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LORD DACRE OF GILSLAND;
OR,
The Rising in the North:
AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF THE DAYS OF ELIZABETH
By E. M. Stewart.

CHAPTER VII.—(CONTINUED).

The appearance of Lord Burleigh and Sir Francis Walsingham gave a new impetus to the violence of the Queen.
"Tis well, sirs," she said, "you have come. What is the new tale of danger to be apprehended, and disgrace that we must incur?"
"Alas! gracious Sovereign," answered Lord Burleigh, "we have indeed to report the confirmation of those ill tidings which our noble colleague of Leicester has this morning conveyed to your most royal ear. There is a hurrying to and fro, and meetings of armed men, and long and late discussion in the northern counties. It were well that your Majesty summoned at once those audacious spirits Northumberland and Westmoreland. Long have we perceived that these bold Lords fretted in the ruin of your Grace's Government. It were well that you called them at once into your presence."
"Northumberland! Westmoreland! Dacre!" said Elizabeth; "have ye no more of the noble and powerful of our own fair land, who have been won from their fealty to the daughter of King Henry by the fatal wilyeries of Mary Stuart?"
"Alas, madam," said Walsingham, "we fear that the restless partisans of your cousin are in yet another quarter seeking to destroy your peace. This reliquary, and he produced, as he spoke, a silver crucifix with an opening at the back; "this reliquary did an emissary of my Lord of Leicester find by accident last night. A scroll in cipher was concealed within it, and this scroll contained hints of an attempt to be made upon your royal life. No pains will your faithful servants spare that may suffice to detect these conspirators. But you, madam, are in error. Why persist in still stretching out your appointed hand to shelter the goddess from her doom?"
"Thou art somewhat too bold, sir counsellor," said Elizabeth, "to talk thus of error to thy Sovereign. Error! we know not when we are in error, save when we yield our own good judgment. Heaven be witness we profited by thy advice, and that of our sage Cecil, when we yielded so much to accommodate the precise consciences of John Calvin's sons. See you not, my Lords, that these meddling in church matters would, were we once to remove the rein from their necks and the bit from their mouths, chatter no less with the affairs of State? They are swelled and bloated like the loathsome toad, and the poison which puffs them up in self-conceit; and woe to those who shall succeed us in the royal seat, if they slack the bridle in dealing with the new religionists, for whose insolence we may chiefly thank our advisers."
"Will it please your Grace," said Cecil coldly, "to slack your bridle for the Papists instead, to let the two bold Earls brave it to your face among their rude retainers, and turn a deaf ear to the news that that most suspected traitor, Leonard Dacre, has been seen hovering within verge even of your royal Court?"
"It would please us," said Elizabeth, "to be more wary than suspicious, and safe rather than severe. Summon hither, if ye will, the two proud Earls; we would have them know that we who spare can also strike. And for the captive of Turbury—Oh, my Lords, my Lords, there is indeed a deep wisdom in your councils where that captive is concerned! Is there not a mighty One above us, in whose hand the lives of kings and princes are as chaff? Who shall say, 'This will we do to-morrow' when, lo! we are in His hand, and ere to-morrow we may cease to be swept from existence at His word, like a grain of dry sand into the surging sea—like the red leaf whirling from the autumn bough? And should our own existence hap to be thus numbered with the things that are no more, and Mary of Scotland live to ascend our throne, ill might it not then fare with our trusty counsellors? Who may say how they would rank in the esteem of Queen Mary? Oh, full of prudence, my Lords, is your advice! What pity that it is not as prompt to execute as it is to plan!"
The keen blue eyes of Elizabeth wandered while she spoke thus from face to face of her companions, and settled at last upon the countenance of Wal-

singham. But that adept in hypocrisy did not flinch to encounter even that blighting, sarcastic gaze.
"Policy, madam," he quietly answered, "is most patient. Does the hunter stretch forth his hand to strike when the lion is only half entrapped in his coils? But let him be once encircled in those strict coils, and vain are all his endeavors to escape. Who would fling a snare, whose strength he has not proved, over the head of the monarch of the wild?"
