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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 XXI.
 LETTERS FROM A QUEEN.
 UPON our return to England I left Jane down in Suffolk with her uncle, Lord Bolingbroke, having determined never to permit her to come within sight of King Henry again if I could prevent it. I then went up to London with the twofold purpose of seeing Brandon and resigning my place as master of the dance.

When I presented myself to the king and told him of my marriage, he flew into a great passion because we had not asked his consent. One of his whims was that every one must ask his permission to do anything—to eat or sleep or say one's prayers, especially to marry, if the lady was of a degree entitled to be a king's ward. Jane, fortunately, had no estate, the king's father having stolen it from her when she was an infant; so all the king could do about our marriage was to grumble, which I let him do to his heart's content.

"I wish also to thank your majesty for the thousand kindnesses you have shown me," I said, "and, although it grieves me to the heart to separate from you, circumstances compel me to tender my resignation as your master of dance." Upon this he was kind enough to express regret and ask me to reconsider, but I stood my ground firmly, and then ended my official relations with Henry Tudor forever.

Upon taking my leave of the king I sought Brandon, whom I found comfortably ensconced in our old quarters, he preferring them to much more pretentious apartments offered him in another part of the palace. The king had given him some new furnishings for them, and, as I was to remain a few days to attend to some matters of business, he invited me to share his comfort with him, and I gladly did so.

Those few days with Brandon were my farewell to individuality. Thereafter I was to be so mysteriously intermingled with Jane that I was only a part—and a small part at that. I fear—of two. I did not, of course, regret the change, since it was the one thing in life I most longed for, yet the period was tinged with a faint sentiment of pathos at parting from the old life that had been so kind to me and which I was leaving forever. I say I did not regret it, and, though I was leaving my old haunts and companions and friends so dear to me, I was finding them all again in Jane, who was friend as well as wife.

Mary's letter was in one of my boxes which had been delayed, and Jane was to forward it to me when it should come. When I told Brandon of it, I dealt with emphasis upon its bulk, and he, of course, was delighted and impatient to have it. I had put the

letter in the box, but there was something else which Mary had sent to him that I had carried with me. It was a sum of money sufficient to pay the debt against his father's estate and, in addition, to buy some large tracts of land adjoining. Brandon did not hesitate to accept the money and seemed glad that it had come from Mary, she, doubtless, being the only person from whom he would have taken it.

One of Brandon's sisters had married a rich merchant at Ipswich, and another was soon to marry a Scotch gentleman. The brother would probably never marry, so Brandon would eventually have to take charge of the estates. In fact, he afterward lived there many years, and, as Jane and I had purchased a little estate near by, which had been generously added to by Jane's uncle, we saw a great deal of him. But I am getting ahead of my story again.

The D'Angouleme complication troubled me greatly, notwithstanding my faith in Mary, and although I had resolved to say nothing to Brandon about it, I soon told him plainly what I thought and feared.

He replied with a low, contented little laugh.
 "Do not fear for Mary. I do not. That young fellow is of different stuff. I know, from the old king, but I have all faith in her purity and ability to take care of herself. Before she left she promised to be true to me, whatever befell, and I trust her entirely. I am not so unhappy by any means as one would expect. Am I? And I was compelled to admit that she certainly was not."

So it seems they had met, as Jane and I suspected, but how Mary managed it I am sure I cannot tell. She beat the very deuce for having her own way, by hook or by crook. Then came the bulky letter, which Brandon pounced upon and eagerly devoured. I leave out most of the sentimental passages, which, like effervescent wine, lose flavor quickly. She said, in part:

To Master Brandon:
 Sir and Dear Friend, Greeting—After leaving thee, long time had I that mighty grief and dole within my heart that it was like to break, for my separation from thee was so much harder to bear even than I had taken thought of, and I also doubted me that I could live in Paris, as I did wish. Sleep rested not upon my weary eyes, and of a very deed could I neither eat nor drink, since food distasted me like a nausea and wine did strangle in my throat. This lasted through my journey hither, which I did prolong upon many pretexts nearly two months, but

