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AN HISTORICAL
ROMANCE
—OF THE—
Times of
Queen
Elizabeth.



The Wonderful Flower of Woxindon,

By Rev. Joseph Spillman, S.J.



when there were plenty of underhand goings on. But yesterday one of Walsingham's creatures, one of his craftiest spies, I know the fox, slipped into this room. I happened to come up just as he was writing down your names and the piece of Latin from the picture over the chimney piece there. I need hardly say I sent him about his business pretty quickly, and dismissed the girl that same day, to whom he was paying court, for the sake of worming things out on the sly; for I loathe from the bottom of my soul these sneaks and tale-bearers. Now, good sirs, I do not for a moment credit you with seriously cherishing any design against crown or country, for no man in his senses would look for conspirators among jolly fellows like you, of whom, alas! merry England cannot now boast as many as in days of yore. With your permission however, gentlemen, let me remind you that the laws now-a-days are very sharp and severe, and the Lord Chief Justice would think nothing of twisting an ugly rope out of harmless henden strands. Of course, I should get into trouble too, but I will not speak of that. To make an end; I thought it my duty to warn you, that Walsingham certainly has his eye on you, and for your own sakes I should much rather you should observe less secrecy about your meetings here. Again craving your indulgence, gentlemen, in all submission, I beg you to think over my well meant warning."

So saying, he tossed off his glass, made the nearest approach to a bow that his obesity permitted, and left the apartment. When the door had closed behind him, we sat for a moment in silence, looking inquiringly at one another. Then Babington struck the table with his first, and said, with a forced laugh: "Well, good friends, what of this? We might have known that sooner or later Walsingham would get wind of our enterprise, but we have no reason to think that he is aware of its object."

"Probably not," observed Henry Donne, dryly, "but the hounds are on the scent."

"And before they run us to earth, we shall have reached our goal; the illustrious Queen, the fairest and noblest of her race, born to inherit the crown of England, will be free, will have fled with us to the continent, and our names will be inscribed on our country's annals in letters of gold."

"Or we shall be branded as traitors, and our heads impaled on stakes on London Bridge," Donne quietly replied to Babington's enthusiastic outburst.

"What?" continued the latter, "is the first semblance of difficulty to overthrow the plan we have pledged ourselves to, as a breath overturns a child's house of cards? Did we not take into account the chance of failure, when we resolved to liberate the captive queen? He who would win fame's highest prize, must be prepared to hold his life cheap."

"Far be it from me to risk my life, and what is dearer to me, a time-honored name and the happiness of my young wife, for the sake of earthly glory," Tichbourne replied with great gravity. "I counted it my duty to pledge myself for the liberation of the Queen of Scots, hoping that this might be the means of upholding the Catholic Faith in England. That was my only motive in joining this chivalrous enterprise, and I am fully resolved to keep my word if, as we have stipulated, the plan appears feasible. For in so important a matter we must not trust to chance. That would not be courage, but simple madness, and the failure of the undertaking would not only be sure perdition for ourselves, but the prisoner herself would be involved in our fate."

We all declared that we agreed with him, and only on this condition were we prepared to venture our lives and our property in the attempt to which we had pledged ourselves.

Babington then explained how amongst his friends and tenants at Chartley, he would have no difficulty in raising a body of 200 men to liberate the prisoner by force of arms, if need be.

"And if the plan succeeds," asked

Salisbury, "how are we to get the queen over to France?"

"There are two ways open to us," Babington replied. "One is through Lancashire by the Wash, where in the little port of Fossdyke I have made the acquaintance of an old fisherman, who would let me have his smack for £100. Of course I did not tell him what I wanted it for, he thinks it is a love affair. Or perhaps it would be safer to go westward to the Mersey, or through Lancashire to Formby or Southport; for Catholics are a majority in Lancashire, and if we were pursued, we could reckon upon help there. Nothing will be easier than to find the owner of some vessel who is willing to let us have his bark and his services for a good price, to sail southwards round the English coast, or northwards round the Scottish coast, and land us on the shores of Normandy. The distance to the sea is much the same whether we go to Lancashire or Lancashire, about sixty miles, and could be covered in 10 or 12 hours, provided fresh horses are ready at three halting places at least."

