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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] Copyright, 1898 and 1901, by the Bowen-Merrill Company

CHAPTER IV.

A LESSON IN DANCING. LAUGHED heartily when Jane told me of the tilt between Brandon and Princess Mary, the latter of whom was in the habit of saying unkind things and being thanked for them.

Brandon was the wrong man to say them to, as Mary learned. He was not hot tempered—in fact, just the reverse -but he was the last man to brook an affront and the quickest to resent in a cool headed, dangerous way an intentional offense.

He respected himself and made others do the same, or seem to do so at least. He had no vanity, which is but an inordinate desire for those qualities that bring self respect and often the result of conscious demerit, but he knew himself and knew that he was entitled to his own good opinion. He was every inch a man, strong, intelligent and brave to temerity, with a reckless disregard of consequences, which might have been dangerous had it not been tempered by a dash of prudence and caution that gave him ballast.

I was not surprised when I heard of the encounter, for I knew enough of him to be sure that Mary's high handedness would meet its counterpart in my cool friend Brandon. It was, however, an unfortunate victory, and what all Mary's beauty and brightness would have failed to do her honest, open acknowledgment of wrong, following so quickly upon the heels of her fault, accomplished easily. It drew him within the circle of her fatal attractions, and when Jane told me of it I knew his fate was sealed and that sooner or later his untouched heart and cool head would fall victim to the shafts that so surely winged all others.

"later," since, as Brandon had said, he was not one of those who wear the



"I met your friend. Did he tell you?" heart upon the sleeve. Then he had that strong vein of prudence and cau tion which, in view of Mary's unattainableness, would probably come to his help. But never was man's heart strong enough to resist Mary Tudor's smile for long.

There was this difference between Brandon and most others—he would be slow to love, but when love should once fairly take root in his intense nature he would not do to trifle with.

The night after the meeting Mary cuddled up to Jane, who slept with her, and whispered, half bashfully:

"Tell me all about Brandon. I am interested in him. I believe if I knew more persons like him I should be a better girl, notwithstanding he is one of the boldest men I ever knew. He says anything he wishes and, with all his modest manner, is as cool with me as if I were a burgher's daughter. His modesty is all on the outside, but it is pretty, and pretty things must be on the outside to be useful. I wonder if Judson thought him modest."

Jane talked of Brandon to Mary, who was in an excellent humor, until the girls fell asleep.

When Jane told me of this, I became frightened, for the surest way to any Mr Charles McKinnon, and you make her better and arouse in her which was almost sure to happen, but for them to fall in love with each other meant Brandon's head upon the block and Mary's heart bruised, broken and empty for life. Her strong nature, filled to the brim with latent passion, was the stuff of which love makes a conflagration that burns to destruction, and should she learn to love Brandon she would move heaven and earth

to possess him. She whose every desire from childhood up had been gratified, whose every whim seemed to her a paramount necessity, would stop at nothing when the dearest wish a woman's heart can coin was to be gained or lost. Brandon's element of prudence might help him and might forestall any effort on his part to win her, but Mary had never heard of prudence, and man's caution avails but little when set against woman's daring. In case they both should love they were sure to try for each other and in trying were equally sure to find ruin and desola-

tion.

A few evenings after this I met the princess in the queen's drawing room. She beckoned me to her and, resting her elbows on the top of a cabinet, her chin in her hands, said: "I met your friend, Captain Brandon, a day or two ago. Did he tell you?"

"No," I answered. "Jane told me,

but he has not mentioned it." It was true Brandon had not said a word of the matter, and I had not spoken of it either. I wanted to see how long he would remain silent concerning an adventure that would have set most men of the court boasting at a great rate. To have a tilt with the ever victorious Mary and to come off him. victor was enough, I think, to loosen any tongue less given to bragging than Brandon's.

