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THE CARDINAL'S EYE.

By Robert Sauber.

FROM THE HARMSWORTH MAGAZINE.

The Queen dismissed her ladies for the night and walked across the room to the window which looked on the courtyard.

As she threw it open the sounds of music and revelry floated in from the ballroom she had just left. Ann Boleyn—for it was she—sank down on a deep seat in the window recess and looked at the scene in the courtyard.

A throng of grooms with their masters horses, coaches for the fair ladies, men-at-arms leaning on their halberds, made picturesque groups in the light of the torches and horn-lanterns. The Queen had left the ball earlier than usual, for her pleasure had been spoiled and she wanted to be alone to realize what she had heard.

Yet, as she listened to the music, she even wished she had stopped for another half-hour in that brilliant scene; she would never see the like again—at least in England, and as a Queen. No wonder she wished to be alone now. She had disregarded all her friends' warnings until tonight, and at last, to her horror, had discovered the ghastly truth—that the King was only seeking an excuse to get rid of her.

Even more than that she knew now. One of her ladies who had just left the room had whispered to her that the King was going to have her arrested at the Greenwich tournament on the morrow. Everyone knew what that would mean.

No doubt some good pretext would be fit upon to satisfy the people, but the whole of England knew that no pretext was really necessary—that the mere presence of Sir Henry Norris in London was enough cause for the King's anger. He had even been at the ball that night, though he had not been able to speak to the Queen.

At his request she had led him to a corner where they would be undisturbed, and had there learnt that plans had been made for her escape to the French coast that very night. Norris was to be her rescuer, and the attempt was to be made at three o'clock. The Ambassador, from long habit, had turned his sentences so diplomatically that at first the Queen had not grasped their meaning.

However, when she understood what this meant for her, she inclined to remonstrate at so much haste. Here she was, enjoying herself in the gaieties of the Court, surrounded by her admirers, and at perfect liberty to come and go when she would, yet she was told that she must be ready in an hour's time to be smuggled out of England.

She had not realized the danger until the Ambassador, on the way back to the ballroom, had said, "Tomorrow will be too late. Madame will be ready at three o'clock tonight, is it not so?" adding, as an afterthought, as he took his leave, "To save her fair neck."

So, when Mistress Royston told her of the Greenwich Tournament on the morrow, she understood why they should be anxious to carry her off tonight.

But now the music had ended. The company was dispersing, and the rumbling of coaches and shouts of the torch-bearers were growing less frequent each minute.

She started from her seat by the window and gave a quick glance round the room. There was no one there, and yet she thought she had heard a sound during the lull in the clatter of the courtyard. Of late her nerves had not been so strong as heretofore, for she had been told that the King was having her watched, and she was always on the look-out for her hidden enemies. As the time drew near she put out her lights and looked out of the window. The courtyard was deserted.

Even the two sentries who usually stood beneath her windows were not there. The plot must have been well arranged. A glimmer of light came into the room from a lantern in the courtyard, enough to make the long rows of portraits look more ghastly than ever.

She shuddered as she glanced round at these sinister-looking gentlemen, who seemed to be watching her out of their frames.

She hated them all—kings and councillors—and most of all the one in the red robe; it was the portrait of the Cardinal Archbishop of York, her old enemy Wolsey, whom she had finally defeated, though he had cheated the block by dying on his way to London. In the half-light she could almost fancy that his squinting eye—for the right one had a cast in it—was gleaming defiance at her.

The light from the courtyard lantern went out suddenly. She guessed that her friends had arrived.

There was a soft scraping on the wall below her window as the ladder was put in position, and soon she heard the muffled tread of someone climbing the rungs.

She drew back into the shadow by the side of the window.

The summer night was still bright enough to make the pictures on the opposite wall visible. From her crouching position she looked round once more on the room which she would never see again, and, as she waited

for her rescuer to appear against the light, her eyes rested on the picture of the Archbishop, who for ten years was the uncrowned King of England.

Though at each moment she expected to see her lover's head appear at the window, she could not take her eyes away from the picture. There was something in the expression of the face that she had not noticed before. The look of vengeance was deepened, the eyes gleamed more maliciously and seemed more lifelike than ever as they looked at her.

Then she heard Norris' voice in a whisper, and she knew that his head had already appeared above the sill. Even then she could not take her eyes away from the picture.

Suddenly she became conscious that the Cardinal was no longer looking at her, but at the window above her.

