

Chapter I.

A Princess is Born.

On the morning of December 28th, 1635, the few citizens of London that were abroad in Smoothfield** hugged themselves in their cloaks for protection against the bitter north wind. A small private coach was drawn up in the ~~open~~ close of St. Bartholomew's, and the coachman, seated on the open box, from time to time hooked up the horse's reins that he might flap his arms across his chest in an endeavour to keep himself warm while waiting. A West countryman of cheerful disposition, he broke out into a 14th century carol :-

"Masters in this Hall,
Hear ye news to-day,
Brought from over-sea
And ever you I pray.
Noel, Noel, Noel,
Noel sing we loud,
God to-day poor folk hath raised
And cast a-down the proud!"

The coachman's singing drew upon him the attentions of a passer-by. This was a lanky man, garbed all in sombre black, his hair close-cropped, wearing a tall steeple-hat with wide brim, pointed shoes, and a cloak wrapped closely about him. In Puritan fashion, he had a text embroidered on his cloak, and despite its folds, its presence was obvious.

The Puritan grimly addressed the caroller thus :-

"Hearken, ye singer of profane songs! Repent ye, ere it be too late, and ye fall with all other Malignants into the burning pit!"

"Oh, zo you be one o' they zour fellows, be you, that miscalls loyal Churchfolk, and would not have 'un me-ak merry even on holy day?"

To this the Puritan hissed:

"I hate, I despise your feast days. I will not smell in your solemn assemblies!"

"Oh, be that it?" replied the coachman, good humouredly. "Zo you woul'n't be a-keepin' Childermas to-day?"

** Now Smithfield.

"Away with it, away, and with all the rest of your Popery, fellow! And away too, with that great idol-house here, and all your other idol-houses!"

^w "Be it popery now", asked the coachman, "to mind ussen o' the little innocents that zuffered when our Lord Christ He were born? There weren't nothing popish about my old Mother don Nunney way. Like all good religious mothers, she did used to whip we youngsters out o' bed come Childermas morn, to put we in mind o' what they infants zuffered for our Zaviour".

high ^ As he spoke, a fop, his finery largely obscured by his wrapped cloak, but showing his two ribbon-tied lovelocks falling over it, his tall narrow-brimmed hat embellished with long feathers on one side, and many hued ribbons bunched on the other, and square-toed boots with low lace-befrilled tops, sauntered by, long cane in hand. Not far behind him, having emerged from the Priory close, came a clerk in Holy Orders, canonically dressed in cassock, master's gown, tippet, and square cap. [Attracted by the controversy in progress, the fop came to a halt alongside the Puritan, and probing with his cane the folds of the man's cloak, he mischievously ejaculated as he read aloud the words of the text thus disclosed:

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"'The wicked shall be turned into hell'. Ah, I see! So you've labelled yourself with your destination, fellow!" and laughing, minced off.

Wholly taken aback, the Puritan yet managed to splutter after him:

"Godless son of Belial - mock not one of the Elect!"

Just then, the priest, who had come up and overheard the encounter between the fop and the Puritan, admonished the latter.

"My friend, you seem well up in the Old Testament. Let me counsel you rather to study the New, and bear in mind what our Lord said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged"."

Now red in the face with rage at thus being countered, the Puritan could only snarl:

"Avaunt thee, thou priest of Baal! The livery of the man of sin that thou wearest; and his badge of the square cap are an offence unto mine eyes! May Jehovah make a clean sweep of all of your like, and of all your popish abominations".

Realising he had an ally in the coachman, by reason of his chuckles, the rector of St. Bartholomew's, Dr. Westfield, looked up at him with a twinkling eye, as, again, he addressed the Puritan, and said:

l / "Then it's to be hoped you keep in good health, my friend, for should anything ail you seriously, where would you betake yourself? Not to this house of healing, I trow. Nay, for it was founded by the good Rahere, who was, in very truth, a priest who did acknowledge the Pope, and was a monk to boot!"

Now completely at a loss for any retort, the Puritan turned on his heel and hastily made off. Laughing merrily, the coachman addressed the priest.