"So," continued Mary, evidently somewhat piqued, "he did not think his presentation to me a thing worth mentioning? We had a little passage at arms, and, to tell you the truth, I came off second best and had to acknowledge it too. Now, what do you think of this new friend of yours? And he did not I mumbled over some sort of a lame boast about having the better of me. After all, there is more virtue in his silence than I at first thought." And she threw back her head and clapped her hands and laughed with the most contagious little ripple you ever heard. She seemed not to grieve over her defeat, but dimpled as though it were a huge joke, the thought of which rather pleased her than otherwise. Victory had grown stale for her, although so

"What do I think of my new friend?" I repeated after her, and that gave me theme upon which I could enlarge eloquently. I told her of his learning, notwithstanding the fact that he had been in the continental wars ever since It might and probably would be he was a boy. I repeated to her stories of his daring and bravery that had been told to me by his uncle, the master of the horse, and others, and then I added what I knew Lady Jane had already said. I had expected to be brief, but to my surprise found a close and interested listener, even to the out a little, to the liking of us both.

"Your friend has an earnest advocate in you, Sir Edwin," said the princess. "That he has." I replied. "There is nothing too good to say of him."

I knew that Mary, with her better, the palm of her hand, so I thought to word.

nity occur."

tiently, for she kept an eye on things of humor. If quick to retaliate for an political, even if she were only a girl. intentional offense, he was not thin "The king has given away everything skinned at a piece of pleasantry, and that can be given already, and now had none of that stiff, sensitive dignity that the war is over and men are com- so troublesome to oneself and friends. ing home there are hundreds waiting Now, Jane and Mary were always for more. My father's great treasure is bantering me because I was short and squandered, to say nothing of the mon- inclined to be, in fact, round, but I ey collected from Empson, Dudley and did not care. It made them laugh, and the other commissioners. There is noth- their laughing was so contagious it ing to give unless it be the titles and made me laugh, too, and we all enestate of the late Duke of Suffolk. joyed it. I would give a pound sterling Perhaps the king will give these to any time for a good laugh, and that, I your paragon if you will paint him in think, is why I have always beenas fair a light as you have drawn him | round. for me." Then, throwing back her head, with a laugh, "Ask him."

"It would be none too much for his dies." deserts," I replied, falling in with her humor.

"We will so arrange it, then," went satuted him: on Mary banteringly. "Captain Brandon no longer, but Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk. How sounds it, Master Caskoden?"

"Sweet in my ears," I replied.

at least see that he is presented to the us all at our ease immediately. queen at once. I wonder if he dances. I suppose not. He has probably been upon-that time of life when one finds too busy cutting and thrusting." And his heaven in a ready laugh! she laughed again at her own pleas-

antry. When the mirth began to gather in only we four. No one knows a word of her face and the dimples came respon- it. Did you tell any one, Sir Edwin?" sive to her smiles, when she threw back her perfectly poised head, stretching her soft, white throat, so full and "But I know you did not. I've heard round and beautiful, half closing her how discreet you were about another big brown eyes till they shone again matter. Well, no one knows it, then, from beneath the shade of those long, and we can have a famous evening. black, sweeping lashes; when her red You did not expect this, Master Branlips parted, showing her teeth of pearl, don, after my reception of you the othand she gave the little clap of her er morning? Were you not surprised hands, a sort of climax to the soft, low, when Sir Edwin told you?" rippling laugh, she made a picture of such exquisite loveliness that it is no prepared not to be surprised at anywonder men were fools about her and thing your highness might graciously caught love as one catches a contagion. conclude to do-after my first experi-I had it once, as you already know, and ence," he answered, smiling. had recovered. All that prevented a "Indeed?" returned Mary, with eledaily relapse was my fair, sweet anti- vated eyebrows and a rising inflection dote, Jane, whose image rested in my on the last syllable of the word. It

heart, a lasting safeguard. "I wonder if your prodigy plays "Well, we'll try to find some way to cards-that is, such as we ladies play?" asked Mary. "You say he has lived much in France, where the game was surprises for him. Mary continued: invented, but I have no doubt he would scorn to waste his time at so day. Of what use are 'other days,' anyfrivolous a pursuit when he might be way? Before the evening is over, Masslaughtering armies single handed and ter Brandon, we want you to give us

"I do not know as to his dancing ting off three other laughs as hearty and card playing, but I dare venture and sincere as if she had uttered the a wager he does both," I replied, not rarest witticism on earth.

liking her tone of sarcasm. She had yet to learn who Brandon was.