"Regina!" That was all. Only a queen! Surely no one could charge Brandon with possessing too modest tastes.
 It was, I think, during the second week in December that I gave this letter to Brandon, and about a fortnight later there came to him a messenger from Paris, bringing another from Mary, as follows:

Master Charles Brandon:
 Sir and Dear Friend, Greeting—I have but time to write that the king is so ill he cannot but die ere morning. Thou knowest that which I last wrote to thee, and in addition thereto I would say that although I have, as thou likewise knowest, my brother's permission to marry whom I wish, yet as I have his consent it is safer that we act upon that rather than be so scrupulous as to ask for another. So it were better that thou take me to the wife upon the old rather than risk the necessity of having to do it without any. I say no more, but come with all the speed thou knowest. MARY.

It is needless to say that Brandon started in haste for Paris. He left court for the ostensible purpose of paying me a visit, and came to Ipswich, whence we sailed.

The French king was dead before Mary's message reached London, and when we arrived at Paris Francis I. reigned on the throne of his father-in-law. I had guessed only too accurately. As soon as the restraint of the old king's presence, light as it had been, was removed, the young king opened his attack upon Mary in dreadful earnest. He begged and pleaded and swore his love, which was surely manifest enough, and within three days after the old king's death offered to divorce Claude and make Mary his queen. When she refused this flattering offer, his surprise was genuine.

"Do you know what you refuse?" he asked in a temper. "I offer to make you my wife—queen of 15,000,000 of the greatest subjects on earth—and are you such a fool as to refuse a gift like that, and a man like me for a husband?"

"That I am, your majesty, and with a good grace. I am queen of France without your help and care not so much as one penny for the honor. It is greater to be a princess of England. As for this love you avow, I would make so bold as to suggest that you have a good, true wife, to whom you would do well to give it all. To me it is nothing, even were you a thousand times the king you are. My heart is another's, and I have my brother's permission to marry him."

"Another's? God's soul! Tell me who this fellow is that I may spit him on my sword!"

"No, no! You would not. Even were you as valiant and grand as you think yourself, you would be but a child in his hands."

Francis was furious, and had Mary's apartments guarded to prevent her escape, swearing he would have his way. As soon as Brandon and I arrived in Paris we took private lodgings, and well it was that we did. I at once went out to reconnoiter, and found the widowed queen a prisoner in the old Palace des Tournelles. With the help of Queen Claude I secretly obtained an interview and learned the true state of affairs.

Had Brandon been recognized and his mission known in Paris he would certainly have been assassinated by order of Francis.

When I saw the whole situation, with Mary nothing less than a prisoner in the palace, I was ready to give up without a struggle, but not so Mary. Her brain was worth having, so fertile was it in expedients, and while I was ready to despair, she was only getting herself in good fighting order.

After Mary's refusal of Francis, and after he had learned that the sacrifice of Claude would not help him, he grew desperate and determined to keep the English girl in his court at any price and by any means. So he hit upon the scheme of marrying her to his weak-minded cousin, the Count of Savoy. To that end he sent a hurried embassy to Henry VIII., offering, in case of the Savoy marriage, to pay back Mary's dower of 400,000 crowns. He offered to help Henry in the matter of the imperial crown in case of Maximilian's death, a help much greater than any King Louis could have given. He also offered to confirm Henry in all his French possessions and to relinquish all claims of his own thereto—all as the price of one eighteen-year-old girl. Do you wonder she had an exalted estimate of her own value?

As to Henry, it of course need not be said that half the price offered would have bought him to break an oath made upon the true cross itself. The promise he had made to Mary, broken in intent before it was given, stood not for an instant in the way of the French king's wishes, and Henry, with a promptitude begotten of greed, was as hasty in sending an embassy to accept the offer as Francis had been to make it. It mattered not to him what new torture he put upon his sister. The price, I believe, was sufficient to have induced him to cut off her head with his own hands.