"Right, right, my good, my trusty Walsingham," said Elizabeth, sinking back in her chair with clasped hands, while an increased glow of complexion was visible even through her paint, and with a kind of hysterical exultation in her voice. "Right, my trusty Walsingham, the coils must be strong—yes, strong and well spread. We will have all the traitors in our power—all! And, in the meantime, oh, what need to talk of violence!—we would not counsel it. But there are ways, my faithful friends. A damp, cold lodging might do much, a stint alike of courtesy and food, and aggregate of those small evils that wear out heart and life together. Search thy keen wits, Walsingham; think how many of such evils thou canst heap on one poor head. Good Lords, we need not summon axe or dagger to our aid!"
"Your Grace's commands shall be in all obeyed!" said Walsingham.
"Yes, my commands!" returned the Queen, leaning forward, while a fearful and doubtful smile played upon her lip, which had become suddenly pale, and contrasted frightfully with the false bloom that stained her cheek. "Yes, my commands!—But I command no violence—none, Walsingham—none. It were unbecoming to a sister Queen, and one, too, who sought our protection?" Elizabeth paused for a moment, and then resumed with more composure, "The Dacre you believe to be in London?"
"Aye, madam," answered Cecil.
"Let him be summoned to our Court anon," said Elizabeth. "The man is one whom we like, and do not like. Oh, he were a brave, a worthy subject, were his heart once set to the tune of a just loyalty! But he is even, we fear, one of those impatient dreamers who will not take State affairs as they find them, but must ever think and govern for themselves, and make and meddle with a Prince's right. Yet would we give the best jewel of our Crown to make the Dacre our true servant!"
"I fear me, most gracious Sovereign, that were a vain hope," said Cecil. "Leonard Dacre is a man who, having once chosen a cause, is most like to abide by that cause even unto death."
"And death let him meet who will obstinately abide by an evil cause!" returned Elizabeth, sternly.
"It were vain, I apprehend, to summon the Dacre hither," said Leicester, who, with his arms folded upon his breast, had sat till now silently listening to the discussion. "Were it he whom I suspect visited the city only two nights since, he has already withdrawn from it."
"That trusty informant, my Lord," said Burleigh, "whom you sent this morning to my dwelling, with the whisper that Dacre was in London, told somewhat too of his lodging in the house of one Harding, a mercer of Grass Street, and a suspected Papist—Now Harding, if we mistake not, is the name of the damsel who saved the life of her Grace. It were well to learn if she be connected with this Harding of Grass Street. We marvel that my Lord of Leicester has not entertained such a suspicion."
"It was not in vain that Burleigh bent his searching eyes upon the countenance of Lord Leicester.—The latter was evidently somewhat disconcerted by his gaze; and Elizabeth, ever prompt in suspicion, and jealous to a point of ridicule where her favorite was concerned, did not fail to remember the extreme beauty of the girl who was now mentioned, and to couple that remembrance with the confusion of Leicester. Her eyes shot fire, and violently ringing a silver bell that stood beside her, she bade the gentleman-in-waiting summon the damsel Gertrude Harding immediately to her presence.
Leicester mentally cursed his own folly and idleness, which had entrusted his spy and informant to the questioning of the crafty Burleigh. He made an attempt to extricate himself from the snare into which he had been led by his own carelessness.
"We must hear with caution, my Lord, and take, with some exceptions, the report of that person whom I this morning sent to you. I would not charge the man Harding as a Papist on her word; and for his connection with the damsel Gertrude, if such exists, I knew not of it."
"Tis a pity," answered Burleigh dryly, "that the noble Earl chooses confidants in whom he can place so little faith."
"We cannot infuse into the mean lurcher the spirit of the noble hound," answered Leicester; "yet is the crouching, cringing animal of use, so that we neither value nor trust him beyond his worth."
"Tis well said Leicester!" exclaimed Elizabeth, who was still eager to exonerate her favorite even from her own suspicions.
Burleigh perceived his rival's advantage, and observed:
"I can tell you, my Lord, that the maid is indeed the daughter of that suspected Papist. From her own lips did I hear so much, when by chance she fell yesterday in my way, in an interview which she had with our gallant ambassador, Vitelli—in which interview, I would fain believe, that there lurked no more than its apparent meaning. But the damsel is cunning, and whatever might be her real errand, she appeared as no other than the disposer of her father's wares."
