



The Wonderful Flower of Woxindon,

By Rev. Joseph Spillman, S.J.

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CHAPTER XX CONTINUED.—"It all becomes you to complain of her Majesty, who has always shown the greatest forbearance towards you. After the Westminster judgment she might have made short work with you. It was only what you merit, considering your obstinacy in adhering to your idolatrous worship. The signs of it sicken me, whenever my office compels me to enter these apartments." Here Sir Amias looked wrathfully at the objects of devotion, adding: "To-day, at least, you have reason to give thanks instead of finding fault, since Her Majesty has been pleased to send a physician to minister to your needs."

While the knight was speaking, the Queen supported by her women, had crossed the room and seated herself on a stool close to one of the windows. I had a good view of her features, and was struck by the salowness of her complexion, and the premature greyness of her hair. But her expression was sweet and touching in the extreme, and one could see what a strikingly handsome woman she had been in her youth. As she took her seat, she answered in a pleasant voice:

"I am not going to argue with you, Sir Amias, about the veneration I pay to the images of my Redeemer and His all-merciful Mother, for I should not convince you, nor would you convince me. And as for the Westminster judgment, it could not have been other than it was, seeing that it was the verdict of bitterly prejudiced persons and that the accused was not allowed a hearing. I must await the sentence that will be pronounced by an omniscient God before all the world. For although I know myself to be guilty of sins and failings innumerable in His sight, for which I must ask pardon for the sake of Christ's passion, I know myself to be innocent in respect to the assassination of my unfortunate husband. Therefore I must beg for the last time, that you will spare me these insulting insinuations. For granting me this gentleman's medical aid, a favor I never sought, I naturally return thanks to my royal Sister of England."

The last words were spoken doubtfully, and the Queen looked inquiringly at me. I stepped forward, and knelt upon one knee to kiss her hand. As she extended it to me, she said: "Mr. Windsor, if I remember right? Rise up. Are you a brother of Lord Windsor? How comes it that you have studied medicine?"

"It is no unusual thing for the younger sons of peers to adopt a profession in England," I replied. "And as under existing circumstances, I was but little inclined to take a post at Court, or under Government, or on the Bench."

"You have not remained true to the ancient faith?" the Queen broke in.

"I have your Majesty, thanks be to God," I answered.

On hearing that, a grateful smile passed over her countenance and her eyes rested on me with a kinder expression than before, despite the malediction which Sir Amias could not refrain from muttering. "Oh," she exclaimed, "I never could have dreamt of your sending me a Catholic leech! But there remained the military profession open to you; you might have borne arms under the brave Parma."

"Nature endowed me with a pacific disposition, one that finds more pleasure in healing wounds than in inflicting them," I rejoined. "Had I consulted my inclinations, I should have devoted myself to the service of the Muses, and Your Majesty knows the saying: 'Inter arma Muses silent.'"

"What, you are a scholar too!" she said. "We also loved the poets in our youth. Even now, it would give us pleasure to read one of the classics with you, or perhaps Dante's immortal poem.—You studied in Italy?"

"That cannot be," Paulet interrupted roughly. "All you have to talk about with this Windsor is your health, and that only once a week, and in my presence."

"That last condition cannot be taken literally," replied the Queen, as she rose wearily from her seat. "Mr. Windsor, will you have the goodness to come into the next room with me and my women?"

Sir Amias began to protest, but Mary Stuart, accustomed to his scolding, paid no heed to it. In the room into which I was taken, a

worktable stood by the window, besides an embroidery-frame, and further on there was a large crucifix hung upon the wall, with a prie-dieu beneath it, on which some prayer-books and a rosary were lying. The Queen spoke to me most cordially, asking under her breath whether I was perhaps a physician of the soul? She thought that possibly a priest had gained admittance under the guise of a leech, and appeared disappointed on discovering that this was not the case. "I care little about the bodily health," she said. "What can any doctor do for me? The best gardener cannot produce a healthy plant if it is kept in a cellar, deprived of sun, air and light. So it is with me in the absence of liberty and of all that makes life cheerful. In fact everything concurs to make me miserable. I assure you, Mr. Windsor, my son's conduct during the last few years, has been more grievous to me than my protracted captivity!" Tears filled her eyes as she spoke, and her breast heaved with sobs.

