a cool headed, dangerous way an intentional offense.

He respected himself and made other people do the same, so he was so at least. He had no vanity, which was an inordinate desire for those qualities that bring self respect and often the result of conscious merit, but he knew himself and knew that he was entitled to his own good opinion. He was very much a man of strong, intelligent and brave totemism, with a reckless disregard of consequences, which might have been dangerous had it not been tempered by a dash of prudence and caution that gave him ballast.

I was not surprised when I heard of the encounter, for I knew enough of him to be sure that Mary's high handedness would meet its counterpart in his cool friend Brandon. It was, however, an unfortunate victory, and what all Mary's beauty and brightness would have failed to do her honest, open acknowledgment of wrong, following so quickly upon the heels of her fault, accomplished easily. It drew him into the circle of her fatal attractions, and when Jane told me of it I knew his fate was sealed and that sooner or later his untouched heart and cool head would fall victim to the shafts that so surely winged all others.

It might, as Brandon had said, be "later," since, as Brandon had said, he was not one of those who wear the

"What, in the name of heaven, have we to give him?" cried Mary impatiently, for she kept an eye on things political, even if she were only a girl. "The king has given away everything that can be given already, and now that the war is over, and men are coming home there are hundreds waiting for more. My father's great treasure is squandered, to say nothing of the money collected from the ransom, and the other commissioners. There is nothing to give unless it be the titles and estate of the late Duke of Suffolk. Perhaps the king will give these to your paragon if you will paint him in as fast a light as you have drawn him for me." Then, throwing back her head, with a laugh, "Ask him to give me his deserts," I replied, falling in with her humor.

"We will so arrange it, then," went on Mary banteringly. "Captain Brandon no longer, but Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk. How sounds it, Master Caskoden?"

"Sweet in my ears," I replied. "I really believe you would have the king's crown for him, you absurd man, if you could get it. We must have so interesting a person at court. I shall at least see that he is presented to the queen at once. I wonder if he be handsome. I suppose not. He has probably been too busy cutting and thrusting." And she laughed again at her own pleasantry.

When the mirth began to gather in her face and the dimples came responsive to her smiles, when she threw back her perfectly poised head, stretching her soft, white throat, so full and round and beautiful, half closing her big brown eyes till they shone again from beneath the shade of those long, black, sweeping lashes; when her red lips parted, showing her teeth and pearl, and she gave the little clasp of her hands, a sort of climax to the soft, low, rippling laugh, she made a picture of such exquisite loveliness that it is no wonder men were fools about her and caught love as one catches a contagion.

I had it once, as you already know, and had recovered. All that prevented a daily relapse was my fair, sweet antidote, Jane, whose image rested in my heart, a lasting safeguard.

"I wonder if your prodigy plays cards—that is, such as we ladies play?" asked Mary. "You say he has lived much in France, where the game is invented, but I have no doubt he would scorn to waste his time at so frivolous a pursuit when he might be slaughtering armies single handed and alone."

do not know as to his dancing and card playing, but I dare venture a wager he does both." I replied, not liking her tone of sarcasm. She had yet to learn who Brandon was.

"I will hazard ten crowns," said Mary quickly, for she loved a wager and was a born gambler.

"Taken," said I. "We will try him on both tomorrow night in my drawing room," she continued. "You bring him up, but tell me no one. I will have Jane there with her lute, which will not frighten you away I know, and we will try his step. I will have cards too, and we shall see what he can do at that." Just as she said this, she turned and I saw the new Duke of Suffolk and I. Oh, I can hardly wait!" And she fairly danced with joyous anticipation.

The thing had enough irregularity to give it zest, for while Mary often had a few young people in her drawing room, the companies were never as small as two couples only, and the king and queen, to make up for greater faults, were wonderful sticklers in the matter of little proprieties.

The ten crown wager, too, gave spice to it, but to do her justice she cared very little for that. The princess loved gambling purely for gambling sake, and with her the next best thing to winning was losing.

When I went to my room that night, I awakened Brandon and told him of the king and queen, to make up for greater faults, were wonderful sticklers in the matter of little proprieties.

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friend, Captain Brandon, a day or two ago. Did he tell you?"

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"So?" continued Mary, evidently somewhat piqued, "he did not think his presentation to me a thing worth mentioning? We had a little passage at arms, and, to tell you the truth, I came off second best and had to acknowledge it too. Now, what do you think of this new friend of yours? And he did not boast about having the better of me. After all, there is more virtue in his silence than I at first thought." And she threw back her head and clapped her hands and laughed with the most contagious little ripple you ever heard. She seemed as though to grieve over her defeat, but dimpled as though it were a joke, the thought of which rather pleased her than otherwise. Victory had grown stale for her, although so young.

