

Chapter IIDays of Infancy.

The little Elizabeth, whose advent was greeted by a wealth of verse, remained at St. James' for a few months. But that summer the Plague appeared in London, so that she, with her brothers - Charles not yet 5, and James 2 years old, and their sister Mary, a little over 3 - were all taken by the Countess of Roxburgh, under whose care they were, to the Palace of Richmond, or Shene.

It was in this palace, (the Saxon name of which means "resplendent"), that Queen Elizabeth had died. In those days it was entirely out in the country. Now its only remaining fragment, on the present Richmond Green, is the old stone gateway of the Wardrobe Court. The palace had been granted in 1617 to Charles, when Prince of Wales, and when he became King and married, he settled it on his Queen, as part of her dowry, adding to its grounds the New Deer - the present Richmond - Park. The Thames front of the palace presented a long line of irregular buildings with projecting towers crowned by ill-shaped turrets, but within, everything was handsome, and there was a large collection of pictures.

In this year of 1636, the King and Queen with their train arrived at the palace one evening, long after their children were in bed. The little ones had been sent to Shene a few days in advance with their governess. The Royal pair were to be entertained that night by the young Queen's favourite amusement, a masque, which the Lord Buckhurst and Edward Sackville, afterwards Earl of Dorset, were to perform before them.

What a stir there had been in the palace days beforehand to make preparation for this event under the superintendence of the great master, Inigo Jones! Directed by him, a proscenium had been erected at one end of the great hall, behind which Sir William Davenant's masque was to be performed. It was Inigo, too, who devised not only the scenic background but the costumes. From the first, the King had made it an absolute rule that in these masques nothing should offend against a chaste decorum, but that all should be in conformity with that seemliness and dignity which distinguished his Court. Therefore, he had been greatly incensed by the publication of the Puritan, William Prynne's, Histriomastix - "The Player's Scourge", for its scurrilous abuse of the Queen. Pure and sober as the Court was, the Puritans never ceased to rail

against the "idolatrours" Queen as well as all others of the "ungodly", (including the King), who delighted in these graceful and joyous performances.

During their stay at Richmond, Charles and Mary had played happily in the old Deer Park attached to the Palace, with his favourite dog, Rex, a collie, little James keeping his infant sister company in the nursery. Early in the morning following the masque, the Countess told the children that after their parents had breakfasted, they would be ~~go~~ ^{taken} coming to see them, whereupon little Charles cheered, and Princess Mary clapped her hands gleefully.

"Your tire-women will dress you in tidier clothes than those in which you play about", she intimated, then continued: "Mind, Prince Charles, that you do not spoil your dress, for you are none too careful of your clothes".

"I will look after him, dear Lady Roxy", piped Mary, who adored her brothers, and was already deeply in love with her baby sister.

While the children were eagerly awaiting ~~the coming~~ ^{meet} ~~of their~~ parents, Charles called to his dog: ^{with}

"Now Rex, I hope you will die properly for His Majesty, as I have taught you to do. Come here, there's a good dog, and let me see if you remember".

The collie came bounding along and bounced up to him.

"Down, down!" commanded the small Prince, and the dog obeyed.

"Now then, Rex, die for the King".

The dog crouched down on the ground with his fore paws outstretched, and looked up at his master.

"No, no, that's not dying for the King: that's worshipping me", and so saying, Charles knelt beside the dog and pushed his head over on one side.

"Now, then you finish off dying properly", admonished the Prince, and obediently the collie rolled over on his side and closed his eyes.

"Good Rex!" exclaimed Charles, "you lie like that till I get a biscuit for you. But mind, when His Majesty comes, you'll just die for him, without any biscuit. But the King will be very pleased, and is sure to pat you, so that will be a royal reward".

The boys, and particularly Charles, did not like being dressed in good clothes of which they had to be careful, but each had been coaxed by their tactful dressers into submitting patiently. Charles was robed in a long silk frock, embroidered with silver braid and lace, having a broad lace collar and cuffs, and a little lace cap on his head. Mary was very proud of her white silken dress, a miniature of that worn by her Mother, open at her throat round which she wore a string of pearls. Her little ringlets, also a copy of the Queen's, were finished off by a sprig of flowers at one side. The baby James was made ready for his parents' reception by being dressed, too, in a long silk frock, with a little cap, like that of his brother, set upon his head.**

When a page came to announce that their parents had finished breakfast, they were taken down to one of the royal reception rooms of the Palace; the collie following at the heels of his master. Charles was so excited at the prospect of seeing his parents, that he could not keep still, but jumped about crying out:

"We are going to see our Father and Mother, hurrah, hurrah!"

