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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

Rewritten and Rendered into Modern English From Sir Edwin Caskoden's Memoir

By EDWIN CASKODEN [CHARLES MAJOR]

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THE CASKODENS.

WE Caskodens take great pride in our ancestry. Some persons, I know, hold that to be totally un-Solomonlike and the height of vanity, but they usually have no ancestors of whom to be proud. The man who does not know who his great-grandfather was naturally enough would not care what he was. The Caskodens have pride of ancestry because they know both who and what.

We have a right to be proud, for there is an unbroken male line from William the Conqueror down to the present time. In this lineal list are fourteen barons—the title lapsed when Charles I. fell—twelve Knights of the Garter and forty-seven Knights of the Bath and other orders. A Caskoden distinguished himself by gallant service under the great Norman and was given rich English lands and a fair Saxon bride, albeit an unwilling one, as his reward. With this fair, unwilling Saxon bride and her long plait of yellow hair goes a very pretty, pathetic story, which I may tell you at some future time if you take kindly to this. A Caskoden was seneschal to William Rufus and sat at the rich, half barbaric banquets in the first great hall. Still another was one of the doughty barons who wrested from John the great charter, England's declaration of independence; another was high in the councils of Henry V. I have omitted one whom I should not fail to mention, Adjudika Caskoden, who was a member of the dance parliament of Henry IV., so called because there were no lawyers in it.

It is true that in the time of Edward IV. a Caskoden did stoop to trade, but it was trade of the most dignified, honorable sort—he was a goldsmith, and his guild, as you know, were the bankers and international clearance house for people, kings and nobles.

Now, it has been the custom of the Caskodens for centuries to keep a record of events as they have happened, both private and public. Some are in the form of diaries and journals, like those of Pepps and Evelyn; others in letters, like the Pastons; others, again, in verse and song, like Chaucer's and the Water Poet's, and still others in the more pretentious form of memoir and chronicle. These records we always have kept jealously within our family, thinking it vulgar, like the Pastons, to submit our private affairs to public gaze.

There can, however, be no reason why those parts treating solely of outside matters should be so carefully guarded, and I have determined to choose for publication such portions as do not divulge family secrets or skeletons and which really redound to family honor.

For this occasion I have selected from the memoir of my worthy ancestor and namesake, Sir Edwin Caskoden, grandson of the goldsmith and master of the dance to Henry VIII., the story of Charles Brandon and Mary Tudor, sister to the king.

This story is so well known to the student of English history that I fear its repetition will lack that zest which attends the development of an unforeseen denouement, but it is of so great interest and is so full in its sweet, fierce manifestation of the one thing insoluble by time—love—that I will nevertheless rewrite it from old Sir Edwin's memoir.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUEL.

IT sometimes happens, Sir Edwin says, that when a woman will she won't, and when she won't she will, but usually in the end the adage holds good. That sentence may not be luminous with meaning, but I will give you an illustration.

I think it was in the spring of 1509—at any rate, soon after the death of the Modern Solomon, as Queen Catherine called her old father-in-law, the late King Henry VII.—that his august majesty Henry VIII., "the vndubitate flower and very Heire of both the sayd Lineage," came to the throne of England and tendered me the honorable position of master of the dance at his sumptuous court.

As to "worldly goods," as some of the new religionists call wealth, I was very comfortably off, having inherited from my father, one of the counselors of Henry VII., a very competent fortune indeed. How my worthy father contrived to save from the greedy hand of that rich old miser so great a fortune I am sure I cannot tell. He was the only man of my knowledge who did it, for the old king had a reach as long as the kingdom, and, upon one pretext or another, appropriated to himself everything on which he could lay his hands. My father, however, was himself pretty shrewd in money matters, having inherited along with his fortune a rare knack at keeping it. His father was a goldsmith in the time of King Edward and enjoyed the marked favor of that puissant prince.

Being thus in a position of affluence, I cared nothing for the fact that little or no emolument went with the office. It was the honor which delighted me. Besides, I was thereby an inmate of the king's palace and brought into intimate relations with the court, and, above all, with the finest ladies of the land—the best company a man can keep, since it ennobs his mind with better thoughts, purifies his heart with cleaner motives and makes him gentle without detracting from his strength. It was an office any lord of the kingdom might have been proud to hold.