If Francis and Henry were quick in their movements, Mary was quicker. Her plan was made in the twinkling of an eye. Immediately upon seeing me at the palace she sent for Queen Claude, with whom she had become fast friends, and told her all she knew.



He fell upon his knee and kissed the hem of her gown.

Brandon and Mary caught sight of each other Queen Claude and I began to examine the shrines and decipher the Latin inscriptions. If these two had not married soon, they would have been the death of me. I was compelled at length to remind them that time was very precious just at that juncture, whereupon Mary, who was half laughing, half crying, lifted her hands to her hair and let it fall in all its lustrous wealth down over her shoulders. When Brandon saw this, he fell upon his knee and kissed the hem of her gown, and she, stooping over him, raised him to his feet and placed her hand in his.

Thus Mary was married to the man to save whose life she had four months before married the French king.

She and Queen Claude had forgotten nothing, and all arrangements were completed for the flight. A messenger had been dispatched two hours before with an order from Queen Claude that a ship should be waiting at Dieppe ready to sail immediately upon our arrival.

After the ceremony Claude quickly bowed up Mary's hair, and the queens departed from the chapel in their coach. We soon followed, meeting them again at St. Denis gate, where we found the best of horses and four sturdy men awaiting us. The messenger to Dieppe who had preceded us would arrange for relays, and, as Mary, according to her wont when she had another to rely upon, had taken the opportunity to become thoroughly frightened, no time was lost. We made these forty leagues in less than twenty-four hours from the time of starting, having paused only for a short rest at a little town near Rouen, which city we carefully passed around.

We had little fear of being overtaken at the rate we were riding, but Mary said she supposed the wind would die down for a month immediately upon our arrival at Dieppe. Fortunately no one pursued us, thanks to Queen Claude, who had spread the report that Mary was ill, and, fortunately also, much to Mary's surprise and delight, when we arrived at Dieppe, as fair a wind as a sailor's heart could wish was blowing right up the channel. It was a part of the system of relays—horses, ship and wind.

"When the very wind blows for our special use, we may surely dismiss fear," said Mary, laughing and clapping her hands, but nearly ready for tears notwithstanding.

The ship was a fine new one, well fitted to breast any sea, and, learning this, we at once agreed that upon landing in England Mary and I should go to London and win over the king, if possible. We felt some confidence in being able to do this, as we counted upon Wolsey's help, but in case of failure we still had our plan. Brandon was to take the ship to a certain island off the Suffolk coast and there await the period of a year if need be, as Mary might, in case of Henry's obstinacy, be detained, then revictual and remain the ship and out through the North sea for their former haven, New Spain.

In case of Henry's consent, how they were to live in a style fit for a princess Brandon did not know unless Henry should open his heart and provide for them, a doubtful contingency upon which they did not base much hope. At a pinch they might go down into Suffolk and live next to Jane and me on Brandon's estates. To this Mary readily agreed, and said it was what she wanted above all else.

There was one thing now in favor of the king's acquiescence. During the last three months Brandon had become very necessary to his amusement, and amusement was his greatest need and aim in life.

Mary and I went to London to see the king, having landed at Southampton for the purpose of throwing off the

scent any one who might seek the ship. The king was delighted to see his sister, and kissed her over and over again.

Mary had as hard a game to play as ever fell to the lot of woman, but she was equal to the emergency if any woman ever was. She did not give Henry the slightest hint that she knew anything of the Count of Savoy episode, but calmly assumed that of course her brother had meant literally what he said when he made the promise as to the second marriage.

The king soon asked: "But what are you doing here? They have hardly buried Louis as yet, have they?"
 "I am sure I do not know," answered Mary, "and I certainly care less. I married him only during his life and not for one moment afterward, so I came away and left them to bury him or keep him, as they choose; I care not which."