"If I may me-ak zo bold, Raverund Measter, it did me good to 'ear ye. There's too many o' they gloomy fellows about Lunnion town, to my mind. We bain't greatly troubled wi' they down Zummerzset way".

The priest sighed.

"You are indeed fortunate, my friend, for the turbulence of these self-righteous and intolerant fellows threatens the peace of the Kingdom. Good day to you, and God be with you".

So saying, the Rector walked away, as the snow which had threatened all day at last began to fall. Shortly after his departure, a lady and gentleman came out of St. Bartholomew's, and made for the coach. He was very different both in dress and mien from the foppish roisterer who had preceded them. This cavalier was grave and dignified of bearing, handsomely, but far from extravagantly, dressed. Long locks fell loosely on either side of his low-crowned, broad-brimmed beaver hat, round which an ostrich feather curled. His square-toed boots of soft leather reached to his knee before the tops turned over. His wife also was richly attired: cloaked in a long mantle reaching to the ground, her head closely hooded and her hands encased in a muff against the cold.

After the cavalier had handed her into the coach, he addressed the coachman before following her inside.

"My poor Dickon, I fear you have had a very cold wait".

"It would have bin, Squire", replied Dickon, touching his hat, "but one o' they Puritan rascals warmed me wi' the flames o' hell a-comin' out o' the text 'e wore! I'm glad we're not troubled by the like o' they home along to Zummerzset. They sim to be fair swarmin' 'ere in Lunnion town".

"Alas, I fear you speak only too truly", replied the cavalier as, after telling the coachman to drive home, he joined his wife in the coach, and Dickon whipped up his horse through the increasing fall of snow.

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situated in what was

The snow lay thick upon the ground that night when, about ten of the clock, Queen Henrietta Maria gave birth to her second daughter in St. James' Palace, in those days accounted a suburb of London, for it was in the country. When the birth of the new little Princess was proclaimed, people shook their heads, finding an ill-omen in the fact that she was born on the Holy Innocents' Day.

A few days later, therefore, they were not surprised to hear that, so sickly was the royal infant, that Dr. Laud, His Grace of Canterbury, had been summoned to the Palace by King Charles, always devout and exact in his religious duties, to christen the child privately, lest she die unbaptised. And so it fell out that on January 2nd, 1636, the little Princess was received into the congregation of Christ's flock, and given the name of Elizabeth, after the King's beloved sister, the "Queen of Hearts", the "Winter Queen" of Bohemia.

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King Charles, a scholar, and with musical and pronounced artistic tastes, was a very reserved man, and slow of thought. He had a few strong personal attachments, all too often to men who proved themselves utterly unworthy of his confidence in them. But his conception of loyalty forbade him to tolerate any criticism of them; and, as it was his misfortune to have few worthy of his trust, either as ministers or friends, he suffered accordingly from disastrous service, as in the case of the Duke of Buckingham, or from such traitors as the Earl of Holland and the Duke of Hamilton. On the other hand, such was the effect of personal contact with him, that he won over the Marquis of Montrose from his support of the Covenant with its hypocritical pretence of upholding the King, to become, in

actual fact, a whole-hearted supporter and his Lieutenant in Scotland.

But the outstanding characteristics of the King were his detestation of Romanism, shared by Laud and Wentworth, and his unswerving attachment to the Church, in whose doctrine he was deeply versed, and which he unreservedly accepted. And in his private life he was pure, strict, and devout.

His marriage with the young French Princess, Henrietta Maria, proved to be that ideal union which so often opposites achieve. Though light-hearted and gay, she was a devoted wife and mother, and a militant Roman Catholic, ~~but~~ she should not be blamed for being as attached to her religion as Charles was to his. Nevertheless, his marriage proved fatal to the King: with Henrietta beside him, he was doomed from the outset, and that apart from the fact that her religion alienated his subjects from him. For she was an even more pernicious councillor than Buckingham, cared nothing for England, and was constantly engaged in the most foolish intrigues, again and again playing innocently but disastrously into the hands of traitors, such as Lady Carlisle, by repeating her husband's confidences, to his undoing. Such were the parents of the little Elizabeth, and it will be seen that she was her Father's, rather than her Mother's child.