After a long consultation as to which route should be adopted, we finally decided upon going through Lancashire. It was longer, but the one which we should be less likely to be thought to have taken. Only two of us were to escort the queen, while the others were to fly in the opposite direction, in the hope of putting our pursuers on a false scent. It remained to determine who was to accompany the queen besides Babington, to whom, as our leader, the place of honor was naturally given. For this we cast lots; the lot fell upon Salisbury, an ardent, resolute young fellow. He promised at once to execute the instructions: namely, to acquaint himself thoroughly with the road from Chartley to Formby, and ascertain at what places a relay of horses could be obtained. Barnwell was to go with him, for he had friends residing on the Lancashire coast, and knew a good Catholic skipper, who had already smuggled several priests out of the country, and might be induced to lend his services in this instance.

So far all had, so we imagined, been wisely considered. It was, of course, impossible to fix the time when the venture was to be made, as it was necessary to await a favorable opportunity. Still we were all of opinion that it must not be indefinitely postponed, because on the one hand the queen was now in such evil care, and on the other, Walsingham would be certain to put a spoke into our wheel, if it were true that he had got wind of our project. Whether this really were so Babington undertook to discover on the morrow, when he was going to see him about Topcliffe's behaviour at Woxindon, as well as to speak on behalf of the two prisoners. We warned him to be on his guard, for Walsingham was known to be the most crafty, and unscrupulous politician to be found not only in England, but in Europe. He said there was no fear that he would let himself be hoodwinked, and when I repeated my caution, he told me I had better go with him. This, at the wish of the others, I consented to do.

Now Tichbourne suggested another and a no less important question: Were we to liberate the queen without having previously acquainted her with our design, almost, in fact, by force? Would it not be better to communicate our plan to her, and ask whether she gave her consent, and would avail herself of our assistance in the hazardous attempt? At first we could not agree on this point, there was so much to be said on both sides. At last, after a lengthy debate, we concluded that it was perfectly permissible to carry her off, apparently by force, out of the hands of her gaoler, since we might take her permission for granted, provided every arrangement was duly made, and success appeared at least morally certain. Indeed, it seemed as if in this case the wisest plan by far would be, not to breathe a word of it to the prisoner, because then there would be less chance of discovery, and if the attempt miscarried, she would be able to prove that she had not been privy to it. Yet, as in spite of the most careful preparations the enterprise must be attended with

great risk, it was thought advisable on the whole, that Babington should let the queen know, in a general way, that a number of Catholic noblemen had pledged themselves to set her at liberty, and only waited for a sign of consent from her, to venture their lives in her cause. But before giving a hint of this kind to the captive, we advised him to exchange one or two letters on indifferent subjects with her secretary, Nau, in order to test the means of getting letters in safety into the castle. Then he might ask Nau to tell him of a cipher, to be employed for communications of greater importance, but on no account should he give him more information than was absolutely necessary, or mention any persons by name.

We thought now every point in our scheme had been fully deliberated upon, and every precaution taken, so that even the most prudent amongst us, my friend Tichbourne, had nothing to urge against it. Meanwhile the flagon had gone round pretty freely, and its contents were at a low ebb. Babington proposed that we should have a glass or two of the stronger vintage of the South, to keep up our courage, and fortify us for our ride home through the chilly night air. So he called to the host to bring us "interioris notae Falernum," that is to say his choicest wine; and old Clayton was not slow in making his appearance anew, bringing goblets of the fine Venetian glass with rings then in fashion, which sounded almost like bells as they jingled, whilst the dusty cobweb covered bottles were being uncorked. Babington took the opportunity of thanking Clayton for the information he had given us, telling him that we had determined to explain all about our meetings to Walsingham the very next day, and tell him the meaning of the Latin lines beneath the portraits, which the old man regarded as of specially sinister import.

Our good host seemed well pleased at hearing this: "I crave your pardon once more, gentlemen," he said, "for the liberty I am taking, but I must say you are doing the right thing. Always straightforward and open, that is the good old English way, and none of the crooked ways and doubledealing of later times. Do you go and say thus to the Honorable Secretary of State: We are half-a-dozen English noblemen who have joined together to bring back some of the old jollity in these sullen times. We ride, and row, and play sports and drink together; you tell him that; and tell him too that if that is a conspiracy, then you are conspirators, and old Clayton of the "Blue Boar" at St. Giles-in-the-fields, who always sets the best liquor before his guests, not the doctored stuff for which London folk pay good gold—old Clayton is our leader and the arch-conspirator. And say if the Lord Secretary of State, and the worshipful lords of the Privy Council will honor him with a visit, they shall learn all the details of this formidable conspiracy over a bottle of this old wine, and see all that is to be seen "visum reperitum," as one may say, with their own eyes. Ha, ha, ha! all in good part, gentlemen."

