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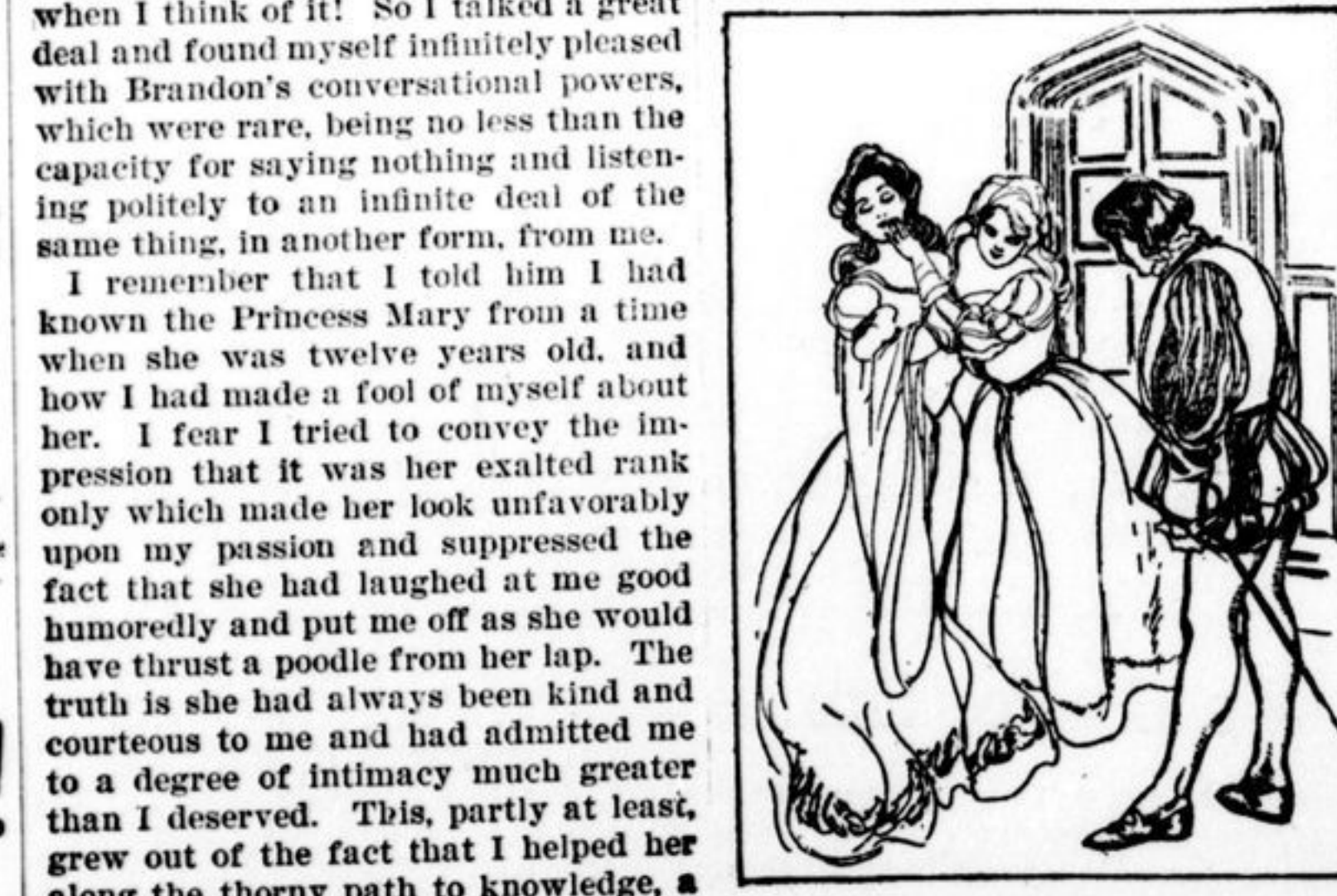
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WHEN KNIGHTHOOD WAS IN FLOWER
 Or, The Love Story of Charles Brandon and Mary Tudor, the King's Sister, and Happening in the Reign of His August Majesty King Henry the Eighth
 Rewritten and Rendered into Modern English From Sir Edwin Caskoden's Memoir
 By **EDWIN CASKODEN [CHARLES MAJOR]**
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CHAPTER III.