Now, some four or five years after my induction into this honorable office there came to court news of a terrible duel fought down in Suffolk, out of which only one of the four combatants had come alive—two, rather, but one of them in a condition worse than death. The first survivor was a son of Sir William Brandon, and the second was a man called Sir Adam Judson. The story went that young Brandon and his elder brother, both just home from the continental wars, had met Judson at an Ipswich inn, where there had been considerable gambling among them. Judson had won from the brothers a large sum of money which they had brought home, for, notwithstanding their youth, the elder being but twenty-six and the younger about twenty-four years of age, they had gained great honor and considerable profit in wars, especially the younger, whose name was Charles.

It is a little hard to fight for money and then to lose it by a single spot upon the die, but such is the fate of him who plays, and a philosopher will swallow his ill luck and take to fighting for more. The Brandons could have done this easily enough, especially Charles, who was an offhand philosopher, rather fond of a good humored fight, had it not been that in the course of play one evening the secret of Judson's winning had been disclosed by a discovery that he cheated. The Brandons waited until they were sure, and then trouble began, which resulted in a duel on the second morning following.

This Judson was a Scotch gentleman of whom very little was known except that he was counted the most deadly and most cruel duelist of the time. He was called the "Walking Death," and it is said he took pride in the appellation. He boasted that he had fought eighty-seven duels, in which he had killed seventy-five men, and it was considered certain death to meet him. I got the story of the duel afterward from Brandon as I give it here.

John was the elder brother and when the challenge came was entitled to fight first, a bright out of which Charles tried in vain to talk him. The brothers told their father, Sir William Brandon, and at the appointed time father and sons repaired to the place of meeting, where they found Judson and his two seconds ready for the fight.

Sir William was still a vigorous man, with few equals in sword play, and the sons, especially the younger, were better men and more skillful than their father had ever been, yet they felt that this duel meant certain death, so great was Judson's fame for skill and cruelty. Notwithstanding they were so handicapped with this feeling of impending evil, they met their duty without a tremor, for the motto of their house was "Malo Mori Quam Fedari."

It was a misty morning in March. Brandon has told me since that when his elder brother took his stand it was at once manifest that he was Judson's superior both in strength and skill, but after a few strokes the brother's blade bent double and broke off short at the hilt when it should have gone home. Thereupon Judson, with a malignant smile of triumph, deliberately selected his opponent's heart and pierced it with his sword, giving the blade a twist as he drew it out in order to cut and mutilate the more.

In an instant Sir William's doublet was off, and he was in his dead son's tracks, ready to avenge him or to die.



"Fight, you bloodhound!"

Again the thrust which should have killed broke the sword, and the father died as the son had died.

After this came young Charles, expecting, but so great was his strong heart, not one whit fearing, to lie beside his dead father and brother. He knew he was the superior of both in strength and skill, and his knowledge of men and the noble art told him they had each been the superior of Judson, but the fellow's hand seemed to be the hand of death. An opening came through Judson's unskillful play which gave young Brandon an opportunity

for a thrust to kill, but his blade, like his father's and his brother's, bent double without penetrating. Unlike the others, however, it did not break, and the thrust revealed the fact that Judson's skill as a duelist lay in a shirt of mail which it was useless to try to pierce. Aware of this, Brandon knew that victory was his and that soon he would have avenged the murders that had gone before. He saw that his adversary was strong neither in wind nor arm and had not the skill to penetrate his guard in a week's trying, so he determined to fight on the defensive until Judson's strength should wane, and then kill him when and how he chose.

After a time Judson began to breathe hard and his thrusts to lack force. "Boy, I would spare you," he said. "I have killed enough of your tribe. Put up your sword and call it quits."

Young Brandon replied: "Stand your ground, you coward. You will be a dead man as soon as you grow a little weaker. If you try to run, I will thrust you through the neck as I would a cur. Listen how you snort. I shall soon have you. You are almost gone. You would spare me, would you? I could preach a sermon or dance a hornpipe while I am killing you. I will not break my sword against your coat of mail, but will wait until you fall from weakness, and then—Fight, you bloodhound!"