Mary entirely shared his excitement, but careful of her beautiful satin dress, did not dance about with her brother. Soon they arrived at a door which, at their approach, was flung open when two figures instantly sprang up from their chairs and went forward to embrace them. The first was a lovely gay little lady who wore a white satin dress with full sleeves ending in generous frills; a bracelet on either wrist, and the long tabbed bodice finished with a bow at the waist. A lovely deep lace collar came down over each shoulder; round her slim neck was a string of pearls from which depended a larger pearl. Pearls, too, were in a cluster at the back of her head, and ringlets fell on either side of her face. Side by side with her came a handsome gentleman, only very little taller than his wife, his usually grave face alight with joy at the sight of his two elder children.

A *showing the children thus garbed*
 ** *This picture is in the Royal Gallery, Turin.*
by Vandyke Dyck

Regarding the meeting with their children^{as} of too intimate a nature to be witnessed even by the most attached of the Court, the King had expressly dispensed with all attendants, so that they had been left alone in the room.

As soon as they entered, ~~it~~, Charles and Mary had curtsied deeply to their parents, then when the Prince got off his knee, he leaped upon his Mother, who embraced him warmly. At the same time Mary ran into the open arms of her Father and hugged him, as he kissed her fondly. Then Prince Charles, leaving his Mother, cried out:

"Father, you must see what a loyal subject Rex is!" calling on his collie to die for the King, which he did quite to his young master's satisfaction.

After witnessing Rex's exhibition of loyalty and commending it, the King asked:

"But where is the rest of the family?"

"In the nursery, Father", answered Charles. "James and Elizabeth are too small to be with us big ones".

"Well, let us to the nursery, then", answered the King.

"This way, Father", said Charles, taking the King's hand and dancing along, leaving Mary in charge of her Mother.

At the nursery door, the King drew up, and gently turning the handle, looked in. Whilst little James was playing on the floor with a big ball, watched by his nurse, another nurse, the rocker, was crooning as she rocked the big, deep-hooded cradle :-

"Bye, Baby Bunting,
Father's gone a-hunting
Gone to get a rabbit skin
To wrap his Baby Bunting in".

"And here comes Father back again to see his precious partridge!" exclaimed the King as he entered the room and made for the cradle, the others following him.

As soon as the Royal pair were seen in the doorway, both nurses rose, and after making profound obeisances, stood up.

"Good nurse", said Charles, "I pray you give me my my little one into my arms".

Obediently the nurse bent over the cradle, lifted the tiny infant from amongst a mass of feather pillows and blankets out of the depths of the richly carved wooden cradle on rockers, and placed her in her father's arms. He, with great tenderness, after gazing upon the little face and kissing it with infinite gentleness, pressed the baby to his bosom, and there held her, as though loth to relinquish the precious bundle.

In the meantime, the Queen had been playing with the small James, whilst Charles and his collie pranced around, and Mary happily but sedately looked on. Then leaving the little boy, Henrietta Maria ran across to her husband and pressing on his arm pleaded:

"My Charles, let me have her now", and as he gave up the little Elizabeth to her Mother, she looked at the child estatically, and exclaimed:

"Comme elle est jolie, cette petite chérie!" and kissed her several times.

Then, having regained the child, Charles, with a sigh, returned her to her rocker, once more to be buried deep in the pillows and blankets of the cradle.

That evening, as the culmination of their treat, the elder children were allowed to sit up to have six o'clock supper with their beloved parents. The King was served on knee with gold dishes, covered after the "try", or test of the food, to make sure it was free from poison.

The two Princes sat on either side of their Father at the head of the table, and the Princess next to her Mother. Charles, Prince of Wales, was proud to be allowed to take a sip of Gascony wine out of his Father's own cup, held to his lips by the King himself. Whilst Prince Charles, to begin with, had a small piece of veal cut up for him on his plate, James, the little Duke of York, and Mary were both content with a dish of custard. But whereas James was carefully fed from it by an attentive page, the little Mary daintly fed herself with a small golden spoon.

Soon, however, the nurses were summoned to take their small charges to the night-nursery and put them to bed. James was already falling asleep when he was carried out, but Charles wanted the assurance, readily given, that his parents would bid them good night in their cribs before he was persuaded to retire.

A little later, up in the night-nursery the King and Queen went round the little cots, but only Charles had contrived to keep awake, though he was more than half-asleep. Mother and Father gently kissed each of their dear children, but the King could scarcely tear himself away from the infant Princess' cradle. As he looked down upon her the babe opened her big brown eyes and smiled upon him. Greatly moved, the King laid his hand in blessing on the tiny body, and murmured:

"May the Good Shepherd ever have my lambkin in His tender keeping!"