"What do I think of my new friend?" I repeated after her, and that gave me a theme upon which I could enlarge eloquently. I told her of his learning notwithstanding the fact that he had been in the continental wars ever since he was a boy. I repeated to her stories of his daring and bravery that had been told to me by my uncle, the master of the horse, and others, and then I added, what I knew Lady Jane had already said. I had expected to be brief, but to my surprise found a close and interested listener, even to the twice told parts, and drew my story out a little, to the liking of us both.

"Your friend has an earnest advocate in you, Sir Edwin," said the princess. "That he has," I replied. "There is nothing too good to say of him."

I knew that Mary, with her better, clearer brain, held the king almost in the palm of her hand, so I thought to advance Brandon's fortune by a timely word.

"I trust the king will see fit to favor him, and I hope that you will speak a word in his behalf should the opportunity occur."

"What, in the name of heaven, have we to give him?" cried Mary impatiently, for she kept an eye on things political, even if she were only a girl. "The king has given away everything that can be given already, and now that the war is over, and men are coming home there are hundreds waiting for more. My father's great treasure is squandered, to say nothing of the money collected from the ransom, and the other commissioners. There is nothing to give unless it be the titles and estate of the late Duke of Suffolk. Perhaps the king will give these to your paragon if you will paint him in as fast a light as you have drawn him for me." Then, throwing back her head, with a laugh, "Ask him to give me his deserts," I replied, falling in with her humor.

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the distinguished honor that awaited him.

"Well, I'll be— But he did not say what he would 'be.' He always halted before an oath, unless angry, which was seldom, but then beware. He had learned to swear in Flanders. 'How she did fly at me the other morning! I never was more surprised in all my life. For once I was almost caught with my guard down and did not know how to parry the thrust. I mumbled over some sort of a lame room and beat a retreat. It was so unjust."

"She told me of your or 'nunter.' I returned, 'but said she had come off second best, and seemed to think her overthrow a huge joke.'"

"The man who learns to know what a woman thinks and feels will have a great deal of valuable information," he replied, and then turned over to me, greatly pleased that one woman thought as she did.

I was not sure he would be so highly flattered if he knew that he had been invited to settle a wager and to help Mary to a little sport.

"So the former had an interest there myself, although I dared not settle the question by asking Brandon if he played cards and danced, and as to the matter of Mary's sport, I felt there was but little if any danger of her having too much of it at his expense, Brandon being well able to care for himself in that respect."

The next evening at the appointed time we wended our way by an unrequited route and presented ourselves as secretly as possible at the drawing room of the princess.

The door was opened by Lady Jane, and we met the two girls almost at the threshold. I had told Brandon of the bantering conversation about the title and estates of the late Duke of Suffolk, and he had laughed over it in the best of humor. If quick to retaliate for an intentional offense, he was not thin skinned at a piece of pleasantry, and had none of that stiff, sensitive dignity so troublesome to oneself and friends.

Now, Jane and Mary were always bantering me because I was short and inclined to be, in fact, round, but I did not care. It made them laugh, and their laughing made me laugh, and we all enjoyed it. I would give a pound sterling any time for a good laugh, and that, I think, is why I have always been—round.

So, upon entering, I said: "His grace the Duke of Suffolk, ladies."

They each made a sweeping courtesy, with hand on breast, and gravely saluted him.

"Your grace, good even."

Brandon's bow was as deep and graceful as the others were possible, as theirs, and when he moved toward the room it was with a little halt in his step and a big blowing out of the cheeks in ludicrous imitation of his late lamented predecessor that sent the girls into peals of soft laughter and put us all at our ease immediately.

"Ah, what a thing it is to look back upon—that time of life when one finds his heaven in a ready laugh!"

"Be seated, all," said the princess. "This is to be without ceremony and only we four. No one knows a word of it. Did you tell any one, Sir Edwin?"

"Perish the thought!" I exclaimed. "She turned her face toward Brandon. 'But I know you did not. I've heard how discreet you were about another matter. Well, no one knows it, then, and we can have a famous evening. And we can't expect this, Master Brandon, after my receipt of the other day or morning? Were you not surprised when Sir Edwin told you?"

"I think I can safely say that I was prepared not to be surprised at anything your highness might graciously conclude to do—after my first experience," he answered, smiling.

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