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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 VIII.

THE TROUBLE IN BILLINGSGATE WARD.

ABOUT a week after Brandon's memorable interview with Mary an incident occurred which changed everything and came very near terminating his career in the flower of youth. It also brought about a situation of affairs that showed the difference in the quality of these two persons thrown so marvelously together from their far distant stations at each end of the ladder of fortune in a way that reflected very little credit upon the one from the upper end. But before I tell you of that I will relate briefly one or two other matters that had a bearing upon what was done and the motives prompting it.

To begin with, Brandon had kept himself entirely away from the princess ever since the afternoon at the king's antechamber. The first day or so she sighed, but thought little of his absence; then she wept and, as usual, began to grow piqued and irritable.

What was left of her judgment told her it was better for them to remain apart, but her longing to see Brandon grew stronger as the prospect of it grew less, and she became angry that it could not be gratified. Jane was right; an unsatisfied desire with Mary was torture. Even her sense of the great distance between them had begun to fade, and when she so wished for him and he did not come their positions seemed to be reversed. At the end of the third day she sent for him to come to her rooms, but he by a mighty effort sent back a brief note saying that he could not and ought not to go. This, of course, threw Mary into a great passion, for she judged him by herself, a very common but dangerous method of judgment, and thought that if he felt at all as she did he would

throw prudence to the winds and come to her, as she knew she would go to him if she could. It did not occur to her that Brandon knew himself well enough to be sure he would never go to New Spain if he allowed another grain of temptation to fall into the balance against him, but would remain in London to love hopelessly, to try to win a hopeless cause and end it all by placing his head upon the block.

It required all his strength even now to hold fast his determination to go to New Spain. He had reached his limit. He had a fund of that most useful of all wisdom, knowledge of self, and knew his limitations, a little matter concerning which nine men out of ten go all their lives in blissful ignorance.

Mary, who was no more given to self analysis than her pet linnet, did not appreciate Brandon's potent reasons and was in a flaming passion when she received his answer. Rage and humiliation completely smothered for the time her affection, and she said to herself over and over again: "I hate the lowborn wretch. Oh, to think what I have permitted!" It seemed only too clear that she had been too quick to give, no very comforting thought to a proud girl even though a mistaken one.

As the days went by and Brandon did not come her anger cooled as usual, and again her heart began to ache, but her sense of injury grew stronger day by day and she thought she was beyond a doubt the most ill used of women.

The negotiations for Mary's marriage with old Louis XII. of France were beginning to be an open secret about the court. The Duc de Longueville, who had been held by Henry for some time as a sort of hostage from the French king, had opened negotiations by inflaming the flickering passions of old Louis with descriptions of Mary's beauty. As there was a prospect of a new emperor soon and as the imperial bee had of late been making a most vehement buzzing in Henry's bonnet, he encouraged De Longueville and thought it would be a good time to purchase the help of France at the cost of his beautiful sister and a handsome dowry. Mary of course had not been consulted, and although she had coaxed her brother out of other marriage projects Henry had gone about this as if he were in earnest, and it was thought throughout the court that Mary's coaxings would be all in vain—a fear which she herself had begun to share, notwithstanding her usual self confidence.

She hated the thought of the marriage and dreaded it as she would death itself, though she said nothing to any one but Jane and was holding her forces in reserve for a grand attack. She was preparing the way by being very sweet and kind to Henry.

Now, all of this, coming upon the heels of her trouble with Brandon, made her most wretched indeed. For the first time in her life she began to feel suffering—that great broadener, in fact maker, of human character.

Above all, there was an alarming sense of uncertainty in everything. She could hardly bring herself to believe that Brandon would really go to New Spain and that she would actually lose him, although she did not want him as yet—that is, as a prospective husband. Flashes of all sorts of wild schemes had begun to shoot through her anger and grief when she stared in the face the prospect of her double separation from him, her marriage to another and

the countless miles of fathomless sea that would be between them. She could endure anything better than uncertainty. A menacing future is the keenest of all tortures for any of us to bear, but especially for a girl like Mary. Death itself is not so terrible as the fear of it.

Now, about this time there lived over in Billingsgate Ward, the worst part of London, a Jewish soothsayer named Grouche. He was also an astrologer and had of late grown into great fame as prophet of the future—a fortune teller.

His fame rested on several remarkable predictions which had been fulfilled to the letter, and I really think the man had some wonderful powers. They said he was half Jew, half gypsy, and, if there is alchemy in the mixing of blood, that combination should surely produce something peculiar. The city folk were said to have visited him in great numbers, and, notwithstanding the priests and bishops all condemned him as an imp of Satan and a follower of witchcraft, many fine people, including some court ladies, continued to go there by stealth in order to take a dangerous, inquisitive peep into the future.