THE PRINCESS MARY.
NOW, at that time, Mary, the king's sister, was just ripening into her greatest womanly perfection. Her skin was like velvet, a rich, clear, rosy snow, with the hot young blood glowing through it like the faint red tinge we sometimes see on the inner side of a white rose leaf. Her hair was a very light brown, almost golden, and fluffy, soft and fine as a skein of Arras silk. She was of medium height, with a figure that Venus might have envied. Her feet and hands were small and apparently made for the sole purpose of driving mankind distracted. In fact, that seemed to be the paramount object in her creation, for she had the world of men at her feet. Her greatest beauty was her glowing dark brown eyes, which shone with an ever changing luster from beneath the shade of the longest, blackest upcurving lashes ever seen.
 Her voice was soft and full and, except when angry, which, alas, was not infrequent, had a low and coaxing little note that made it irresistible. She was a most adroit coxer and knew her power "well, although she did not always plead, having the Tudor temper and preferring to command—when she could. As before hinted, she had coaxed her royal brother out of several proposed marriages for her which would have been greatly to his advantage, and if you had only known Henry Tudor, with his vain, boisterous, stubborn violence, you could form some idea of Mary's powers by that achievement alone.
 Such was the royal maid to whose tender mercies, I now tell you frankly, my friend Brandon was soon to be turned over. He, however, was a blade of very different temper from any she had known, and when I first saw signs of a growing intimacy between them I felt, from what little I had seen of Brandon, that the tables were very likely to be turned upon her ladyship. Then thought I, "God help her," for in a nature like hers, charged with latent force, strong and hot and fiery as the sun's stored rays, it needed but a flash to make it patent when damage was sure to follow for somebody—probably Brandon.
 Mary did not come home with us from Westminster the morning after the joustings, as we had expected, but followed some four or five days later, and Brandon had fairly settled himself at court before her arrival. As neither his duties nor mine were onerous, we had a great deal of time on our hands, which we employed walking and riding or sitting in our common room reading and talking. Of course, as with most young men, that very attractive branch of natural history, woman, was a favorite topic, and we accordingly discussed it a great deal—that is, to tell the exact truth, I did. Although Brandon had seen many an adventure during his life on the continent which would not do to write down here, he was as little of a boaster as any man I ever met, and, while I am in the truth telling business, I was as great a braggart of my inches as ever drew the longbow—in that line, I mean. Gods, I flush up hot even now when I think of it! So I talked a great deal and found myself infinitely pleased with Brandon's conversational powers, which were rare, being no less than the capacity for saying nothing and listening politely to an infinite deal of the same thing, in another form, from me.
 I remember that I told him I had known the Princess Mary from a time when she was twelve years old, and how I had made a fool of myself about her. I fear I tried to convey the impression that it was her exalted rank only which made her look unfavorably upon my passion and suppressed the fact that she had laughed at me good humoredly and put me off as she would have thrust a poodle from her lap. The truth is she had always been kind and courteous to me and had admitted me to a degree of intimacy much greater than I deserved. This, partly at least, grew out of the fact that I helped her along the thorny path to knowledge, a road she traveled at an eager gallop, for she dearly loved to learn—from curiosity perhaps.
 I am sure she held me in her light, gentle heart as a dear friend; but, while her heart was filled with this mild warmth for me, mine began to burn with the flame that discolors everything, and I saw her friendliness in a very distorting light. She was much kinder to me than to most men, but I did not see that it was by reason of my absolute harmlessness, and, I suppose, because I was a vain fool I gradually began to gather hope—which goes with every vain man's love—and, what is more, actually climbed to the very apex of idiocy and declared myself: I well knew the infinite distance between us; but, like every other man who came within the circle of this charming loadstone, I lost my head and, in short, made a greater fool of myself than I naturally was, which is saying a good deal for that time in my life, God knows!
