

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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(CONTINUED).

"I cannot do," Lady Mary. When I mentioned your name the other day, he said he would curse me if I ever spoke it again in his hearing."

"Is it so bad as that?" Then, meditatively: "And at his trial he did not tell the reason for the killing? Would not compromise me, who had served him so ill, even to save his own life? Noble, noble!" And her lips went together as she rose to her feet. No tears now; nothing but glowing, determined womanhood.

"Then I will go to him wherever he may be. He shall forgive me, no matter what my fault."

Soon after this we were on our way to London at a brisk gallop.

We were all very silent, but at one time Mary spoke up from the midst of a reverie: "During the moment when I thought Master Brandon had been executed—when you said it was too late—

it seemed that I was born again and all made over; that I was changed in the very texture of my nature by the shock, as they say the grain of the iron cannon is sometimes changed by too violent an explosion." And this proved to be true in some respects.

We rode on rapidly and did not stop in London except to give the horses drink.

After crossing the bridge Mary said, half to Jane and half to herself, "I will never marry the French king—never." Mary was but a girl pitted against a body of brutal men, two of them rulers of the two greatest nations on earth—rather heavy odds for one woman.

We rode down to Greenwich and entered the palace without exciting comment, as the princess was in the habit of coming and going at will.

The king and queen and most of the courtiers were in London at Bridewell House and Baynard's castle, where Henry was vigorously pushing the loan of 500,000 crowns for Mary's dower, the only business of state in which at that time he took any active interest. Subsequently, as you know, he became interested in the divorce laws and the various methods whereby a man, especially a king, might rid himself of a distasteful wife, and after he saw the truth in Anne Boleyn's eyes he adopted a combined policy of church and state craft that has brought us a deal of senseless trouble ever since and is like to keep it up.

As to Mary's dower, Henry was to pay Louis only 400,000 crowns, but he made the marriage an excuse for an extra 100,000 to be devoted to his own private use.

When we arrived at the palace the girls went to their apartments and I to mine, where I found Brandon reading. There was only one window to our common room—a dormer window set into the roof and reached by a little passage as broad as the window itself and perhaps a yard and a half

long. In the alcove thus formed was a bench along the wall, cushioned by Brandon's great campaign cloak. In this window we often sat and read, and here was Brandon with his book. I had intended to tell him the girls were coming, for when Mary asked me if I thought he would come to her at the palace, and when I had again said no, she reiterated her intention of going to him at once; but my courage failed me and I did not speak of it.

I knew that Mary ought not to come to our room, and that if news of it should reach the king's ears there would be more and worse trouble than ever, and as usual Brandon would pay the penalty for all. Then again, if it were discovered it might seriously compromise both Mary and Jane, as the world is full of people who would rather say and believe an evil thing of another than to say their prayers or to believe the holy creed.

I had said as much to the Lady Mary when she expressed her determination to go to Brandon. She had been in the wrong so much of late that she was humbled, and I was brave enough to say whatever I felt, but she said she had thought it all over, and as every one was away from Greenwich it would not be found out if done secretly.

She told Jane she need not go; that she, Mary, did not want to take any risk of compromising her.

Jane would have gone, though, had she known that all her fair name would go with her. She was right, you see, when she told me while riding over to Windsor that should Mary's love blossom into a full blown passion she would wreck everything and everybody, including herself perhaps, to attain the object of so great a desire.

It looked now as if she were on the highroad to that end. Nothing short of chains and fetters could have kept her from going to Brandon that evening. There was an inherent force about her that was irresistible and swept everything before it.

In our garret she was to meet another will, stronger and infinitely better controlled than her own, and I did not know how it would all turn out.

CHAPTER XII. ATONEMENT.

I HAD not been long in the room when a knock at the door announced the girls. I admitted them, and Mary walked to the middle of the floor. It was just growing dark, and the room was quite dim, save at the window where Brandon sat reading. Gods, those were exciting moments! My heart beat like a woman's. Brandon saw the girls when they entered, but never so much as looked up from his book. You must remember he had a great grievance. Jane and I had remained near the door, and poor Mary was a pitiable princess, standing there so full of doubt in the middle of the room. After a moment she stepped toward the window and, with quick coming breath, stopped at the threshold of the little passage.

"Master Brandon, I have come, not to make excuses, for nothing can excuse me, but to tell you how it all happened—by trusting to another."