Thereupon Clayton quitted the apartment, whilst we under the exhilarating influence of his excellent wine, proceeded to discuss another and a more momentous matter, of which the reader shall hear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.—The old Roman poets, as is well known, used to sing the power of wine to give courage and resolution to the timid and wavering, so that they feared neither the wrath of kings nor the deadly weapons of their warriors. Perhaps it was the remembrance of Horace's lines, "Tu spem reducis mentibus anxii, etc.," which we read together at Oxford, that led Babington, seeing that we received his proposals with cautious reserve, to call for the strong wine of the sunny south before making further disclosures to us. Accordingly not until the bottle had been passed around once or twice, and our laughter and merry talk showed that the generous liquor had warmed our blood, did he enter upon a topic of greater magnitude and greater peril. He did not commu-

nicate all he had to say at once, but told it us gradually.

First of all, he told us that he had received tidings from Paris, from the Spanish ambassador Mendoza, concerning the scheme which was to go hand in hand with ours, namely that Philip II. was at last about to make his long threatened descent upon England. Perhaps the sending of English troops to the Netherlands, or the attack of Sir Francis Drake upon the town of Vigo in Galicia, and the presence of the English fleet among his West Indian possessions had roused the monarch to take active measures. At any rate it was a matter of fact that the Prince of Parma had been asked whether he would undertake the invasion of England, and Alexander Farnese had declared his readiness to do so, provided the Spanish fleet protected the army during its landing, and the king placed twenty thousand men under his orders. The Pope would support the enterprise with his authority and with money, since the object of it was to execute the Bull of Pius V. to dethrone Elizabeth, that is, and reinstate the Catholic religion in England. That the throne would be ascended by the rightful heir, Mary Stuart, would follow as a matter of course. There was even a report that she would marry the Prince of Parma. It will readily be imagined, that these tidings came upon us like a thunderbolt. We all asked at once when and from whom the news had come, and why he had not told us sooner? He replied that he had received them the day before yesterday, just as we were starting to ride to Tyburn, and as we made it our habit never to speak of such things on the highway, he had waited until we were all together this evening to communicate them to us. "And what will our duty be," he concluded, "if this really comes to pass, and the Prince of Parma lands an army on our shores?"

"Our duty will be to defend our country," some of us replied. "The attack will not be the illegitimacy of whose birth disqualifies her for wearing the crown, and against her bloodthirsty adherents, who for the space of twenty-eight years already have persecuted us Catholics in the cruellest manner. Think what we have seen this very day, when a delicate young girl and an innocent child were dragged away to prison almost before their father's breath was out of his body, and one more noble Catholic house succumbed beneath the blows of the persecutor. In ten, or five years, all our Catholic families will have shared the fate of our good friends at Woxindon; and future ages will ask, could not a handful of men be found among all the Catholic nobles of England who would dare a bold deed for their rights and their faith?"

"Thousands of such men have been found, but what good has come of it?" Tichbourne answered. "Remember the sad end of the Pilgrimage of Grace, under Henry VIII, and of Northumberland's bold attempt in the winter of 1569, instigated by that well meant, but most unfortunate Bull of Pius V. Remember the executions of the following Christmas, when hundreds were delivered over to the headsman's axe. I am sorely afraid we shall have a repetition of these horrors, if there is any truth in this report of Parma's expedition against our land."

"And I hope," retorted Babington, "that he will come, and with the edge of the sword put an end to all these preachers and their wretched following, who have brought this misery upon England. And if he does come, surely it will be the duty of every Catholic noble, to be on his side."

"I do not see that, by any means," exclaimed several of our number. "Well, quite apart from other weighty reasons," continued Babington, the Bull of Pope Pius would then come into force. And in that case, I am not so sure that it would not be permissible for us to employ against Elizabeth the same forcible measures that she and her Council make use of against Mary Stuart. Mind you, I am not hinting at regicide, I do not forget she is a Queen."