Judson was pale from exhaustion, and his breath was coming in gasps as he tried to keep the merciless sword from his throat. At last, by a dexterous twist of his blade, Brandon sent Judson's sword flying thirty feet away. The fellow started to run, but turned and fell upon his knees to beg for life. Brandon's reply was a flashing circle of steel, and his sword point cut lengthwise through Judson's eyes and the bridge of his nose, leaving him sightless and hideous for life—a revenge compared to which death would have been merciful.

The duel created a sensation throughout the kingdom, for, although little was known as to who Judson was, his fame as a duelist was as broad as the land. He had been at court upon several occasions, and at one time, upon the king's birthday, had fought in the royal lists. So the matter came in for its share of consideration by king and courtiers, and young Brandon became a person of interest. He became still more so when some gentlemen who had served with him in the continental wars told the court of his daring and bravery and related stories of deeds at arms worthy of the best knight in Christendom.

He had an uncle at the court, Sir Thomas Brandon, the king's master of horse, who thought it a good opportunity to put his nephew forward and let him take his chance at winning royal favor. The uncle broached the subject to the king, with favorable issue, and Charles Brandon, led by the hand of fate, came to London court, where that same fate had in keeping for him events such as seldom fall to the lot of man.

CHAPTER II.

HOW BRANDON CAME TO COURT.

WHEN we learned that Brandon was coming to court, every one believed he would soon gain the king's favor. How much that would amount to none could tell, as the king's favorites were of many sorts and taken from all conditions of men. There was Master Wolsey, a butcher's son, whom he had first made almoner, then chief counselor and bishop of Lincoln, soon to be bishop of York and cardinal of the holy Roman church.

From the other extreme of life came young Thomas, Lord Howard, heir to the Earl of Surrey, and my Lord of L Buckingham, premier peer of the realm. Then sometimes would the king take a yeoman of the guard and make him his companion in jousts and tournaments solely because of his brawn and bone. There were others whom he kept close by him in the palace because of their wit and the entertainment they furnished, of which class was I, and, I flatter myself, no mean member.

To begin with, being in no way dependent on the king for money, I never drew a farthing from the royal treasury. This, you may be sure, did me no harm, for, although the king sometimes delighted to give, he always hated to pay. There were other good reasons, too, why I should be a favorite with the king.

My appointment as master of the dance, I am sure, was owing entirely to my manner. My brother, the baron, who stood high with the king, was not friendly toward me because my father had seen fit to bequeath me so good a competency in place of giving it all to "the firstborn and leaving me dependent upon the tender mercies of an elder brother. So I had no help from him nor from any one else. I was quite small of stature and therefore unable to compete with lance and mace with bulkier men, but I would bet with any man, of any size, on any game, at any place and time, in any amount, and, if I do say it, who perhaps should not, I basked in the light of many a fair smile which larger men had sighed for in vain.

I did not know when Brandon first came to London. We had all remained at Greenwich while the king went up to Westminster to waste his time with matters of state and quarrel with the parliament, then sitting, over the amount of certain subsidies.

Mary, the king's sister, then some eighteen or nineteen years of age, a perfect bud, just blossoming into a perfect flower, had gone over to Windsor on a visit to her elder sister, Margaret of Scotland, and the palace was dull enough. Brandon, it seems, had been presented to Henry during this time at Westminster and had, to some extent at least, become a favorite before I met him. The first time I saw him was at a joust given by the king at West-

minster in celebration of the fact that he had coaxed a good round subsidy out of parliament.

The queen and her ladies had been invited over, and it was known that Mary would be down from Windsor and come home with the king and the court to Greenwich when we should return. So we all went over to Westminster the night before the jousts and were up bright and early next morning to see all that was to be seen.

[Here the editor sees fit to substitute a description of this tournament taken from the quaint old chronicler Hall.]