"I will hazard ten crowns," said Mary quickly, for she loved a wager and was a born gambler.

"Taken," said I. "We will try him on both tomorrow night in my drawing room," she continued. "You bring him up, but tell no one. I will have Jane there with her lute, which will not frighten you away I know, and we will try his step. I will have cards, too, and we shall see what he can do at triumph. Just we four, no one else at all. You and Jane, the new Duke of Suffolk and I. Oh, I can hardly wait!" And she fairly danced with joyous anticipation.

The thing had enough irregularity to give it zest, for while Mary often had a few young people in her drawing room, the companies were never so small as two couples only, and the king and queen, to make up for greater faults, were wonderful sticklers in the matter of little proprieties.

The ten crown wager, too, gave spice to it, but to do her justice she cared very little for that. The princess loved gambling purely for gambling sake, and with her the next best thing to winning was losing.

When I went to my room that night, I awakened Brandon and told him of the distinguished honor that awaited

"Well, I'll be"- But he did not say what he would "be." He always halted before an oath, unless angry, which was seldom, but then beware. He had learned to swear in Flanders. "How she did fly at me the other morning! I never was more surprised in all my life. For once I was almost caught with my guard down and did not know how to parry the thrust. retaliation and beat a retreat. It was so unjust and uncalled for that it made me angry. But she was so gracious in her amends that I was almost glad it happened. I like a woman who can be as savage as the very devil when it pleases her. She usually has in store an assortment of possibilities for the other extreme."

"She told me of your encounter," I returned, "but said she had come off second best, and seemed to think her overthrow a huge joke."

"The man who learns to know what a woman thinks and feels will have a great deal of valuable information," he replied, and then turned over for sleep, greatly pleased that one woman thought as she did.

I was not sure he would be so highly flattered if he knew that he had been invited to settle a wager and to help Mary to a little sport.

As to the former, I had an interest there myself, although I dared not settle the question by asking Brandon if twice told parts, and drew my story he played cards and danced, and, as to the matter of Mary's sport, I felt there was but little if any danger of her having too much of it at his expense, Brandon being well able to care for himself in that respect.

The next evening at the appointed clearer brain, held the king almost in time we wended our way by an unfrequented route and presented ourselves advance Brandon's fortune by a timely as secretly as possible at the drawing room of the princess.

"I trust the king will see fit to favor | The door was opened by Lady Jane, him, and I hope that you will speak a and we met the two girls almost at the word in his behalf should the opportu- threshold. I had told Brandon of the bantering conversation about the title "What, in the name of heaven, have and estates of the late Duke of Suffolk, we to give him?" cried Mary impa- and he had laughed over it in the best

So, upon entering, I said: "His grace the Duke of Suffolk, la-

They each made a sweeping courtesy, with hand on breast, and gravely

"Your grace, good even." Brandon's bow was as deep and graceful, if that were possible, as theirs, and when he moved on into the room it was with a little halt in his "I really believe you would have the step and a big blowing out of the king's crown for him, you absurd man, cheeks in ludicrous imitation of his if you could get it. We must have so late lamented predecessor that sent the interesting a person at court. I shall girls into peals of soft laughter and put

Ah, what a thing it is to look back

"Be seated, all," said the princess. "This is to be without ceremony and

"Perish the thought!" I exclaimed. She turned her face toward Brandon,

"I think I can safely say that I was

was now her turn for a little surprise. surprise you one of these days." And the time came when she was full of "But let us not talk about the other another sermon." And she laughed, set-

The princess had told Jane and Jane had told me of the "Sermon in the Park," as Mary called it.

"Jane needs it as much as I," said the princess.

"I can't believe that," responded Brandon, looking at Jane with a softening glance quite too admiring and commendatory to suit me, for I was a

jealous little devil. The eyebrows went up again.