"Say rather, my Lord," said Leicester, "that she is simple; her manner might well elude your penetration if she had really nothing to conceal."
"You are as eager, my Lord," retorted Burleigh, "to defend this maiden with your tongue, as you would have been to interfere in favor of her whom but two nights since we heard screaming from the cabin of a fishing boat on the river; 'tis pity, as I then told you, that the days of knight-errantry should be past. But, who am I, not so chivalrous, confess that I like not the foreigner Vitelli, and I hope he may have no other errand than he avows, or that the maid may be as innocent as the dove seems. Let her Majesty deign to question her of her errand to the Italian and of Leonard Dacre, something may we perhaps elicit from her surprise."

"We will do so," said the Queen, who had fallen into a musing attitude, with her eyes fixed suspiciously on Leicester, who had on his part now succeeded in assuming an air of utter unconcern.
At this moment the damsel was ushered into the royal presence. The effects of a night of anxiety and pain were visible in her pale features and spiritless air; she wore her wounded wrist in a sling, and advanced towards the Queen with a tottering step—the united effect of bodily weakness and of a terror which the unusual circumstances in which she was placed excited even in her powerful mind. She sank upon one knee as she approached the royal chair, and remained in that attitude awaiting the questions of Elizabeth. Even in that short space of time which it occupied for Gertrude to cross the presence chamber, the Queen had worked herself into a frenzy of rage and jealousy. Wherefore should Cecil doubt, why did he suspect a poor, insignificant girl, if he had not some cause for suspicion? and the confusion too of Leicester, had he a wish to screen the damsel? The veins of Elizabeth's neck swelled, and fire seemed darting from her eyes as she fiercely exclaimed:
"Girl! what hadst thou to do with visiting the foreigner, Vitelli?"
Gertrude was suffering under bodily indisposition, and how much effect has the poor frail body on the imperishable mind—how does the mind stoop to the body's weakness? The question, so sudden and unexpected, had the effect which Burleigh had anticipated, and the start of the damsel, though slight, was sufficiently perceptible. She briefly, however, regained her self-possession, and submissively answered that she had approached the noble foreigner to pray him to purchase some trifles of her father—But Elizabeth had seen the maiden start, and her fury strengthened with her suspicions, she sprang like a maniac from her seat, and alike heedless and unconscious of what pain she might inflict, she seized the girl, as it chanced, by her lacerated wrist, and dragged her to her feet. Elizabeth was a powerful woman, and the citizen's daughter was as an infant in her grasp. The Queen struggled for utterance in her rage, but it at last found words.
"Insolent minion, what else was thine errand?"
The pain of her wounded wrist, so rudely grasped, forced involuntarily tears to Gertrude's eyes, but her mind recovered its tone from the very exigency of the occasion, and she replied firmly that it was an account of her father's trade that she had visited Vitelli.
"Aye, false girl!" exclaimed Elizabeth, "and on another errand too. Tell me this moment, was there not some traitor lurking in the dwelling of thy father, for whom thou didst convey a message to the Italian?"
"Madam!" replied Gertrude, "I can only repeat what your Majesty already knows."
"Worm! dost thou dare to trifle with Elizabeth? Answer at once, and to the purpose, or thy miserable life shall not be worth an hour's purchase!"
As she spoke, the Queen raised her clenched hand, and in a transport of ungovernable rage struck the girl so violently on the mouth that the blood streamed from her lips. But she had for once dealt with a spirit which, though less fierce, was no less unconquerable than her own; and though choking with the blood that filled her mouth, half fainting with the agony of her wrist, from which the Queen had torn the bandage, Gertrude, as she sunk corporally powerless at her feet, repented with firmness her former assertion.
"Minion, we have necks that shall force the truth from thee!" shrieked the enraged Elizabeth.
"And necks, madam, will extort no more from my lips," answered Gertrude; "that courage which could dare the bullet of the assassin would, I doubt not, support me under the torments of the rack."
"Dost thou boast of thy poor service? and dare to bandy threats with thy Sovereign?" said Elizabeth, again seizing the maiden, and shaking her violently.