Mary had long wanted to see this Grouche, at first out of mere curiosity, but Henry, who was very moral—with other people's consciences—would not think of permitting it. Two ladies, Lady Chesterfield and Lady Ormond, both good and virtuous women, had been detected in such a visit and had been disgraced and expelled from court in the most cruel manner by order of the king himself.

Now, added to Mary's old time desire to see Grouche, came a longing to know the outcome of the present momentous complication of affairs that touched her so closely.

She could not wait for Time to unfold himself and drop his budget of events as he traveled, but she must plunge ahead of him and know beforehand the stores of the fates, an intrusion they usually resent. I need not tell you that was Mary's only object in going, nor that her heart was as pure as a babe's, quite as chaste and almost as innocent. It is equally true that the large proportion of persons who visited Grouche made his soothsaying an expense. The thought of how wretched she would be with Louis had put into her mind the thought of how sweet it would be with Brandon. Then came the news that Brandon had been a prisoner in the great English noble's hands and had been leaped up, all rainbow

ated, the hope that he might yet, by reason of his own great virtues, rise to all of these and she become his wife. But at the threshold of this fair castle came knocking the thought that perhaps he did not care for her and had deceived her to gain her favors. Then she flushed with anger and swore to herself she hated him and hoped never to see his face again. And the castle faded and was wafted away to the realms of airy nothingness.

Ah, how people will sometimes lie to themselves, and sensible people at that! So Mary wanted to see Grouche, first, through curiosity, in itself a stronger motive than we give it credit for; second, to learn if she would be able to dissuade Henry from the French marriage and perhaps catch a hint how to do it, and last, but by no means least, to discover the state of Brandon's heart toward her.

By this time the last named motive was strong enough to draw her any whither, although she would not acknowledge it, even to herself, and in truth hardly knew it, so full are we of things we know not of.

So she determined to go to see Grouche secretly, and was confident she could arrange the visit in such a way that it would never be discovered.

One morning I met Jane, who told me with troubled face that she and Mary were going to London to make some purchases, would lodge at Bridewell House and go over to Billingsgate that evening to consult Grouche. Mary had taken the whim into her willful head, and Jane could not dissuade her.

The court was all at Greenwich, and nobody at Bridewell, so Mary thought they could disguise themselves as orange girls and easily make the trip without any one being the wiser.

It was then, as now, no safe matter for even a man to go unattended through the best parts of London after dark, to say nothing of Billingsgate, that nest of water rats and cutthroats. But Mary did not realize the full danger of the trip and would, as usual, allow nobody to tell her.

She had threatened Jane with all sorts of vengeance if she divulged her secret, and Jane was miserable enough between her fears on either hand, for Mary, though the younger, held her in complete subjection. Despite her fear of Mary, Jane asked me to go to London and follow them at a distance, unknown to the princess. I was to be on duty that night at a dance given in honor of the French envoys who had just arrived, bringing with them commission of special ambassador to De Longueville to negotiate the treaty of marriage, and it was impossible for me to go. Mary was going partly to avoid this ball, and her willful per-

sistency made Henry very angry. I regretted that I could not go, but I promised Jane I would send Brandon in my place, and he would answer the purpose of protection far better than I. I suggested that Brandon take with him a man, but Jane, who was in mortal fear of Mary, would not listen to it. So it was agreed that Brandon should meet Jane at a given place and learn the particulars, and this plan was carried out.

Brandon went up to London and saw Jane, and before the appointed time hid himself behind a hedge near the private gate through which the girls intended to take their departure from Bridewell.

They would leave about dusk and return, so Mary said, before it grew dark.

The citizens of London at that time paid very little attention to the law requiring them to hang out their lights, and when it was dark it was dark.

Scarcely was Brandon safely ensconced behind a clump of arbutus when whom should he see coming down the path toward the gate but his grace, the Duke of Buckingham. He was met by one of the Bridewell servants who was in attendance upon the princess.

"Yes, your grace, this is the gate," said the girl. "You can hide yourself and watch them as they go. They will pass out on this path. As I said, I do not know where they are going. I only overheard them say they would go out



"Yes, your grace, this is the gate." at this gate just before dark. I am sure they go on some errand of gallantry, which your grace will soon learn, I make no doubt."

He replied that he would take care of that.

Brandon did not see where Buckingham hid himself, but soon the two innocent adventurers came down the path attired in the short skirts and bonnets of orange girls and let themselves out at the gate. Buckingham followed them, and Brandon quickly followed him. The girls passed through a little postern in the wall opposite Bridewell House and walked rapidly up Fleet ditch, climbed Ludgate hill, passed Paul's church, turned toward the river down Bennett hill, to the left on Thames street, then on past the bridge,

following Lower Thames street to the neighborhood of Fish street hill, where they took an alley leading up toward East Cheap to Grouche's house.