I tried to console and encourage her, assuring her that her son had been misled by bad counsellors. I said also that although I could not hold out hopes of complete recovery under present conditions, yet I trusted that much might be done to alleviate her sufferings by the use of baths in which aromatic herbs had been steeped, and by taking a little physic. Thereupon she exclaimed: "No potions for me, if you please, my good sir!" I looked at her in surprise, and she added, dropping her voice: "I am afraid that Walsingham and my other enemies have some design, in sending me a Catholic as my doctor. I should not wonder if they surreptitiously mixed poison with your drugs, so as to make you responsible for my death."

I was much struck by her suggesting this, as it was the very same thing that Father Weston had mentioned as possible. I resolved to prescribe nothing for her which I could not prepare myself, and if possible, administer with my own hands. This I told her, adding that if there was anything that I or my friends could do for Her Majesty, we would risk life and limb with joy in her service. "Do you remember a man named Babington?" I asked in a low voice. "Babington! Anthony Babington!" she answered, "I do indeed remember him, and the many proofs he gave of attachment to me when I was at Sheffield's Castle. A gallant young fellow, always in good spirits. Pray assure him of my kindest regards."

I told her I had been obliged to promise on oath not to carry any messages, verbal or written, on the occasion of my professional visits to her. I assured her however, that Babington and I, and other of her friends, were taking active measures in her behalf.

Her eyes brightened, and she pressed my hand. "You need not think of conveying letters," she said. "My good friends in Paris have sent over a young man named Gifford, who has devised an ingenious plan, with aid of the brewer who supplies me with ale, of forwarding my letters to me. You should make his acquaintance. But we must not talk of these things any longer, or my amiable jailer will grow suspicious."

We returned to the reception room, where we found Sir Amias fuming with impatience. When I mentioned amongst other means of restoring Her Majesty's health, the necessity of exercise in the open air in fine weather, he became quite abusive, and declared that nothing should induce him to let her go beyond the castle walls. She might walk for an hour every day in the little garden within the precincts, but more than once a month she should not ride out. Even that gave a great deal of trouble as he was obliged to have an escort of twenty horsemen as a guard.

We were compelled to content ourselves with this concession, and I was about to take my leave, when I perceived that Paulet had something else to say, something that even he felt reluctance to bring out. He had, he said, given his prisoner so much pleasure to-day, by introducing her to her popish physician, that it might serve to sweeten a somewhat bitter pill which he had to administer. "The fact is," he blurted out, "Her Gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth was seriously displeased to hear that you, under the garb of

Christian charity, entice all manner of idlers and vagabonds into the castle. Therefore she has given orders that henceforth no alms were to be distributed either by your servants or yourself. That I beg you to understand, once for all." He turned to me, and we took our departure. "So my poor clients also must suffer on account of my inability to ingratiate myself with Elizabeth! God forgive her this injury done to Himself in the person of the poor!"

Such were the words I heard Mary Stuart utter, as I followed Sir Amias out of the apartment. When we got downstairs, he sent me away, curtly telling me, I must get a lodging somewhere, for I could not be accommodated with a room in the castle; besides he had already quite enough Papists under his roof.

CHAPTER XXI.—Finding myself dismissed in so unceremonious a fashion by the churlish knight, I passed out of the castle gates and repaired to the "Mayflower" inn, where I had left my horse that morning. My interview with the captive Queen, her gentleness and Christian patience had profoundly moved me. "You have been in the presence of a saint," I said to myself, and urged by the respect and compassion that filled my heart, I once more made a solemn resolution to strain every nerve, if not to release her from her present position, at any rate to alleviate it in some wise.

The "Mayflower" in which I now took up my quarters was a comfortable, solidly built house, such as one frequently sees in the region between Stafford and Derby, with pointed gables, thatched roof and curiously carved beams of dark wood set into the plastered walls. The swinging signboard over the door, a marvel of rustic art, displayed a huge golden lily, from the flower of which formerly rose the figure of our Lady with the Divine Child; but this abomination, as the friendly but garrulous tavern keeper informed me, had been painted out in more godly times.