"I boast only of my courage, of which I may be in all modesty a judge," answered Gertrude; but the fury of the Queen permitted her no more replies—Promising with an oath that she would test that boasted courage, she flung the damsel from her with such violence, that her head coming in contact with the foot of one of the massive chairs below the platform, she received so severe a contusion that she lay senseless on the floor.
None of those present, if they had even possessed the inclination, would have dared to interfere during this scene, which, extraordinary as it might be, was not without an example in the Court of Queen Elizabeth, whose maids of honor were by no means unused to feel the weight of her hands.
Perceiving that Gertrude did not move, and that her bright golden hair was saturated with blood, the Queen summoned her attendants, with somewhat less of fury in her manner; and as the girl was by her orders borne out of the room, and she glanced upon her wounded wrist, she muttered, as if for once partly ashamed of her violence:
"A bitter, contumacious spirit, a depository, we do not doubt, of malignant secrets; certes, we question whether it would not even hold out against the rack."
Lord Burleigh and Walsingham had witnessed the foregoing scene with unmoved countenances, save that once a furtive smile had played momentarily on their lips as their eyes met, after a glance which each had cast upon Lord Leicester. That nobleman seemed to lack upon the occasion something of his accustomed self-possession; when the hand of the Queen descended on Gertrude's face a slight flush was visible on that of the Earl, and he bit his lip as if some expostulation were struggling for utterance; again, when in the last paroxysm of her rage she hurled the maiden to the ground, he half started from his chair, as if to save her from the fall; the eyes of Cecil was, however, bent upon him, and recalled by that subtle glance to recollection, Leicester reasserted himself with an assumption at least of composure.
"Heaven and earth, my Lord!" said Elizabeth, addressing Burleigh, "this world of ours doth improve apace; the substance of the Londoners is grown too fat, that their tongues wag so saucily; how must our Government have lacked policy, that this little vixen of a citizen dares brave our mandates to our teeth, and palter with the truth, and play the corner with Elizabeth! Your counsel, my good Burleigh, how shall we deal with this obstinate spirit?"

shall we even resign it to the strong arm of the law, to the rack, and to the dungeon; or, in pity to the offender's youth and gracious recollection of her sometime service, test her fealty with more gentle questioning?"
"Ever sagacious and merciful!" answered Cecil: "we cannot doubt that the maiden will be subdued by a leniency for which she has so little reason to hope. There is indeed, I doubt, an obstinacy in her temper, which will defy severity, however wholesome, but which will yet melt to the voice of kindness as the snow-wreath vanishes in the sunbeam."
"And what thinks my Lord of Leicester?" inquired the Queen, fixing her eyes with a gaze of malicious triumph on the countenance of that nobleman; "how would his wisdom counsel our dealing with this wayward maiden?"
Whatever might have been the feelings of the Earl upon this occasion, he had now brought them under due control, and with a steady voice and countenance he replied, "That it was not for him to offer counsel in a matter where a line of conduct had been proposed, which was at once sanctioned by the wisdom of her Grace and of Lord Burleigh; yet did he hazard a word upon the subject, he would then say that some show of sternness should be mingled with the royal mercy for the taming of so haughty a spirit as the damsel had evinced."
"Now dost thou fall in thy duty as knight-errant!" said Elizabeth with a bitter sneer; "when did gentle knight counsel sternness towards a gentle maid?"
To this the Earl made no reply, and the Queen dropped the conversation, by demanding with asperity of Cecil if the offenders in the Chepe had been yet discovered; and when informed that they had not, she burst into a storm of vituperation, swearing that she had naught but drones and sluggards in her service. "And this matter of the reliquary," she said, turning to Leicester, "could not thy dainty emissary discover with the bumble some trace of the traitor to whom it belonged?"
"Some trace of that traitor we hope that we have already obtained," answered Leicester.
"Aye," said Walsingham, while that ambiguous smile which is so painful to behold, passed for a moment over his features and illuminated them as the brief lightning illumines the surface of the stormy sky only to show the depth and blackness of its gloom. Such was the smile of Walsingham as he answered—
"Aye, we have indeed a sure clue to that traitor, coiled not in our snare but in his own. As surely as time shall be shall it work the downfall, Madam, of your enemies."
"And so much do I suspect," said Burleigh, "that the Italian Vitelli is of their number, that in sooth he shall find that English cheer is cold."