The morrow being after dinner, at tyme convenient, the Queene with her Ladies repaired to see the lustes, the trompettes blew vp, and in came many a noble man and Gentilman, richly appareled, takinge their wayes to the ioustes, and their horses, in clothe of Golde and russet and tynnell; Knyghtes in clothe of Golde, and russet Veluet. And a greete number of Gentlemen on foote, in russet sатыn and yealow; and yomen in russet Damaske and yealow, all the aether parte of eury mans hosen Skarlet, and yealow cappes.

Then came the kynge vnder a Paultion of golde, and purpl Veluet embroudered, the compass of the Paultion on the wyre, valenced with a flat, gold beaten in wyre, with an emeral croune in the top, of fine Golde, his bases and trapper of clothe of Golde, fretted with Damaske Golde, the trapper pedant to the tail. A crane and chafron of stele, in the front of the chafro was a godly plume set full of Damaske and yealow, and yomen in russet Damaske and yealow, eury of them vnder a Paultion of Crymosyn Damaske & purple. The number of Gentlemen and yomen a fote, appareled in russet and yealow was sixti. Then next these Paultions came xii chylidren of honor, sittinge eury one of them on a greete couerser, richly trapped, and embroudered in seuerall colours and facions, wher lacked neither broderie nor goldsmithes work, so that eury chylid and horse in deuce and facion was contrary to the other, which was godly to beholde.

Then on the counter parte, entered a Stranger, fyrst on horsebacke in a long robe of Russet sатыne, like a recluse or a religious, and his horse trapped in the same setwe, withoute dromme or noyse of mynstrelsy, puttynge a byll of petition to the Queene, the effect wherof was, that if it would please her to license hym to runne for her presence, he would do it gladly, and if not, then he would departe as he came. After his request was graunted, then he put off hys sayd byllete and was armed at all peces with rynde and bases & horse, also richly trapped, and so did runne his horse to the tyme end, wher heours men on fote appareled in Russet sатыn awaited on him. Thereupon the Heraulds cryed an Oyee! and the ground shoke with the trompe of russhyng stedes. Wouder it were to write of the dedes of Armes which that daye toke place, wher a man might haue seen many a horse raysed on high with galop, turne and stoppe, maruylous to beholde. Cxii staves were broke and the kynge being lusty, he and the stranger toke the prices.

When the queen had given the stranger permission to run, and as he moved away, there was a great clapping of hands and waving of trophies among the ladies, for he was of such noble mien and comely face as to attract the gaze of every one away from even the glittering person of his majesty the king.

His hair, worn in its natural length, fell in brown curls back from his forehead almost to the shoulder, a style just then new, even in France. His eyes were a deep blue, and his complexion, though browned by exposure, had a tinge of beauty which the sun could not mar and a girl might envy. He wore neither mustachio nor beard, as men now disgrace their faces—since Francis I. took a scar on his chin—and his clear cut profile, dilating nostrils and mobile though firm set mouth gave pleasing assurance of tenderness, gentleness, daring and strength.

I was standing near the queen, who called to me, "Who is the handsome stranger that so gracefully asked our license to run?"

"I cannot inform your majesty. I never saw him until now. He is the goodliest knight I have ever beheld."

"That he is," replied the queen, "and we should like very much to know him. Should we not, ladies?" There was a chorus of assent from a dozen voices, and I promised, after the running, to learn all about him and report.

It was at this point the heralds cried their "Oyez!" and our conversation was at an end for the time.

As to height, the stranger was full six feet, with ample evidence of muscle, though no great bulk. He was grace itself, and the king afterward said he had never seen such strength of arm and skill in the use of the lance—a sure harbinger of favor, if not of fortune, for the possessor.

After the jousting the Princess Mary asked me if I could yet give her an account of the stranger, and as I could not she went to the king.

I heard her inquire:

"Who was your companion, brother?"

"That is a secret, sister. You will find out soon enough and will be falling in love with him, no doubt. I have always looked upon you as full of trouble for me in that respect. You will not so much as glance at any one I choose for my son, but, I suppose, would be ready enough with your smiles for some one I should not want."

"Is the stranger one whom you would not want?" asked Mary, with a dimpling smile and a flash of her brown eyes.

"He most certainly is," returned the king.

"Then I will fall in love with him at once. In fact, I don't know but I have already."