I experienced no difficulty in coming to terms with my host; a good sized room with a gable window, commanding a fine view of the surrounding country was assigned me; the opposite one, I was told, being let to a Mr. Gifford, whose family, now much reduced in circumstances, had been one of the wealthiest in that part of the country. A very pleasant young gentleman, the host added, but unfortunately a Papist, and just then absent in London.

I called for ink and paper, and seated myself at the table by the open window to indite a letter to my sweetheart, Mary Bellamy, whom I fondly termed, in the words of Horace, "animæ dimidium meæ," my soul's other half. I soon filled four pages with the account of my ride through the smiling country in the sweet springtime, giving a description of the saintly Queen and the shameful manner in which she was treated, of my room at the "Mayflower," and most important of all, of the love that longed to find happiness in making her happy.

My pleasant task was ended, and my epistle sealed and subscribed, when the host came to tell me dinner was served. After the repast, which I wound up with a tankard of excellent ale, I seated myself in the garden beneath a shady lime tree, and lulled by the humming of the bees among the blossoming fruit trees, I fell asleep. My drowsiness did not last long. I was soon aroused by a clamour of voices, and starting up, beheld a crowd of mendicants, women, children and afflicted persons, crying and lamenting, scolding and grumbling in a manner fit to touch a heart of stone. On presenting themselves at the castle to receive their accustomed alms from Queen Mary, they had been told that she was weary of their insolence and importunity, and would give them nothing more, much less come down into the courtyard to them. This was too barefaced a lie to be believed, and the porter was soon made to acknowledge that a messenger had arrived that morning from the Queen, bearing orders from the Queen, that the almsgiving at Chertley was to be put a stop to for the future. Happening to descry me in the garden of the "Mayflower," the repulsed mendicants conjectured that I was the bird of ill omen, and raised a

deafening tumult of angry cries. I at me, had not the inn-keeper hastened to my rescue, informing the people that I was not only a friend of Mary Stuart, but her newly appointed body physician. Then the tables were turned, and the sick and infirm were no less clamorous in their entreaties that I would give them the benefit of my professional help and advice. I thought I could not do less than comply with their request, in virtue of the office I now held about Her Majesty's person, so I prescribed a few simple remedies for them, in most instances adding a few groats to pay the apothecary, remembering the words of the Gospel: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."

Before long, I had acquired an extensive but highly unremunerative practice in the neighborhood, and was in a fair way of reducing myself to beggary. But my royal patient somehow heard of it, and from time to time she would slip into my hand a good round sum of money, saying it was for me and my poor. Thus I experienced the truth of the saying that charity will bring no man to ruin.

When the crowd of beggars had dispersed, I returned to my seat under the lime tree, and took from my pocket a volume of my favorite Virgil. But before I had read many lines, the sound of voices coming through the open window of the guest room, attracted my attention. It was St. Barbe, in hot altercation with an individual unknown to me, the godly Ezechiel Bitterstone, as I afterwards learnt. St. Barbe was laying before him Miss Cecil's difficulties, expressed somewhat differently. I listened to the discussion with no little interest.

St. Barbe asked the preacher, if he really thought Calvin's teaching to be the best; and on the other replying in the affirmative, he asked whether Calvin's doctrines were taught before Calvin's time? "Undoubtedly," was the reply; "they were taught by Christ and the Apostles."

"Then this doctrine, taught by Christ and the Apostles, was lost at the period when Calvin began to preach?"

"It was contained in Holy Scripture: but the right interpretation of the Scriptures was lost."

"Had it been lost for long?"

"It is impossible to assign any time, for the earliest Fathers of the Church wrested the Scriptures from their true meaning to uphold grievous errors, such as the Mass, the veneration of saints and other essential matters."

"Then," St. Barbe continued, "I am to believe that the whole Church hath erred for several centuries, and been under the dominion of a lying spirit. How can that be reconciled with Christ's promises, recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel: 'I am with you all days; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her?'"

"Are you a Papist in disguise," the preacher retorted, "that you try to ensnare me with these crafty questions?"

St. Barbe replied that he was an honest Protestant, but finding himself incapable of answering the doubts of a friend, he wished to hear them refuted by Mr. Bitterstone.

The preacher declared himself most willing to do this. One must come to the study of the Bible, he said, without pride and cunning phrases which are of the devil. "I am with you all days," did not mean that teachers of religion could never fall into errors.