"But"—began Henry, when Mary interrupted him, saying, "I will tell you"—
 I had taken good care that Wolsey should be present at this interview. So we four—the king, Wolsey, Mary and myself—quietly stepped into a little alcove away from the others and prepared to listen to Mary's tale, which was told with all her dramatic eloquence and feminine persuasiveness. She told of the ignoble insults of Francis, of his vile proposals—insisted upon, almost to the point of force—carefully concealing, however, the offer to divorce Claude and make her queen, which proposition might have had its attractions for Henry. She told of her imprisonment in the Palace des Tournelles and of her deadly peril and many indignities, and the tale lost nothing in the telling. Then she finished by throwing her arms around Henry's neck in a passionate flood of tears and begging him to protect her, to save her, save her, save her, his little sister!

It was all such perfect acting that for the time I forgot it was acting, and a great lump swelled up in my throat. It was, however, only for the instant, and when Mary, whose face was hidden from all the others on Henry's breast, smiled slyly at me from the midst of her tears and sobs, I burst into a laugh that was like to have spoiled everything. Henry turned quickly upon me, and I tried to cover it by pretending that I was sobbing. Wolsey helped me out by putting a corner of his gown to his eyes, when Henry, seeing us all so affected, began to catch the fever and swell with indignation. He put Mary away from him and, striding up and down the room, exclaimed in a voice that all could hear: "The dog, the dog, to treat my sister so! My sister! My father's daughter! My sister! The first princess of England and queen of France for his mistress! By every god that ever breathed, I'll chastise this scurvy cur until he howls again. I swear it by my crown, if it cost me my kingdom," and so on until words failed him. But how he kept his oath, and see how he and Francis hobbled not long afterward at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

Henry came back to Mary and began to question her, when she repeated the story for him. Then it was she told of my timely arrival, and how, in order to escape and protect herself from Francis, she had been compelled to marry Brandon and live with us.

She said: "I so wanted to come home to England and be married where my dear brother could give me away, but I was in such mortal dread of Francis, and there was no other means of escape, so—"

"God's death! If I had but one other sister like you, I swear before heaven I'd have myself hanged. Married to Brandon! Fool! Idiot! What do you mean? Married to Brandon! Jesu! You'll drive me mad! Just one other like you in England, and the whole damned kingdom might sink. I'd have none of it. Married to Brandon without my consent!"

"No, no, brother," answered Mary softly, leaning affectionately against his bulky form. "Do you suppose I would do that? Now, don't be unkind to me when I have been away from you so long! You gave your consent four months ago. Do you not remember? You know I would never have done it otherwise."

"Yes, I know! You would not do anything—you did not want, and it seems equally certain that in the end you always manage to do everything you do want. Hell and furies!"

"Why, brother, I will leave it to my lord bishop of York if you did not promise me that day, in this very room and almost on this very spot, that if I would marry Louis of France I might marry whomsoever I wished when he should die. Of course you knew, after what I had said, whom I should choose, so I went to a little church in company with Queen Claude and took my hair down and married him, and I am his wife, and no power on earth can make it otherwise." And

she looked up into his face with a defiant little pout, as much as to say, "Now, what are you going to do about it?"

Henry looked at her in surprise and then burst out laughing, "Married to Brandon with your hair down?" And he roared again, holding his sides. "Well, you do beat the devil. There's no denying that. Poor old Louis! That was a good joke on him. I'll stake my crown he was glad to die! You kept it warm enough for him, I make no doubt."

"Well," said Mary, with a little shrug of her shoulders, "he would marry me."
 "Yes, and now poor Brandon doesn't know the trouble ahead of him either. He has my pity, by Jove!"

"Oh, that is different," returned Mary, and her eyes burned softly, and her whole person fairly radiated, so expressive was she of the fact that "it was different."
 Different? Yes, as light from darkness; as love from loathing; as heaven