At this we all spoke out, protesting loudly that anything of that sort was quite alien to our designs, and Tichbourne went so far as to say if another word of the kind was said in his hearing, he should altogether withdraw from our association. "I am perfectly aware," he said, "that Knox and Luther and others who hold their tenets, do not hesitate to justify the assassination of a ruler who stands in the way of the Gospel, and even designate such a crime as a meritorious work. But I also know that no good end could justify the use of means so reprehensible, so criminal, as the deliberate and wanton murder of any man, be he prince or subject."

"I quite agree with you," Babington answered that one must not do ill that good may come of it. But I ask, is it doing wrong, to eliminate what is evil? For instance, if our friend Windsor here exercises his skill as a surgeon by amputating a gangrene limb, to save a man's life, is that doing good or evil? And what is this daughter of Anne Boleyn with all her ministers but a cancer eating out the life of England?"

"That is an argument that can be easily answered," Tichbourne replied. The very same question was put to Father Crichton, and his rejoinder is well known, in fact Elizabeth herself had it printed and disseminated. God does not as much regard whether what we do is good, as whether the reasons whereby we bring it about are good and lawful."

"And to keep to the instance you give," I added, "it is by no means anybody and everybody who is allowed to amputate a gangrene limb, but only a practical surgeon, who has received his diploma from the faculty, and can do it with skill and address. An ignoramus would kill the patient instead of curing him, and would probably be charged with manslaughter for his pains."

We were all of one mind on this point and we told Babington if he said another word in favor of such dangerous propositions, we would give up the whole concern. He hastened to throw oil on the troubled waters, by assuring us he had not meant what he said, but only wanted to find out what we thought on the matter.

Thus without a dissentient voice it was specified that every thought of violence against Elizabeth must be excluded from our scheme. But in regard to Parma's invasion we were not equally unanimous. After much arguing pro and con, it was finally determined: That it was not our duty to give information to the Government or in any other way take steps to hinder the project. That it was necessary, when planning the liberation of the Queen, which was the one aim of our association, to allow ourselves to be influenced by Parma's movements, in order that we might work in unison with him. Consequently Babington must keep in communication with his friends in Paris, whilst the utmost caution must be observed, for were it discovered that we had abstained from giving information, we should assuredly suffer the penalty of traitors.

At last Babington broke up our meeting, by a final toast to the success of our enterprise. We all emptied our glasses, shook hands heartily with one another, and separated, after Babington had made arrangements with me to accompany him to the Secretary of State on the morrow.

Tichbourne and I left our horses at the "Blue Boar," and sauntered together through the lonely meadows towards Westminster Abbey, which stands about a mile from the town on the banks of the Thames. Night had closed in, but the air was so mild one might have thought it was already summer; and the soft south wind reminded me of Horace's words:

"Solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni."

Behold the sharp winter gives way by a pleasing change to the spring and the south wind.

The moon was rising in the star bespangled vault of heaven, and again I recalled the words of one of his odes:

"Inter mirra sidera."

It was night; and the moon shone brightly in the calm heavens amid a host of lesser orbs.

Our conversation turned upon the stars, and upon the science of the astrologer, who proposes to read in the constellations the fate of individual men. I mentioned that this was impossible; but my companion, who was naturally inclined to melancholy and had a fancy for occult science, had studied the subject, and was able to bring forward many instances in which a man's horoscope had proved perfectly correct. Although far from having a pagan in faith in fate, he thought it by no means improbable that God, who foresaw the future, allowed us for our warning to glean some knowledge of what lay before us from the stars.

I argued on the other hand that an intimation of the kind could be of no use to us if our fate were already fixed, and that God's foreknowledge could not interfere with our free will. He shook his head, and said that was true in a way, and that as a good Christian he was ready to say to his Maker: My lot is in Thy hand. Yet he could not rid himself of the presentiment that an untimely and violent death awaited him. His father had had his horoscope cast by a celebrated

German astronomer and astrologer, and it was so unfortunate, that his father never would let him know what it was.

I tried to divert him from these gloomy forebodings, and get him to talk about his sweet wife, and his pleasant home in Hampshire, where I had been his guest for a time shortly after his marriage. Ever since our Oxford days, when we were fellow students of Magdalen, we had been like brothers, and almost as inseparable as Orestes and Pylades of old. So he talked quite confidentially to me about his domestic affairs, and said that as soon as a tedious law-suit with a Protestant neighbor was ended, as he expected it would be before long, and to his favor, he meant to leave London, and reside on his own estate. There he hoped to live and die in peace, far from all political intrigues and troubles. The fines for non-attendance at the Protestant worship would be heavy, but he must try and meet them. Then he tried to persuade me to settle in Hampshire with him, and give myself up to a life of study, for he did not think I should ever make much practical use of the knowledge of medicine I had acquired at Padua. And as for the professorship of Latin and Greek poetry at Oxford or Cambridge, the latest object of my aspirations, I might as well renounce all idea of that, at once, since it was very certain that no Catholic had the slightest chance of obtaining any such post.