"That is quite true," St. Barbe answered. "The words do not refer to every individual teacher, but to the Church, the divinely commissioned teacher. It cannot be doubted that the Saviour would ensure for that divine truth which He makes it incumbent on all men to accept, immunity from corruption until the consummation of ages."

"He has done enough, by providing that the truth in all its integrity should always be found in the Holy Scriptures."

"I cannot see that to be enough. The Lord said: Preach the Gospel, teach all nations; and it is to the teachers and preachers that this divine assistance is promised."

"But I," said the minister, "can prove from the Bible that for centuries the Church has erred, and taught abominable idolatry, so your interpretation of those passages cannot be correct."

"And I," responded St. Barbe, "consider that the Divinity of Jesus Christ, upon which the whole fabric of Christianity rests, is conclusive proof that, according to His promise and the general tenor of His teaching, He has provided for mankind an infallible Teacher; hence on no single point of doctrine can the Church be in error."

"What! not in regard to the abomination of the mass?"

"Hitherto, God knows, I have always thought as you do. But just

explain this to me: You continually quote the Bible in proof of what you say; the Papists do the same, and they bring forward the interpretation of learned and holy men, who have studied the Word of God with prayer and fasting, in a far more conscientious and diligent manner than many of our preachers. I repeat, find a way out of this difficulty: Either Christ's promise has been fulfilled, and in that case the Church has not erred; or it has not been fulfilled, and if that be so, Christ is not God, a blasphemous thought which be it far from us to entertain."

By this time the minister's wrath got the better of him; he abused his antagonist for a vile Papist, a priest of Baal perhaps, or even a wily Jesuit.

He would go to the sheriff, he said, and get a warrant for his arrest, for he deserved the stake as much as Servet, an accused wretch, whom Calvin caused to be burnt at Geneva. St. Barbe only laughed at such threats, and advised Mr. Bitterstone to go first to Sir Amias and find out who he was. The minister went on for some time with a vehement tirade against Popery, quoting many texts and urging the necessity of faith alone in matters of belief; his companion answered not a word I resumed my boon and left off listening.

I had not read many lines when a young man of rather prepossessing appearance entered the garden, and coming up to me, asked in a peculiar soft voice, whether I was Edward Windsor? On my replying that I was, he informed me that his name was Gilbert Gifford, and taking a letter from his pocket-book, he handed it to me, not without glancing round to see if we were alone.

"From Anthony Babington!" I exclaimed, as I read the superscription. "Hush!" he said, laying his finger on his lips. "One cannot be too careful not to mention names, in an affair like this. Would you object to taking a stroll with me on the moors? One is never so safe as out on the moors, where there is neither tree nor bush, tapestry or curtain, behind which an eavesdropper may be concealed?"

I agreed to the proposal, and accompanied Gifford for the distance of about a mile from the castle, where fields and meadows gave place to a barren tract of country, where we were absolutely alone. Not a sound broke the stillness except the cry of the lapping, that makes its nest among the moorland heather. Hitherto we had conversed on indifferent subjects, but now my companion began to speak of our plans with regard to the Scottish Queen in a manner, which showed that Babington had fully initiated him into the secret. As Queen Mary had mentioned his name to me as that of a confidential agent, sent by her partisans in Paris, I was not surprised, only there was that about the young man's manner that gave me the impression of great slyness. He then told me at great length how he had been commissioned by the Archbishop of Glasgow and the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, to organize a means of communicating to the prisoner at Chertley the intelligence of Parma's meditated invasion, or any other tidings of consequence; and how on the strength of their recommendation Chateaufort had amply supplied him with means. He proceeded to inform me of the plan concocted with the brewer, also of the successful result of the experiment made in the previous week, in consequence of which Chateaufort had intrusted to him a packet of most important letters, which were to be transmitted to her on the morrow, with the weekly supply of beer. Amongst the letters was one from Babington to Nau, asking for the key to a new alphabet in cipher.