It was a brave thing for the girl to do and showed the determined spirit that dwelt in her soft white breast. Aside from the real dangers, there was enough to deter any woman, I should think.

Jane went all the way over, but Mary never flinched.

There were great mudholes where one sank ankle deep, for no one paved the street at that time, strangely enough, preferring to pay the sixpence fine per square yard for leaving it undone. At one place, Brandon told me, a load of hay blocked the streets, compelling them to squeeze between the houses and the hay. He could hardly believe the girls had passed that way, as he had not always been able to keep them in view, but had sometimes to follow them by watching Buckingham. He, however, kept as close as possible and presently saw them turn down Grouche's alley and enter his house.

Upon learning where they had stopped, Buckingham hurriedly took himself off, and Brandon waited for the girls to come out. It seemed a very long time that they were in the wretched place, and darkness had well descended upon London when they emerged.

Mary soon noticed that a man was following them, and as she did not know who he was became greatly alarmed. The object of her journey had been accomplished now, so the spur of a strong motive to keep her courage up was lacking.

"Jane, some one is following us," she whispered.

"Yes," answered Jane, with an unconcern that surprised Mary, for she knew Jane was a coward from the top of her brown head to the tip of her little pink heels.

"Oh, if I had only taken your advice, Jane, and had never come to this wretched place! And to think, too, that I came here only to learn the worst! Shall we ever get home alive, do you think?" They hurried on, the man behind them taking less care to remain unseen than he did when coming. Mary's fears grew upon her as she heard his step and saw his form persistently following them, and she clutched Jane by the arm.

"It is all over with us, I know. I would give everything I have or ever expect to have on earth for Master Brandon at this moment." She thought of him as the one person best able to defend her.

This was only too welcome an opportunity, and Jane said: "That is Master Brandon following us. If we

wait a few seconds, he will be here." And she called to him before Mary could interpose.

Now this disclosure operated in two ways. Brandon's presence was, it is true, just what Mary had so ardently wished, but the danger and therefore the need was gone when she found that the man who was following them had no evil intent. Two thoughts quickly flashed through the girl's mind. She was angry with Brandon for having cheated her out of so many favors and for having slighted her love, as she had succeeded in convincing herself was the case, all of which Grouche had confirmed by telling her he was false. Then she had been discovered in doing what she knew she should have left undone and what she was anxious to conceal from every one, and, worst of all, had been discovered by the very person from whom she was most anxious to hide it.

So she turned upon Jane angrily: "Jane Bolingbroke, you shall leave me as soon as we get back to Greenwich for this betrayal of my confidence."

She was not afraid now that the danger was over, and feared no new danger with Brandon at hand to protect her, for in her heart she felt that to overcome a few fiery dragons and a company or so of giants would be a mere pastime to him. Yet see how she treated him. The girls had stopped when Jane called Brandon, and he was at once by their side with uncovered head, hoping for and of course expecting a warm welcome. But even Brandon, with his fund of worldly philosophy, had not learned not to put his trust in princesses, and his surprise was numbing when Mary turned angrily upon him.

"Master Brandon, your impudence in following us shall cost you dearly. We do not desire your company, and will thank you to leave us to our own affairs, as we wish you to attend exclusively to yours."

"This from the girl who had given him so much within less than a week! Poor Brandon!"

Jane, who had called him up and was the cause of his following them, began to weep.

"Sir," said she, "forgive me. It was not my fault. She had just said—Slap came Mary's hand on Jane's mouth, and Jane was marched off, weeping bitterly.

The girls had started up toward East Cheap when they left Grouche's, intending to go home by an upper route, and now they walked rapidly in that direction. Brandon continued to follow them, notwithstanding what Mary had said, and she thanked him and her God ever after that he did.

They had been walking not more than five minutes when, just as the girls turned a corner into a secluded little street, winding its way among the fish warehouses, four horsemen passed Brandon in evident pursuit of them. Brandon hurried forward, but before he reached the corner heard screams of fright and as he turned into the street distinctly saw that two of the men had dismounted and were trying to overtake the fleeing girls. Fright lent wings to their feet, and their short skirts affording freedom to their limbs, they were giving the pursuers a warm little race, screaming at every step to

the full limit of their voices. How they did run and scream! It was but a moment till Brandon came up with the pursuers, who, all unconscious that they in turn were pursued, did not expect an attack from the rear. The men remaining on horseback shouted an alarm to their comrades, but so intent were the latter in their pursuit that they did not hear. One of the men on foot fell dead, pierced through the back of the neck by Brandon's sword, before either was aware of his presence. The other turned, but was a corpse before he could cry out. The girls had stopped a short distance ahead, exhausted by their flight. Mary had stumbled and fallen, but had risen again, and both were now leaning against a wall, clinging to each other, a picture of abject terror. Brandon ran to the girls, but by the time he reached them the two men on horseback were there also, hacking away at him from their saddles. Brandon did his best to save himself from being cut to pieces and the girls from being trampled under foot by the prancing horses.