"Oh, I have no doubt of that. If I wanted him, he might be Apollo himself, and you would have none of him." King Henry had been compelled to refuse several very advantageous alliances because this fair, coaxing, self-willed sister would not consent to be a part of the moving consideration.

"But can you not tell me who he is and what his degree?" went on Mary in a bantering tone.

"He has no degree. He is a plain, untitled soldier, not even a knight—that is, not an English knight. I think he has a German or Spanish order of some sort."

"Not a duke, not an earl, not even a baron or knight? Now he has become interesting."

"Yes, I suppose so. But don't bother me."

"Will he be at the dance and banquet tonight?"

"No! No! Now I must go. Don't bother me, I say!" And the king moved away.

That night we had a grand banquet and dance at Westminster, and the next day we all, excepting Lady Mary, went back to Greenwich by boat, paying a farthing a head for our fare. This was just after the law fixing the boat fare, and the watermen were a quarrelling lot, you may be sure. One farthing from Westminster to Greenwich! Eight miles. No wonder they were angry!

The next day I went back to London on an errand and over to Wolsey's house to borrow a book. While there Master Cavendish, Wolsey's secretary, presented me to the handsome stranger, and he proved to be no other than Charles Brandon, who had fought the terrible duel down in Suffolk. I could hardly believe that so mild mannered and boyish a person could have taken the leading part in such a tragedy. But with all his gentleness there was an underlying dash of cool daring which intimated plainly enough that he was not at all mildness.

We became friends at once, drawn together by that subtle human quality which makes one nature fit into another.



"Don't bother me, I say!"

er, resulting in friendship between men and love between men and women. We soon found that we had many tastes in common, chief among which was the strongest of all congenial bonds—the love of books. In fact, we had come to know each other through our common love of reading, for he also had gone to Master Cavendish, who had a fine library, to borrow some volumes to take with him down to Greenwich.

Brandon informed me he was to go to Greenwich that day; so we determined to see a little of London, which was new to him, and then take boat in time to be at the palace before dark.

That evening, upon arriving at Greenwich, we hunted up Brandon's uncle, the master of horse, who invited his nephew to stay with him for the night. He refused, however, and accepted an invitation to take a bed in my room.

The next day Brandon was installed as one of the captains of the king's guard, under his uncle, but with no particular duties except such as should be assigned him from time to time. He was offered a good room on one of the lower floors, but asked instead to be lodged in the attic next to me. So we arranged that each had a room opening into a third that served us alike for drawing room and armory.

Here we sat and talked, and now and then one would read aloud some favorite passage while the other kept his own place with finger between the leaves. Here we discussed everything from court scandal to religion, and settled, to our own satisfaction at least, many a great problem with which the foolish world is still wrestling.

We told each other all our secrets, too, for all the world like a pair of girls. Brandon told me of his hopes and aspirations, chief among which was his desire to earn and save enough money to pay the debt against his father's estate, which he had turned over to his younger brother and sisters. He, as the eldest, could have taken it all, for his father had died without a will, but he said there was not enough to divide, so he had given it to them and hoped to leave it clear of debt; then for new Spain, glory and fortune, conquest and yellow gold! He had read of the voyages of the great Columbus, the Cabots and a host of others, and the future was as rosy as a Cornish girl's cheek. Fortune held up her lips to him, but—there's often a sting in a kiss.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Not the Usual Result.

"How can you afford to give away these salt pickles with your meals?" asked the man who dined cheaply at the little German restaurant around the corner.

"Ah, but you forget they make the awful thirst," said the proprietor. "The awful thirst makes trade for the bar. Is it not the clever idea?"

"They certainly do make one thirsty," said the man at the table. "I feel those I've eaten already. Bring me!"

The proprietor's face was a study in expectancy.

"Bring me another glass of water!"

Stated a Fact.

A clergyman highly esteemed for his many excellent qualities, of which oratory is not one, has recently had placed in his church by his loving congregation a new pulpit. It is a fine piece of work, ornate with carving and artistic embellishment. But the text inscribed on it, considering the effect of the good rector's sermons, might have been more happily chosen. "He giveth his beloved sleep," it runs.