

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.)

She stood there, with head inclined a little to one side, looking at him inquiringly as if awaiting an answer. He did not speak, but looked steadily at his book. I felt, however, that he was changing, and I was sure her beauty, never more exquisite than in its present humility, would yet atone for even so great a fault as hers. Err, look beautiful and receive remission! Such a woman as Mary carries her indulgence in her face.

I now began to realize for the first time the wondrous power of this girl, and ceased to marvel that she had always been able to turn even the king, the most violent, stubborn man on earth, to her own wishes. Her manner made her words eloquent, and already, with true feminine tactics, she had put Brandon in the wrong in everything because he was wrong in part.

Then she quickly went over what she had said to me. She told of her great dread lest the king should learn of the visit to Grouche's and its fatal consequences, knowing full well it would render Henry impervious to her influence and precipitate the French marriage. She told him of how she was going to the king the day after the arrest to ask his release, and of the meeting with Buckingham, and his promise.

Still Brandon said nothing and stood as if politely waiting for her to withdraw.

She remained silent a little time, waiting for him to speak, when tears, partly of vexation, I think, moistened her eyes.

"Tell me at least," she said, "that you know I speak the truth. I have always believed in you, and now I ask for your faith. I would not lie to you in the faintest shading of a thought—not for heaven itself—not even for your love and forgiveness, much as they are to me, and I want to know that you are sure of my truthfulness, if you doubt all else. You see I speak plainly of what your love is to me, for although by remaining away you made me fear I had been too lavish with my favors—that is every woman's fear—I knew in my heart you loved me; that you could not have done and said what you did otherwise. Now you see what faith I have in you, and you a man, whom a woman's instinct prompts to doubt. How does it compare with your faith in me, a woman, whom all the instincts of a manly nature should dispose to trust? It seems to be an unwritten law that a man may lie to a woman concerning the most important thing in life to her and be proud of it, but you see even now I have all faith in your love for me, else I surely should not be here. You see I trust even your unspoken word, when it might, without much blame to you, be a spoken lie; yet you do not trust me, who have no world-given right to speak

railely about such things, and when that which I now do is full of shame for me, and what I have done full of guilt, if inspired by aught but the purest truth from my heart of hearts. Your words mean so much—so much more, I think, than you realize—and are so cruel in turning to evil the highest, purest impulse a woman can feel—the glowing pride in self surrender and the sweet, delightful privilege of giving where she loves. How can you? How can you?"

How eloquent she was! It seemed to me this would have melted the frozen sea, but I think Brandon felt that now his only hope lay in the safeguard of his constantly upheld indignation.

When he spoke he ignored all she had said.

"You did well to employ my Lord of Buckingham. It will make matters more interesting when I tell you it was he who attacked you and was caught by the leg under his wounded horse; he was lame, I am told, for some time afterward. I had watched him following you from the gate at Bridewell and at once recognized him when his mask fell off during the fight by the wall. You have done well at every step, I see."

"Oh, God; to think of it! Had I but known! Buckingham shall pay for this with his head; but how could I know? I was but a poor, distracted girl, sure to make some fatal error. I was in such agony—your wounds—believe me, I suffered more from them than you could. Every pain you felt was a pang for me—and then that awful marriage! I was being sold like a wretched slave

to that old satyr, to be gloated over and feasted upon. No man can know the horror of that thought to a woman—to any woman, good or bad. To have one's beauty turn to curse her and make her desirable only—only as well fed cattle are prized. No matter how great the manifestation of such so called love, it all the more repels a woman and adds to her loathing day by day. Then there was something worse than all"—she was almost weeping now—"I might have been able to bear the thought even of that hideous marriage—others have lived through the like—but after—that—that day—when you—it seemed that your touch was a spark dropped into a heart full of tinder, which had been lying there awaiting it all these years. In that one moment the flame grew so intense I could not withstand it. My throat ached; I could scarcely breathe, and it seemed that my heart would burst." Here the tears gushed forth as she took a step toward him with outstretched arms and said between sobs: "I wanted you, you, for my husband—for my husband, and I could not bear the torturing thought of losing you or enduring any other man. I could not give you up after that—it was all too

RUN DOWN.

When a phrase is coined out of world wide human experience it is apt to be brief and expressive. We are "run-down" we say in the endeavor to describe a relaxed physical condition, and all the terminology of medicine could not more expressively describe the actual condition than that every day phrase. It suggests the clock, perfect mechanically, but failing to record the passage of time because it is run-down.

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late, too late; it had gone too far. I was lost, lost!"

He sprang to where she stood leaning toward him and caught her to his breast.

She held him from her while she said: "Now you know—now you know that I would not have left you in that terrible place had I known it. No, not if it had taken my life to buy your freedom."

"I do know; I do know. Be sure of that. I know it and shall know it always, whatever happens; nothing can change me. I will never doubt you again. It is my turn to ask forgiveness now."

"No, no. Just forgive me. That is all I ask." And her head was on his breast.

"Let us step out into the passageway, Edwin," said Jane, and we did. There were times when Jane seemed to be inspired.

When we went back into the room, Mary and Brandon were sitting in the window-way on his great cloak. They rose and came to us, holding each other's hands, and Mary asked, looking up to him:

"Shall we tell them?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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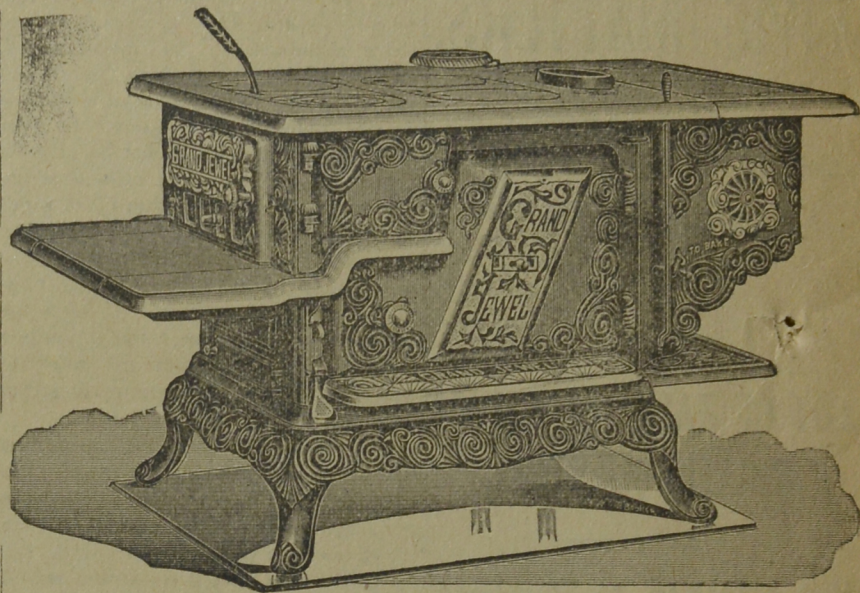
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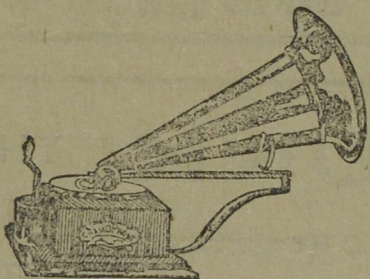
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