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One of the men on foot fell dead.

A narrow jutting of the wall, a foot or two in width, a sort of flying buttress, gave him a little advantage, and up into the slight shelter of the corner thus formed he thrust the girls and with his back to them faced his unequal foe with drawn sword. Fortunately the position allowed only one horseman to attack them. Two men on foot would have been less in each other's way and much more effective. The men, however, stuck to their horses, and one of them pressed the attack, striking at Brandon most viciously. It being dark and the distance deceptive, the horseman's sword at last struck the wall, a flash of sparks flying in its

trail, and lucky it was or this story would have ended here. Thereupon Brandon thrust his sword into the horse's throat, causing it to rear backward, plunging and lunging into the street, where it fell, holding its rider by the leg against the cobblestones of a little gutter.

A cry from the fallen horseman brought his companion to his side and gave Brandon an opportunity to escape with the girls. Of this he took advantage, you may be sure, for one of his mottoes was that the greatest fool in the world is he who does not early in life learn how and when to run.

In the light of the sparks from the sword stroke upon the wall, brief as it was, Brandon recognized the face of Buckingham, from which the mask had fallen. Of this he did not speak to any one till long afterward, and his silence was almost his undoing.

How often a word spoken or unspoken may have the very deuce in it either way!

The girls were nearly dead from fright, and in order to make any sort of progress Brandon had to carry the princess and help Jane until he thought they were out of danger. Jane soon recovered, but Mary did not seem anxious to walk and lay with her head upon Brandon's shoulder, apparently contented enough.

In a few minutes Jane said: "If you can walk now, my lady, I think you had better. We shall soon be near Fishmonger's hall, where some one is sure to be standing at this hour."

Mary said nothing in reply to Jane, but as Brandon fell a step or two behind at a narrow crossing whispered:

"Forgive me, forgive me. I will do any penance you ask. I am unworthy to speak your name. I owe you my life and more—and more a thousand times." At this she lifted her arm and placed her hand upon his cheek and neck. She then learned for the first time that he was wounded, and the tears came softly as she slipped from his arms to the ground. She walked beside him quietly for a little time, then, taking his hand in both hers, gently lifted it to her lips and laid it upon her breast. Half an hour afterward Brandon left the girls at Bridewell House, went over to the bridge where he had left his horse at a hostelry, and rode down to Greenwich.

So Mary had made her trip to Grouche's, but it was labor worse than lost. Grouche had told her nothing she wanted to know, though much that he supposed she would like to learn. He had told her that she had many lovers, a fact which her face and form would make easy enough to discover. He informed her also that she had a lowborn lover, and in order to put a little evil in with the good fortune and give what he said an air of truth he added to Mary's state of unrest more than he thought by telling her that her lowborn lover was false. He thought to flatter her by predicting that she would soon marry a very great prince or nobleman, the indications being in favor of the former, and in place of this making her happy she wished the wretched soothsayer in the bottomless pit—and all his prophecies; herself, too, for going to him. His guesses were pretty shrewd—that is, admitting he did not know who Mary was, which she at least supposed was the case; so Mary wept that night and moaned and moaned because she had gone to Grouche's. It had added infinitely to the pain of which her heart was already too full and made her thoroughly wretched and unhappy.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Odd Ship Model.

The museum of the Royal United Service Institution, in Whitehall, England, has a most ingeniously constructed model of a ship which was made by one of the Russian prisoners of the Crimean war entirely of tortoise shell and bone.

London's Workers.

But one person in eighty of the workers of London goes to church.

The Red Sea.

The Red sea is for the most part blue. It gets its name from the fact that portions of it are covered by minute animalcules which dye the surface of the water red where they float.

A Fish Hospital.

The public aquarium at New York has a hospital for sick fish. The most frequent fish trouble is fungus on the head or tail, shown by a red spot. Fish suffering thus are taken to a special pool of disinfected water and operated on with scissors.

Fried Mouse.

According to an old superstition, fried mouse is considered a specific for smallpox, while, on the other hand, to eat food which a mouse has nibbled is said to give a sore throat.

Pepys' Library.

Pepys' library at Magdalen college, Oxford, remains in the old presses mentioned in the diary as having been set up "to my most extraordinary satisfaction, so that I think it will be as noble a closet as any man hath." There are 3,000 volumes.

First to Climb Mont Blanc.

Jacques Balmat, a guide, was the first man to climb Mont Blanc. He climbed it in 1786 and by so doing won the prize offered by Horace de Saussure.

Where Drunkards Can't Marry.

In Waldeck, Germany, there is a law which prohibits the marriage of any individual who has the habit of overdrinking, and once identified with the habit an inebriate must produce sufficient proof of reformation to warrant his receiving a license at any future time.