"Oh, you think she doesn't? Well, in truth, Master Brandon, there is one failing that cannot be laid at your door -you are no flatterer." For answer Brandon laughed, and that gave us the cue, and away we went in a rippling chorus, all about nothing. Some persons may call our laughter foolish, but there are others who consider it the height of all wisdom. St. George! I'd give my Garter for just one other laugh like that, for just one other hour of youth's dancing blood and glowing soul warmth, of sweet, unconscious, happy heart beat and paradise creating joy in everything!

After a few minutes of gay conversation, in which we all joined, Mary asked: "What shall we do? Will one of you suggest something?"

would have thought mischief could not live within a league of her, but those very demure girls are nearly always dangerous. She said, oh, so innocently: encircled her waist with his right arm.

"Would you like to dance? If so, I will play." And she reached for her away. This nettled Brandon a little. lute, which was by her side.

"Yes, that will be delightful. Master Brandon, will you dance with me?" you the new dance," he said. asked the princess, with a saucy little laugh, her invitation meaning so much danced that way," she replied, with a more to three of us than to Brandon. fluttering little laugh, looking up into Jane and I joined in the laugh, and his face with a half shy, half apologetwhen Mary clapped her hands that set ic manner and then dropping her lashes Brandon off, too, for he thought it the before his gaze. quaintest, prettiest little gesture in the world and was all unconscious that our Frenchman's shrug of the shoulders, laugh was at his expense.

Brandon did not answer Mary's invi- the floor. tation-the fit of laughter had probably put it out of his mind-so she, evidently anxious to win or lose her wager at around my-a lady's waist?" once, again asked him if he danced.

you!" And he was on his feet beside her chair in an instant ready for the dance. This time the girl's laugh, though equally merry, had another tone, for she knew she had lost.

Out they stepped upon the polished floor, he holding her hand in his, awaiting the pause in the music to take the step. I shall never forget the sight of those two standing there together-Mary, dark eyed and glowing; Brandon, almost rosy, with eyes that held the color of a dark spring sky and a wealth of flowing curls crowning his six feet of perfect manhood, strong and vigorous as a young lion. Mary, full of beauty curves and graces, a veritable Venus in her teens, and Brandon, an Apollo, with a touch of Hercules, were a complement each to the other that would surely make a perfect one.

When the music started, off they went, heel and toe, bow and courtesy. a step forward and a step back, in perfect time and rhythm-a poem of human motion. Could Brandon dance? The princess had her answer in the first ten steps. Nothing could be more graceful than Brandon's dancing un less it were Mary's. Her slightest movement was grace itself. When she would throw herself backward in thrusting out her toe and then swing forward with her head a little to one side, her uplifted arm undulating like the white neck of a swan-for her sleeve, which was slit to the shoulder. fell back and left it bare-she was a sight worth a long journey to see. And when she looked up to Brandon with a laugh in her brown eyes and a curving smile just parting her full, red lips that a man would give his very luck to -but I had better stop.

"Was there ever a goodlier couple? I asked Jane, by whose side I sat.

"Never," she responded as she played, and, strange to say, I was jealous because she agreed with me. I was jealous because I feared it was Brandon's beauty to which she referred. That I thought would naturally appeal to her. Had he been less handsome I should perhaps have thought nothing of it. but I knew what my feelings were toward Mary, and I judged, or rather misjudged, Jane by myself. I supposed she would think of Brandon as I could not help thinking of Mary. Was anything in heaven or earth ever so beautiful as that royal creature dancing there, daintily holding up her skirts with thumb and first finger, just far enough to show a distracting little foot and ankle and make one wish he had been born a sheep rather than a sentient man who had to live without Mary Tudor? Yet, strange as it may seem, I was really and wholly in love with Jane. In fact, I loved no one but Jane, and my feeling of intense admi-

man's composite inconstancy. A woman-God bless her!-if she real- He said good humoredly: "What! ly loves a man, has no thought of any Shall you have all the laugh in your other-one at a time is all sufficient- sleeve at my expense? Do you expect but a man may love one woman with to bring me here to win a wager for the warmth of a simoom and at the you made on the assumption of my same time feel like a good, healthy stupidity and lack of social accomsouth wind toward a dozen others. plishments and then complain when it That is the difference between a man comes my turn to laugh? I think I am and a woman-the difference between the one who should be offended, but the good and the bad. One average you see I am not." woman has enough goodness in her to supply an army of men.