Conversing on these and similar topics we reached the time-honored Minister. The clear moonlight, shining full upon the windows, brought into relief every point of their delicate tracery, and lit up every pinnacle of the splendid structure. As we passed onward to the river, I remarked: "Suppose the old monarchs who rest here in their stone coffins, and the pious abbots and monks, who in the silent cloisters await the angel's last trump, could rise from their graves, what would they say to the lamentable changes Henry VIII., and the offspring of his sin have made in this and other sanctuaries of our land!"

"The old monarchs would acknowledge that in some respects their acts had sown the seed which now bears such fatal fruit, and the old monks would exhort us to stand firm in our faith, and by prayer and penance invoke God's mercy upon our country," was Tichbourne's reply. Then he added in a changed tone, as we walked slowly onward in the direction of Temple Bar, "Look here, Windsor, call me a monk or a friar preacher if you will, but I must say every day I like our friend Babington less and less. I am the first to acknowledge that his character is utterly different to my own—He is prompt and daring, joyous and merry, and withal a loyal Catholic, ready to sacrifice everything for his convictions; but he carries his frivolity and love of pleasure to an excess. Others of us too are just as bad as he. For the execution of a project, such as we now have in hand, a leader of quite another stamp is needed, and our consultations ought not to be held wineglass in hand! Really I almost repent having pledged myself to take part in it. Upon my word, I would draw back now, if it were not against the nature of a Tichbourne to do so! You know him better than I do, Edward; pray warn him, and watch him also, for I am sorely afraid, despite his denial, that he has other foolhardy designs in view, in which we shall gradually get entangled. You saw how he drew in his horns, when we declared so positively that we would have nothing to do with the crime he hinted at. Yet I should not be in the least surprised, if so rash as he is, he should go too far, and get involved in some reprehensible transactions. Do pray be on your guard both for his sake and for ours; for we have entered into his designs to an extent which would render us amenable to the law, even if we took no part in carrying them into execution."

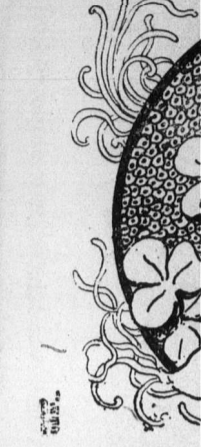
There was no gainsaying Tichbourne's words, and accordingly I promised to do my utmost to avert the mischief he dreaded. I felt watchfulness on my part to be all the more necessary, since I had observed that of late Babington had not been choice in the persons he associated with. One old soldier in particular, who had served in the Netherlands under Parma, in whose company he was frequently to be seen, a sinister-looking individual, inspired me with suspicion and aversion.

By this time we had reached the gate close to Temple Bar, whence we could see London Bridge in the distance, and hear the rush of the river passing swiftly under its arches. We made a small detour to avoid seeing the heads of the unfortunate priests who had been executed the griesome sight, he said he

(To be continued.)



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His Grace was attende
Father Leclair, S.S.,
Strubbe, C.S.S.R., and
Luke Callaghan, Mgr. R.
G., celebrated High Mass
E. Kean and Rev. T. M.
acted as deacon and sub
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Rev. P. Doheny; acolytes
Casey and Rev. T. Duva
Rev. E. D. Hickey; C.
Rev. J. Crowley; candle-
J. J. Roberts; mitre-be
P. Silk and Rev. T. Tier
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Among the clergy pres
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St. Patrick's; Rev. P. M.
S. Rev. Gerald McS
Rev. Father Ouellette,
Father Casey, St. Patri
Father Caron, C.S.S.R.,
Father Flynn, C.S.S.R.,
parish; Rev. W. O'Meara,
Father McDonald, St. Ga
ish; Rev. R. E. Callahan
Hefernan, Rev. M. L.
Hefernan, Rev. M. L.
Anthony's parish; Rev. I
sey, St. Jean Baptiste p
Father St. John, S.S.; F
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Rev. Father Bastian, S.S.