

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 have been thinking and have made up my mind what I will do, and you shall not dissuade me. I will go to New Spain with you. That will be glorious—far better than the hum-drum life of sitting at home—and will solve the whole question."

"But that would be impossible, Mary," said Brandon, into whose face this new evidence of her regard had brought a brightening look; "utterly impossible. To begin with, no woman could stand the voyage, not even you, strong and vigorous as you are."

"Oh, yes I can, and I will not allow you to stop me for that reason. I could bear any hardship better than the torture of the last few weeks. In truth, I cannot bear this at all. It is killing me; so what would it be when you are gone and I am the wife of Louis? Think of that, Charles Brandon; think of that, when I am the wife of Louis. Even if the voyage kills me, I might as well die one way as another, and then I would be with you, where it were sweet to die." And I had to sit there and listen to all this foolish talk!

Brandon insisted: "But no women are going. As I told you, they would not take one. Besides, how could you escape? I will answer the first ques-

tion you ever asked me. You are of sufficient consideration about the court for all your movements to attract notice. It is impossible. We must not think of it. It cannot be done. Why build up hopes only to be cast down?"

"Oh, but it can be done. Never doubt it. I will go, not as a woman, but as a man. I have planned all the details while sitting here. Tomorrow I will

send to Bristol a sum of money asking a separate room in the ship for a young nobleman who wishes to go to New Spain incognito, and will go aboard just before they sail. I will buy a man's complete outfit and will practice being a man before you and Sir Edwin." Here she blushed so that I could see the scarlet even in the gathering gloom. She continued: "As to my escape, I can go to Windsor, and then perhaps on to Berkeley castle, over by Reading, where there will be no one to watch me. You can leave at once, and there will be no cause for them to spy upon me when you are gone, so it can be done easily enough. That is it. I will go to my sister, who is now at Berkeley castle, the other side of Reading, you know, and that will make a shorter ride to Bristol when we start."

The thought, of course, could not but please Brandon, to whom, in the warmth of Mary's ardor, it had almost begun to offer hope, and he said musingly: "I wonder if it could be done? If it could—if we could reach New Spain, we might build ourselves a home in the beautiful green mountains and hide ourselves safely away from all the world, in the lap of some cozy valley, rich with nature's bounteous gift of fruit and flowers, shaded from the hot sun and sheltered from the blasts, and live in a little paradise all our own. What a glorious dream, but it is only a dream, and we had better awake from it!"

Brandon must have been insane. "No, no! It is not a dream," interrupted downright determined Mary.

"It is not a dream. It shall be a reality. How glorious it will be! I can see our little house now nestling among the hills, shaded by great spreading trees, with flowers and vines and golden fruit all about it, rich plumaged birds and gorgeous butterflies. Oh, I can hardly wait! Who would live in a musty palace when one has within reach such a home, and that, too, with you?"

Here it was again. I thought that interview would be the death of me.

Brandon held his face in his hands and then, looking up, said: "It is only a question of your happiness, and, hard as the voyage and your life over there would be, yet I believe it would be better than life with Louis of France. Nothing could be so terrible as that to both of us. If you wish to go, I will try to take you, though I die in the

attempt. There will be ample time to reconsider, so that you can turn back if you wish."

Her reply was inarticulate, though satisfactory, and she took his hand in hers as the tears ran gently down her cheeks, this time tears of joy, the first she had shed for many a day.

In the Siren country again without wax! Overboard and lost!

Yes, Brandon's resolution not to see Mary was well taken, if it could only have been as well kept. Observe as we progress into what the breaking of it led him.

He had known that if he should but see her once more his already tottering

will would lose its equipoise, and he would be led to attempt the impossible and invite destruction. At first this scheme appeared to me in its true light, but Mary's subtle feminine logic made it seem such plain and easy sailing that I soon began to draw enthusiasm from her exhaustless store, and our combined attack upon Brandon eventually routed every vestige of caution and common sense that even he had left.

Siren logic has always been irresistible and will continue so no doubt despite experience.

I cannot define what it was about Mary that made her little speeches,

half argumentative, all pleading, so wonderfully persuasive. Her facts were mere fancies, and her logic was not even good sophistry. As to real argument and reasoning, there was nothing of either in them. It must have been her native strength of character and intensely vigorous personality—some unknown force of nature operating through her occultly—that turned the channels of other persons' thoughts and filled them with her own will. There was magic in her power, I am certain, but unconscious magic to Mary. I am equally sure. She never would have used it knowingly.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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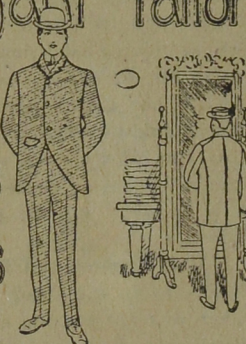
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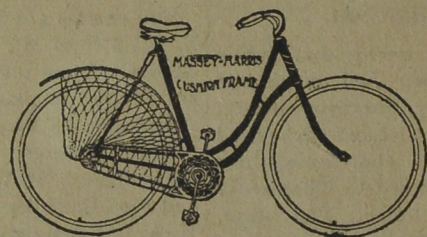
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