 I knew vaguely, but did not fairly realize, how utterly beyond my reach in every way she was until I opened the floodgates of my passion, as I thought it, and saw her smile and try to check

the coming laugh. Then came a look of offended dignity, followed by a quick, softening glance.
 "Leave me one friend, I pray you, Edwin. I value you too highly to lose, and esteem you too much to torment. Do not make of yourself one of those fools who feel, or pretend to feel, I care not which, such preference for me. You cannot know in what contempt a woman holds a man who follows her though she despises him. No man can beg a woman's love; he must command it. Do not join their ranks, but let us be good friends. I will tell you the plain truth. It would be no different were we both of the same degree. Even then I could not feel toward you as you think you wish, but I can be your friend and will promise to be that always if you will promise never again to speak of this to me."
 I promised solemnly and have always kept my word, as this true, gracious woman, so full of faults and beauties, virtues and failings, has ever since that day and moment kept hers. It seemed that my love, or what I supposed was love, left my heart at once, frozen in the cold glint of her eyes as she smiled upon my first avowal, somewhat as disease may leave the sickened body upon a great shock. And in its place came the restful flame of a friend's love, which so softly warms without burning. But the burning! There is nothing in life worth having compared with it for all its pains and agonies. Is there?
 "Now, if you must love somebody," continued the princess, "there is Lady Jane Bolingbroke, who is beautiful and good and admires you and, I think, could learn to— But here the lady in question ran out from behind the draperies, where, I believe, she had been listening to it all, and put her hand over her mistress' mouth to silence her.
 "Don't believe one word she says, Sir Edwin," cried Lady Jane. "If you do, I never will like you." The emphasis on the "will" held out such involuntary promise in case I did not believe the princess that I at once protested total want of faith in a single syllable she had said about her and vowed that I knew it could not be true; that I dared not hope for such happiness.
 You see, I had begun to make love to Jane almost before I was off my knees to Mary, and therefore I had not been much hurt in Mary's case. I had suffered merely a touch of the general epidemic, not the lingering, chronic disease that kills.
 Then I knew that the best cure for the sting which lies in a luckless love is to love elsewhere, and Jane, as she stood there, so petite, so blushing and so fair, struck me as quite the most pleasing antidote I could possibly find, so I began at once to administer to myself the delightful counter irritant. It was a happy thought for me, one of those which come to a man now and then and for which he thanks his wits in every hour of his after life.
 But the winning of Jane was not so easy a matter as my vanity had prompted me to think. I started with a handicap, since Jane had heard my declaration to Mary, and I had to undo all that before I could do anything else. Try the same thing yourself with a spirited girl, naturally laughter lov-



"Don't believe one word she says, Sir Edwin."
 ing and coy, if you think it a simple, easy undertaking. I began to fear I should need another antidote long before I heard her sweet soul-satisfying "yes." I do not believe, however, I could have found in the whole world an antidote to my love for Jane.
 In the course of my talk with Brandon I had, as I have said, told him the story of Mary, with some slight variations and coloring, or, rather, discoloring, to make it appear a little less to my discredit than the barefaced truth would have been. I told him also about Jane, and, I grieve and blush to say, expressed a confidence in that direction I little felt.
 It had been perhaps a year since my adventure with Mary, and I had taken all that time trying to convince Jane that I did not mean a word I had said to her mistress and that I was very earnest in everything I said to her. But Jane's ears would have heard just as much had they been the pair of beautiful little shells she so much resembled. This troubled me a great deal, and the best I could hope was that she held me on probation.

On the evening of the day Mary came home to Greenwich, Brandon asked: "Who and what on earth is this wonderful Mary I hear so much about? They say she is coming home today, and the court seems to have gone mad about it. I hear nothing but 'Mary is coming! Mary is coming! Mary! Mary!' from morning until night. They say Buckingham is beside himself for love of her. He has a wife at home, if I am right, and is old enough to be her father. Is he not?" I assented, and Brandon continued: "A man who will make such a fool of himself about a woman is woefully weak. The men of the court must be poor creatures."
 He had much to learn about the power of womanhood. There is nothing on earth—but you know as much about it as I do.