She had to bite her lips to prevent herself from shrieking. The ghastly truth dawned upon her, and in a moment she regained her self-possession and turned round towards Norris, who was standing on the ladder.

"Quick," he said, "there is no time to be lost. The barge is waiting at the steps, and the guard may be changed at any moment."

He took hold of her arm to help her out. "No," she whispered, "you must come in first. We are being watched. Come and look at the picture of the Cardinal."

Then she raised her voice a little. "Welcome to my gloomy apartment, dear Henry. I fear it has but a cheerless aspect; but you have well chosen the time, and we can talk without being disturbed."

She took his hand as he alighted inside the room, and gently placed it on his sword, pressing his fingers round the hilt.

"Now you must come and see my treasures that I brought with me from Paris. The light is not good, but you can at least examine that eseritoire standing there underneath the picture of our good Lord Archbishop," pointing to the picture of Wolsey which hung above a writing-desk. "It is a very fine specimen of the modern French work, though ill-matched with our clumsy English furniture. I confess that your carved oak and polished iron have no charms for me. But the King will not abide what it pleases his Majesty to call French gew-gaws."

While saying this she had been leading Sir Henry round the room, and they had arrived now at the eseritoire.

They bent their heads down to examine the inlay work. The Queen began pulling out the drawers, and whispered in Norris' ear—

"Do you see him?"

"Yes."

Norris edged up closer. The bottom of the Cardinal's picture was on a level with his shoulders.

"The Queen stepped back and whispered, 'Kill him!'"

In an instant Norris' sword was out, and before she had time to turn her head away he had plunged it into the picture of the red Cardinal.

There was a choking sound, the canvas bulged and fell forward, followed by the body of a man dressed in the uniform of the guard. It fell on to the eseritoire and rolled with a heavy thud on to the floor.

Norris wrenched his sword free, for it had been twisted out of his hand in the fall, and hastened with the Queen towards the window, leaving the dead soldier huddled up on the canvas of the Cardinal's picture.

Jumping on to the window-ledge, he was about to help the Queen up when he saw to his dismay that the ladder was gone and their escape cut off.

Worse still, he could hear low voices underneath the window. Evidently they thought they had caught him, and were waiting for him to try to make his escape by the passages. He listened, but did not dare to look down at them. They were arguing about what should be done.

"I tell you that we must wait for him, whoever it is. One of the men is posted in the niche behind the picture, and he has orders to shoot anyone who comes into the Queen's rooms after midnight. He is sure to see him when it gets light and he tries to pass down the staircase; we will wait here in case he lets himself down by a cord. Besides, there are men posted in the passage, and they won't let him pass. Do you think it's Norris, George?"

"Well, I saw him in the yard, sir, when I was off duty. He was wearing dark blue satin and was carrying a dark cloak."

By this time Sir Henry had heard enough to satisfy him that it was no good thinking of escape by the window. For a moment he thought that it might be possible to fight his way out by the little staircase.

Then an idea occurred to him.

What if he changed his clothes with the soldier? He must get out of the place without being discovered, for it meant death to the Queen if they found him there.

He turned toward her. She was sitting in a high-backed chair gazing with horror at the gaping recess laid open by the Cardinal's picture.

Norris followed the direction of her eyes, expecting to see some new danger, and walk-

ed up to see whether there was any opening at the back.

Climbing on to the eseritoire, he soon convinced himself that there was a roughly shaped tunnel through which a draught of fresh air was coming. He could feel some steps, and came to the conclusion that the tunnel led into the courtyard, or at least to the outside of the palace.

Then he told the Queen his plans. She was crying softly, and begged him to take the body away.

The light was growing at each moment, and it revealed the ghastliness of the scene. The Queen shuddered as she looked at the dead soldier, the blood oozing through his clenched teeth, and a thin, dark streak creeping across the floor. Norris was preparing to carry out his plan of escape, and asked Anne to say good-bye to him and go to her bedroom. She did not move for a few moments. Then she said:—

"We are safe here for a little while. What does it matter now if they do find us? I know that I have not many weeks to live, and even they will be spent in the Tower. Your chance of escaping from here will be the same in an hour's time, and I shall never see you again then. Let us be happy for an hour. Only—throw that thing out of the window."

"Not yet. I shall have to use it to help my escape. If I stay he will have to stay too."

So the two men stayed in the Queen's room till it was broad daylight, and sounds were heard in the lower part of the palace. Then the Queen said that she would have to go, and bade him farewell, holding out her hand to be kissed.

Continued on 7th page.

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