"Tis well, my Lords," said Elizabeth, rising from the Council table. "We release you for the time from your attendance. We have a banquet and a masque to-night, and shall then expect you in our presence."
As she said these words, the Queen had her hand upon the door of the closet, as if about immediately to retire; then hesitating, she turned back for a step or two, and Leicester, who imagined that she would speak with him, was in a moment at her side, but she waved him away with an air of disdain which she did not often assume towards her spoiled favorite. The Earl immediately drew back with an expression of indignation on his countenance not less than that evinced by the Queen. He could venture to be offended even with the imperious Elizabeth, whose extravagant and blind attachment to himself would, he knew, eventually overpower her anger. She now beckoned forward Sir Francis Walsingham, and pressing her hand upon his arm, while her eyes glared fiercely in his face from beneath her contracted brow, she exclaimed in a low tone, "Remember, remember, my Walsingham—the prisoner—the sacred prisoner—whose life we hold so dear. Remember our commands!"
The lips of the wily statesman still moved in reply, when the door of her chamber closed upon the Queen, and he found himself alone with his colleagues.
The room into which Elizabeth had retreated was the one where she was accustomed to pass the hours which she devoted to reflection and to those pursuits of learning in which she greatly excelled. The deep, oriel window overlooked the most retired part of the Palace gardens, where none were permitted to walk without her especial permission. The walls of this apartment, like those of the Council Chamber, were hung with tapestry; the floor was covered with rich carpets; the chairs had soft cushions; and there were as many arrangements for study as for comfort. Long shelves were loaded with ponderous tomes, written not only in French, Spanish, and Italian, but in Greek and Latin; with all those languages was Elizabeth conversant. On the table were writing materials, and a pile of slips of parchment stitched neatly together, and closely written in Elizabeth's own hand, with the notes and observations made in the course of her studies. In a corner of that room, too, were her virginals. Her favorite instrument, a Spanish lute, upon which she also played, lay upon the table. It may be observed that opposite to the virginals, and supported on bronze brackets, stood a rich cabinet of ebony, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. In this cabinet the Queen was in the habit of keeping those little articles which were the treasures of the heart, valued more for some cherished remembrance which is attached to them than for their intrinsic worth. There, too, she kept the most important of her letters, whether from friend or foe.
An open volume, from which Elizabeth had been reading in the morning, lay upon the table; but her mind was now intent upon no purpose of study—She was alone, alone; no need to mask her features with an appearance of composure to hide the inward struggles of her heart. With clasped hands she paced to and fro, and who shall define the thoughts which chased each other across that powerful mind, traced their fearful character on the agitated muscles of her face? More than once a sigh—a tearless, bitter sigh—broke from the bosom of the Queen.—Then with a hasty step she approached the cabinet before named, and unclosing it, took a miniature from a recess. Never did the painter's art preserve more lovely lineaments from oblivion than those represented in that portrait; yet, as if it had been an object of horror rather than delight, the Queen, after bestowing on it one hasty glance, thrust it into

a dark corner of the cabinet. Then, after a few minutes' search, she drew forth a crystal box, and opening it, by turns took out and held to the light two more miniatures which it contained. Elizabeth's proud eye sparkled, and her heart throbbled as she looked upon the first of these portraits. She loved to remind herself that she was the daughter of King Henry—to trace a similarity between her own features and those of her father as they were represented in that portrait, ere age, ill humor, and excess had deformed their early beauty. But not such was the expression of her countenance as she looked upon the companion picture; it might have been gazed upon with pleasure, for it was that of a lovely female. But a very different emotion governed the breast of Elizabeth. Ere long and long did she gaze upon that portrait as though she would fain have looked it into life; and oh, the whirlwind of bitter thoughts that swept through her mind that devastating angry course. Her lip quivered with rage, and, dashing the senseless substance to the ground, she trampled it beneath her feet.
It was the portrait of her mother!
CHAPTER VIII.
The feathered songster chaunteth clear
Had wound his bugle horn,
And told the early vifinger
The comynge of the morn,
CHAPTER IX.