 "Wait until you see her," I answered, "and you will be one of them also. I flatter you by giving you one hour with her to be heels over head in love. With an ordinary man it takes one-sixtieth of that time. So you see I pay a compliment to your strength of mind."
 "Nonsense!" broke in Brandon. "Do you think I left all my wits down in Suffolk? Why, man, she is the sister of the king and is sought by kings and emperors. I might as well fall in love with a twinkling star. Then, besides, my heart is not on my sleeve. You must think me a fool—a poor, enervated, simpering fool like—like—well, like one of those nobles of England. Don't put me down with them, Caskoden, if you would remain my friend."
 We both laughed at this sort of talk, which was a little in advance of the time for a noble, though an idiot to the most of England was a noble still, God created and to be adored.
 Now, when Mary returned the whole court rejoiced, and I was anxious for Brandon to meet her and that they should become friends. There would be no trouble in bringing this meeting about, since, as you know, I was upon terms of intimate friendship with Mary and was the avowed and, as I thought, at least hoped, all but accepted lover of her first lady in waiting and dearest friend, Lady Jane Bolingbroke. Brandon, it is true, was not noble, not even an English knight, while I was both knighted and noble, but he was of an old family as England boasted and near of kin to some of the best blood of the land. The meeting came about sooner than I expected and was very near a failure. It was on the second morning after Mary's arrival at Greenwich, Brandon and I were walking in the palace park when we met Jane, and I took the opportunity to make these, my two best loved friends, acquainted.
 "How do you do, Master Brandon?" said Lady Jane, holding out her plump little hand, so white and soft and dear to me. "I have heard something of you the last day or so from Sir Edwin, but had begun to fear he was not going to give me the pleasure of knowing you. I hope I may see you often now and that I may present you to my mistress."
 With this her eyes, bright as overgrown dewdrops, twinkled with a mischievous little smile, as if to say, "Ah, another large handsome fellow to make a fool of himself."
 Brandon acquiesced in the wish she had made, and after the interchange of a few words Jane said her mistress was waiting at the other side of the grounds and that she must go. She then ran off with a laugh and a courtesy and was soon lost to sight behind the shrubbery at the turning of the walk.
 In a short time we came to a summer house near the marble boat landing, where we found the queen and some of her ladies awaiting the rest of their party for a trip down the river which had been planned the day before. Brandon was known to the queen and several of the ladies, although he had not been formally presented at an audience. Many of the king's friends enjoyed a considerable intimacy with the whole court without ever receiving the public stamp of recognition socially which goes with a formal presentation.
 The queen, seeing us, sent me off to bring the king. After I had gone she asked if any one had seen the Princess Mary, and Brandon told her Lady Jane had said she was at the other side of the grounds. Thereupon her majesty asked Brandon to find the princess and to say that she was wanted.
 Brandon started off and soon found a bevy of girls sitting on some benches under a spreading oak, weaving spring flowers. He had never seen the princess, so could not positively know her. As a matter of fact he did know her as soon as his eyes rested on her, for she could not be mistaken among a thousand. There was no one like her or anything near it. Some stubborn spirit of opposition, however, prompted him to pretend ignorance. All that he had heard of her wonderful power over men and the servile manner in which they fell before her had aroused in him a spirit of antagonism and had begotten a kind of distaste beforehand. He was wrong in this, because Mary was not a coquette in any sense of the word and did absolutely nothing to attract men except to be so beautiful, sweet and winning that they could not let her alone, for all of which surely the prince of fault finders himself could in no way blame her.
 She could not help that God had seen fit to make her the fairest being on earth, and the responsibility would have to lie where it belonged—with God. Mary would have none of it. Her attractiveness was not a matter of volition or intention on her part. She was too young for deliberate snare setting, though it often begins very early in life, and made no effort to attract men. Man's love was too cheap a thing for her to strive for, and I am sure in her heart she would infinitely have preferred to live without it—that is, until the right one should come. The right one is always on his way and, first or last, is sure to come to

every woman—sometimes, alas, too late—and when he comes, be it late or early, she crowns him, even though he be a long eared ass. Blessed crown, and thrice blessed blindness—else there were fewer coronations.