Mary and Brandon went on dancing the wager. long after Jane was tired of playing. ed and smiled and bowed and courte-

sied, all in perfect time and grace. It is more difficult than you may think, if you have never tried, to keep up a conversation and dance La Galliard at the same time-one is apt to balk the other. But Brandon's dancing was as easy to him as walking, and, although so small a matter, I could see it raised him vastly in the estimation of both girls.

"Do you play triumph?" I heard Mary ask in the midst of the dancing.

"Oh, yes," replied Brandon, much to my delight, as the princess threw a mischievous, knowing glance over her shoulder to see if I had heard. She at once saw I had, and this, of course,

settled the wager. "And," continued Brandon, "I also play the new game, honor and ruff, which is more interesting than tri-

umph." "Oh, do you?" cried Mary. "That will more than compensate for the loss of my 10 crowns. Let us sit down at once. I have been wishing to learn, but no one here seems to know it. In France, they say, it is the only game. I suppose there is where you learned it. Perhaps you know their new dances too. I have heard they are delightful."

"Yes, I know them," replied Brandon. "Why. you are a perfect treasure! Teach me at once! How, now, master of the dance? Here is your friend outdoing you in your own line."

"I am glad to hear it," I returned. "If Lady Jane will kindly play some lively air written in the time of 'The Sailor Lass,' I will teach the Lady Mary the new dance," said Brandon.

Jane threw one plump little knee over the other and struck up "The Sailor Jane sat there looking so demure you Lass." After she had adjusted the playing to Brandon's suggestion he stepped deliberately in front of Mary and, taking her right hand in his left, The girl was startled at first and drew and he showed it plainly.

"I thought you wished me to teach

"I do, but-but I did not know it was

"Oh, well!" said Brandon, with a and then moved off as if about to leave

"But is that really the way you they dance it-with your-their arm

"I should not have dared venture up-

"Oh, pardon me! Of course! Thank on such a familiarity otherwise," an-



I thought you wished me to teach you the new dance."

swered Brandon, with a glimmer of a smile playing around his lips and hiding in his eyes.

Mary saw this shadowy smile and said: "Oh, I fear your modesty will cause you hurt. I am beginning to believe you would dare do anything you wish. I more than half suspect you are a very bold man, notwithstanding your smooth, modest manner."

"You do me foul wrong, I assure you. I am the soul of modesty, and grieve that you should think me bold," said Brandon, with a broadening smile.

Mary interrupted him. "Now, I do believe you are laughing at me-at my prudery, I suppose you think it."

Mary would rather have been called a fool than a prude, and I think she was right. Prudery is no more a sign of virtue than a wig is of hair. It is

usually put on to hide a bald place. The princess stood irresolute for a moment in evident hesitation and an-

"You are grieving because I think you bold. And yet you stand there laughing at me to my face. I think so more than ever now. I know it. Oh, you make me angry! Don't! I do not like persons who anger me and then laugh at me." This turned Brandon's smile into-a laugh, which he could not hold back.

Mary's eyes shot fire, and she stamped her foot, exciaiming: "Sir, this goes beyond all bounds! I will not tolerate your boldness another moment." I thought she was going to dismiss him, but she did not. The time had come when he or she must be the master.

It was a battle royal between the forces on the floor, and I enjoyed it and ration for Mary was but a part of felt that Brandon would come out all

right.

"Caskoden, did you tell him?" demanded Mary, evidently referring to

"He said not a word of it," broke in It was plain to see that the girl was Brandon, answering for me. "I should thoroughly enjoying it. They kept up have been a dullard indeed not to have a running fire of small talk and laugh- seen it myself after what you said about the loss of your 10 crowns. So let us cry quits and begin again."

Mary reluctantly struck her flag.

"Very well, I am willing," she said laughingly; "but, as to your boldness, I still insist upon that. I forgive you, however, this time." Then, half apologetically, "After all, it is not such a grievous charge to make. I believe it never yet injured any man with women. They rather like it, I am afraid, however angry it makes them. Don't they, Jane?"