I was astonished at the ingenuity displayed in this contrivance, and asked him however he had hit upon it. He said he was a native of this part of the country, and had lived for some time in Burton, where he made the acquaintance of the fat brewer, and found out how clever he was. Many a time a young re-buck, entrapped in the park of Tixall, had been smuggled into Stafford by him in one of his beer barrels, and this had suggested the employment of a similar means in order to convey letters to and from the royal prisoner. Any suspicions I might have felt being thus allayed, I read Babington's note. It told me that by the middle of June, Salisbury would have made every preparation for flight; also that other matters which it was wiser not to commit to paper, would be told me by word of mouth by the bearer of the epistle, who was perfectly trustworthy.

"It is of the greatest importance," Gifford continued, his shifty eyes ever looking to the right and left, "that Mary Stuart should be conveyed to a place of safety, before either Parma lands, or some other event"—he emphasized this word, and repeated it slowly—"some other

event takes place, which would imperil her life, were she still a prisoner in the hands of her enemies."

I looked inquiringly at him, and he went on: "We shall receive notice of Parma's landing in due time. At present his preparations are not far advanced. Of course it would raise a perfect storm against Mary Stuart who would be regarded as his accomplice, and her life would not be worth an hour's purchase, if she were in Elizabeth's power, or indeed anywhere on English soil. The other event which we must take into consideration is the sudden death of Elizabeth."

"The sudden death?" I answered. "Why do you lay such a peculiar accent upon the word? You surely do not mean her assassination!"

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Gifford. "One must beware of using such an expression, even in confidential conversation. It is quite significant to speak of sudden death. Good God! Is that such an unheard of, impossible occurrence? Two years ago the Prince of Orange died suddenly. And I do not think he was more hated, or more justly hated, than Elizabeth."

"There is some scheme afoot! You know more than you choose to say. Merciful Heavens! Babington will surely not fall in with such a desperate act! Say that he will not!" I exclaimed.

"Do be quiet and divest yourself of that bad habit of mentioning names," he continued. "You might make matters very awkward for yourself and for others too. Your friend and his comrades of St. Giles have not the slightest intention of hurting a hair of Her Majesty's head, although she richly deserves it, and the wording of the Pope's Bull might sound like a justification. Let us however just suppose, for the sake of argument, that you or I or any one of our party, heard casually of something that might cause Elizabeth's death; would it not be your bounden duty to make inquiries as to when such an event was likely to ensue? For if it happened at an inopportune moment, it might be fatal to Mary Stuart as well; while on the other hand, if it took place at a seasonable time, it might facilitate, not her deliverance only, but her elevation to the throne, and thereby promote the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in England."

Then on a sudden a thought struck me. I remembered the man in the "Paris Garden," who was such a first-rate shot. I had seen him of late very frequently in Babington's company. "You mean Savage, John Savage," I said to Gifford. "And Babington is privy to it!"

"When will you stop that unfortunate trick of proclaiming everyone's name?" he rejoined. "Well, let us assume that to be the man's name, and that he has had an object in practising with the pistol, until he can hit any mark at thirty paces distance; is it not of the greatest moment to us, that the shot should not be fired at an unsuitable time? Otherwise it might strike two hearts. In other words, we must know what is going on, in order to turn events to the advantage of the Scottish Queen, and of our holy religion. On that account it is desirable for Anthony to keep friends with the marksman, though he does not approve his designs."

"Keep friends with such a wretch!" I answered indignantly. "Babington has lost his senses. He ought to inform against him instantly."

"He does not think himself obliged to do that, nor do I consider that he is. It is one thing to do a deed oneself, another, not to prevent its being done. I do not see that under the circumstances it would be anyone's duty to give information."

"I will do so myself!" I cried.

"Do not be precipitate," he said. "In the first place, what proof have you against Savage? None, absolutely none. Nor could you accuse him without incriminating your friends and yourself, disclosing the plot, and destroying all chance of liberating the prisoner, nay, her very life might be the price of your indiscretion. The fact is, the shot in question would very likely have been fired before now, had not Anthony held the man back, until all was in readiness here."

(To be continued.)

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ON
COERCION
IN
IRELAND.

following resolutions
adopted at a meeting of
County Board of the A.
H. last week.

The British Government,
Lord Lieutenant Earl
as proclaimed the Coer-
Ireland.

The only reason alleged
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It is admitted by
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Ancient Order of Hiber-
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DESPREAD.
IS
LECTRICITY

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