 So Brandon stirred this antagonism and determined not to see her manifold perfections, which he felt sure were exaggerated, but to treat her as he would the queen, who was black and leathery enough to frighten a satyr, with all respect due to her rank, but with his own opinion of her nevertheless safely stored away in the back of his head.
 Coming up to the group, Brandon took off his hat and, with a graceful little bow that let the curls fall around his face, asked, "Have I the honor to find the Princess Mary among these ladies?"
 Mary, who I know you will at once say was thoroughly spoiled, without turning her face toward him replied: "Is the Princess Mary a person of so little consequence about the court that she is not known to a mighty captain of the guard?"
 He wore his guardsman's doublet, and she knew his rank by his uniform. She had not noticed his face.
 Quick as a flash came the answer: "I cannot say of what consequence the Princess Mary is about the court. It is not my place to determine such matters. I am sure, however, she is not here, for I doubt not she would have given a gentler answer to a message from the queen. I shall continue my search." With this he turned to leave, and the ladies, including Jane, who was there and saw it all and told me of it, awaited the bolt they knew would come, for they saw the lightning gathering in Mary's eyes.
 Mary sprang to her feet with an angry flush in her face, exclaiming: "Insolent fellow, I am the Princess Mary. If you have a message, deliver it and be gone." You may be sure this sort of treatment was such as the cool headed, daring Brandon would repay with usury; so, turning upon his heel and almost presenting his back to Mary, he spoke to Lady Jane:
 "Will your ladyship say to her highness that her majesty the queen awaits her coming at the marble landing?"
 "No need to repeat the message, Jane," cried Mary. "I have ears and can hear for myself." Then, turning to Brandon, "If your insolence will permit you to receive a message from so insignificant a person as the king's sister, I beg you to say to the queen that I shall be with her presently."
 He did not turn his face toward Mary, but bowed again to Jane.
 "May I ask your ladyship further to say for me that if I have been guilty of any discourtesy I greatly regret it. My failure to recognize the Princess Mary grew out of my misfortune in never having been allowed to bask in the light of her countenance. I cannot believe the fault lies at my door, and I hope for her own sake that her highness on second thought will realize how ungentle and unkind some one else has been." And with a sweeping courtesy he walked quickly down the path.
 "The insolent wretch!" cried one.
 "He ought to hold papers on the pilory," said another.
 "Nothing of the sort," broke in sensible, fearless little Jane. "I think the Lady Mary was wrong. He could not have known her by inspiration."
 "Jane is right," exclaimed Mary, whose temper, if short, was also short lived and whose kindly heart always set her right if she but gave it a little time. Her faults were rather those of education than of nature. "Jane is right. It was what I deserved. I did not think when I spoke and did not really mean it as it sounded. He acted like a man and looked like one, too, when he defended himself. I warrant the pope at Rome could not run over him with impunity. For once I have found a real live man, full of manliness. I saw him in the lists at Windsor a week ago, but the king said his name was a secret, and I could not learn it. He seemed to know you, Jane. Who is he? Now tell us all you know. The queen can wait."
 And her majesty waited on a girl's curiosity.
 I had told Jane all I knew about Brandon, so she was prepared with full information and gave it. She told the princess who he was, of his terrible duel with Judson, his bravery and adventures in the wars, his generous gift to his brother and sisters, and, lastly, "Sir Edwin says he is the best read man in the court and the bravest, truest heart in Christendom."
 After Jane's account of Brandon they all started by a roundabout way for the marble landing. In a few moments whom did they see coming toward them down the path but Brandon, who had delivered his message and continued his walk. When he saw whom he was about to meet, he quickly turned in another direction. The Lady Mary had seen him, however, and told Jane to run forward and bring him to her. She soon overtook him and said:
 "Master Brandon, the princess wishes to see you," then maliciously: "You will suffer this time. I assure you she is not used to such treatment. It was glorious, though, to see you resent such an affront. Men usually smirk and smile foolishly and thank her when she smites them."
 Brandon was disinclined to return.
 "I am not in her highness' command," he answered, "and do not care to go back for a reprimand when I am in no way to blame."