Brandon arose and, marking the place in his book with his finger, followed Mary, who had stepped backward into the room.

"Your highness is very gracious and kind thus to honor me, but as our ways will hereafter lie as far apart as the world is broad, I think it would have been far better had you refrained from so imprudent a visit, especially as anything one so exalted as yourself may have to say can be no affair of such as I—one just free of the hangman's noose."

"Oh, don't, I pray you! Let me tell you, and it may make a difference. It must pain you, I know, to think of me as you do, after—after—you know; after what has passed between us."

"Yes, that only makes it all the harder. If you could give your kisses"—and she blushed red as blood—"to one for whom you care so little that you could leave him to die like a dog, when a word from you would have saved him, what reason have I to suppose they are not for every man?"

This gave Mary an opening of which she was quick enough to take advantage, for Brandon was in the wrong.

"You know that is not true. You are not honest with me nor with yourself, and that is not like you. You know that



Anxious thoughts sometimes perplex the wife who sees maternity before her. If she is treading an untried path, she sometimes frets herself into a nervous condition which is injurious and prostrating. If motherhood has already been a painful experience she is apt to shrink from the coming trial and by her very mental anxiety increase the possibility of her suffering.

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no other man ever had, or could have, any favor from me, even the slightest. Wantonness is not among my thousand faults. It is not that which angers you. You are sure enough of me in that respect. In truth, I had almost come to believe you were too sure, that I had grown cheap in your eyes, and you did not care so much as I thought and hoped for what I had to give, for after that day you came not near me at all. I know it was the part of wisdom and prudence that you should remain away, but had you cared as much as I your prudence would not have held you."

She hung her head a moment in silence, then, looking at him, almost ready for tears, continued: "A man has no right to speak in that way of a woman whose little favors he has taken, and make her regret that she has given a gift only that it may recoil upon her. 'Little,' did I say? Sir, do you know what that—first—kiss was to me? Had I possessed all the crowns of all the earth I would have given them to you as willingly. Now you know the value I placed on it, however worthless it was to you. Yet I was a cheerful giver of that gift, was I not? And can you find it in your heart to make of it a shame to me—that of which I was so proud?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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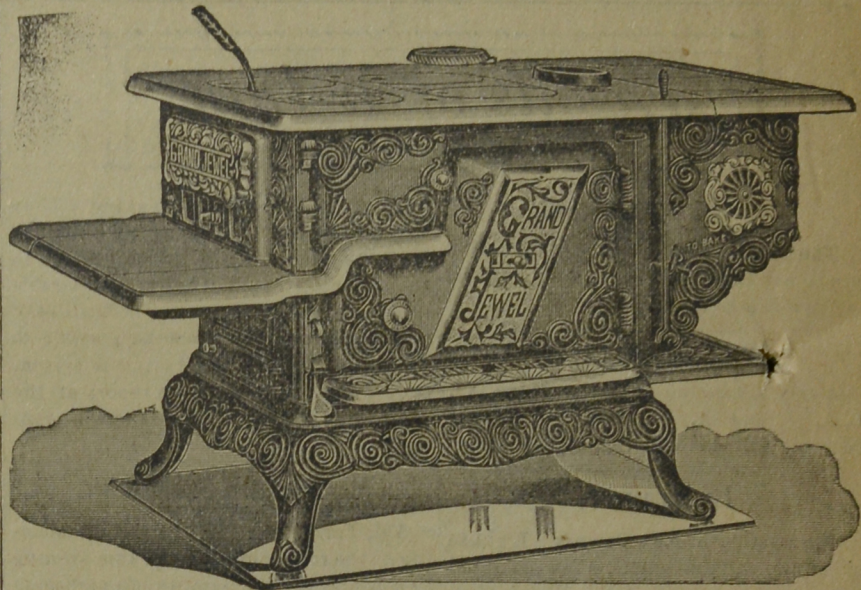
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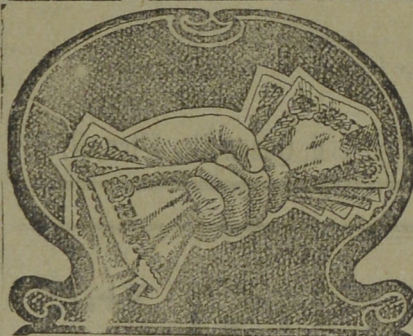
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