There is nothing in nature more beautiful than a fine autumn morning; the sparkling, but not sultry sunbeam, the fresh, invigorating breeze, the fields spread with the golden promise of plenty for the coming year, the orchards with their trees bending beneath the weight of fruit, and the lively tints of the year's last flowers. Even when the season is on the wane, when the ripe sheaf is gathered into the garner-house, and the fruit stripped from the bough, and the grey mists creep over the lake, and through the hazel copse; when the leaves of the forest are grown few, and the light breath of the wind sweeps them red and sown beneath the passing foot, still is autumn in its own melancholy grace. Thus thought a traveller who rode unattended through the forest of Needwood, in Staffordshire, as he caught at intervals through a long arcade of the half-stripped branches, a distant glimpse of the rapid waters of the Dove, or described, as the haze of the morning was dispelled by the strengthening sunbeams, the neat, but still far-off towers of Tutbury, with the time worn towers of its ancient castle frowning over it from the brow of a hill.
Around the traveller were all the beauties of forest scenery, knots of tall and stately trees, yet rich with varied colorings—red, purple, and yellow—melting into gorgeous confusion, and contrasting with the deep green of the long ivy wreath that twined about their trunks, and sometime even hung in tendrils from branch to branch. Then a vista from which might be seen the fair valley of the Dove, scattered over with cottages and mansions, the latter conspicuous with their tall, fantastic, chimneys and pointed gables, and all the capricious architecture that marked the age; while far beyond a blue undulating line on the verge of horizon marked the hills of Derbyshire. Every beautiful variety too, of grassy glade, and nook and dingle, distinguished the forest; while the underwood was bright with autumn berries and flowers. Nor were the inanimate beauties of nature alone visible—the note of the blackbird was yet heard upon the bough, and the deer which abounded in the forests, startled by the sound of the horse's hoofs, often darted with the lightning speed across the path of the traveller.
But neither the trill of the blackbird, nor the beauties gilded by the now sparkling sun-shine, could long divert the anxious thoughts of that traveller. Something more than mere bodily fatigue was written on his fine brow. The occasional compression, too, of his lips and all the bitterness of mental pain. Yet that traveller had ridden through the live long night; he might well have sunk from very corporeal weariness. But when did the noble and generous Dacre cast a regret towards any selfish convenience? And who shall trace the faithful current of his thoughts? Did they rest only upon the chances that might yet operate against that fair and royal prisoner, whose wearisome captivity he hoped ere long to terminate? His hope in her favor ran high and his dark eye sparkled, and his smile grew less severe, as he pictured to himself that most injured of women once more seated on her ancestral throne. But ever and anon, before the beautiful form of the liberated Mary, gilded another form as fair, with a pale cheek and a sorrowful brow; and hands held up, it seemed, for mercy or for shelter. Oh, it was in vain that when the sweet face of Gertrude Harding, suffering and unprotected, presented itself to the mind's eye of Lord Dacre—it was in vain that he strove to dismiss the mournful vision, to recall the generous Morden and his promise, or to hope that no protection would suffice to shield her from the artifice or the violence of Leicester. Once already had John Harding fallen under the anger of that most insolent of Court favorites; and it had been the lot of Lord Dacre to shield the honest merchant from the worst effects of the Earl's wrath. But now, with none near to step between him and the rapacity of Leicester, how easy were it for the latter to involve Gertrude and her old father in one common and immediate ruin. When he had seen Queen Mary—when he had discharged that most urgent and important portion of his duty—and when he was once more encircled in the arms of his father, by his own brave vassals, then Leonard resolved that he would despatch a trusty messenger to London, praying the citizen and his fair daughter—if yet no ill hap had befallen them—to secure, as speedily as might be, the greater portion of their wealth, and hasten with all speed to the shelter of one of his own castles. For never, Lord Dacre well knew, might they hope for comfort in London again; his fears respecting Leicester were correct. Wraps in these thoughts, Lord Dacre had even ridden on since the dawn of the morning, unheeding hitherto that since the first glimpse of daylight he had a near companion on his way. Now, however, the sound of the hoofs of another horse than that which he rode attracted his attention, and as he turned his head, his eyes met those of the rider, who thereupon springing his horse into a trot rode rapidly past him. The person, as he sat, seemed of a tall and thick frame; he wore a huge slouched felt hat, and the collar of his large cloak completely enveloping the