 "Oh, but you must come. Perhaps she will not scold this time." And she put her hand upon his arm and laughingly drew him along. Brandon of course had to submit when led by so sweet a captor—anybody would. So fresh and fair and lovable was Jane that I am sure anything masculine must have given way.
 Coming up to the princess and her

ladies, who were waiting, Jane said, "Lady Mary, let me present Master Brandon, who, if he has offended in any way, humbly sues for pardon." That was the one thing Brandon had no notion on earth of doing, but he let it go as Jane had put it, and this was his reward:
 "It is not Master Brandon who should sue for pardon," responded the princess. "It is I who was wrong. I blush for what I did and said. Forgive me, sir, and let us start anew." At this she stepped up to Brandon and offered him her hand, which he, dropping to his knee, kissed most gallantly.
 "Your highness, you can well afford to offend when you have so sweet and gracious a talent for making amends. A wrong acknowledged, as some one



"Your highness, you can well afford to offend."
 has said, 'becomes an obligation.' He looked straight into the girl's eyes as he said this, and his gaze was altogether too strong for her, so the lashes fell. She flushed and said, with a smile that brought the dimples:
 "I thank you. That is a real compliment." Then laughingly: "Much better than extravagant comments on one's skin and eyes and hair. We are going to the queen at the marble landing. Will you walk with us, sir?" And they strolled away together, while the other girls followed in a whispering, laughing group.
 Was there ever so glorious a calm after such a storm?
 "Then those mythological compliments," continued Mary. "Don't you dislike them?"
 "I can't say that I have ever received many, none that I recall," replied Brandon, with a perfectly straight face, but with a smile trying its best to break out.
 "Oh, you have not? Well, how would you like to have somebody always telling you that Apollo was humpbacked and misshapen compared with you; that Endymion would have covered his face had he but seen yours, and so on?"
 "I don't know, but I think I should like it from some persons," he replied, looking ever so innocent.
 This savored of familiarity after so brief an acquaintance and caused the princess to glance up in slight surprise, but only for the instant, for his innocent look disarmed her.
 "I have a mind to see," she returned, laughing and throwing her head back as she looked up at him out of the corner of her lustrous eyes. "But I will pay you a better compliment. I positively thank you for the rebuke. I do many things like that, for which I am always sorry. Oh, you don't know how difficult it is to be a good princess!" And she shook her head with a gathering of little trouble wrinkles in her forehead, as much as to say, "There is no getting away from it, though." Then she breathed a soft little sigh of tribulation as they walked on.
 "I know it must be a task to be good when everybody flatters even one's shortcomings," said Brandon and then continued in a way that, I am free to confess, was something priggish: "It is almost impossible for us to see our own faults even when others are kind enough to point them out, for they are right ugly things and unpleasant to look upon. But, lacking those outside monitors, one must all the more cultivate the habit of constant inlooking and self examination. If we are only brave enough to confront our faults and look them in the face, ugly as they are, we shall be sure to overcome the worst of them. A striving toward good will achieve at least a part of it."
 "Oh!" returned the princess. "But what is good and what is wrong? So often we cannot tell them apart until we look back at what we have done, and then it is all too late. I truly wish to be good more than I desire anything else in the world. I am so ignorant and helpless and have such strong inclinations to do wrong that sometimes I seem to be almost all wrong. The priests say so much, but tell us so little. They talk about St. Peter and St. Paul and a host of other saints and holy fathers and what notes, but fail to tell us what we need every moment of our lives; that is, how to know the right when we see it, and how to do it; and how to know the wrong and how to avoid it. They ask us to believe so much and insist that faith is the sum of virtue and the lack of it the sum of sin, that to faith all things are added, but we might believe every syllable of their whole disturbing creed and then spoil it all through blind ignorance of what is right and what is wrong."
 "As to knowing right and wrong," replied Brandon, "I think I can give you a rule which, although it may not cover the whole ground, is excellent for everyday use. It is this, Whatever makes others unhappy is wrong, whatever makes the world happier is good. As to how we are always to do this I cannot tell you. One has to learn that by trying. We can but try, and if we fail altogether there is still virtue in every futile effort toward the right."