

Chapter V.

Difficult Days.

In common with other children of the Church at this period, Elizabeth, in her earliest years, was thoroughly grounded in the Church Catechism, for theology was then the most important subject of every child's education, and regular lessons usually started at four. Before she had attained her eighth year, she was able to write French, Italian, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, being particularly devoted to the two latter, as the original languages of the Holy Bible, for she had always been most religiously disposed.

The Princess received her lessons in languages from Mrs. Makin, the most learned Englishwoman of her time, and a distinguished linguist, who took the greatest pride in the application and remarkable abilities of the little Elizabeth who, from the first, was devoted to her studies. So widespread was the knowledge of the little Princess' biblical learning, that actually a Puritan divine dedicated to her, in a lengthy and fulsome letter, his exposition of the first few chapters of Ezekiel. A little later, an erudite scholar dedicated to the "peerless Princess Elizabeth", a vocabulary of the Hebrew and Greek words used in Holy Scripture, with their explanations in Latin and English.

In the autumn of 1642, the civil disturbances began to affect the lives of the little royal pair, for tonnage and poundage, the grant of which was usual for the life of the sovereign, had recently been refused renewal by the Commons, and on the money raised by this tax, the keep of the children had depended. The King, naturally, did all he could to support them out of his own small privy purse, but of this, his personal income, the Commons later deprived him. The poor children, in consequence, were left in such need that the Countess of Roxburgh sent a remonstrance to the Commons on the subject, with the result that the Speaker caused investigations to be made to discover the truth of her allegations. When he received his report, the Speaker declared to the House that he was satisfied that the poverty which had befallen the royal children was such that he should be ashamed to have the facts published, or even to speak of them.

After the Commons had consulted with the Lords, they did make a monthly allowance for the household expenses of the two children. But much of this was owing to Lord Say and Sale, one of the Treasury Commissioners, who had advanced

money for them during their financial distress. Both Houses, however, refusing to repay him except out of the newly-made allowance, money difficulties increased so persistently that, ultimately, the Mint received orders to supply the children with their usual grant for the necessities of life.

But the poor little pair had to pay heavily for this concession, by an inquisition into the characters and doctrines of the clergy who served the Chapel of St. James', in which all "superstitious pictures" were immediately defaced. For the clergy loyal to Church and King were to be substituted "orthodox" and able divines, as interpreted by the Puritans. In other words, Calvinists whose cruel creed, in the words of Laud, "makes God, the God of all mercies, to be the most fierce and unreasonable tyrant in the world": who extolled preaching and belittled the Sacraments, were to replace the "Arminian", i.e. anti-Calvinist clergy who were loyal to the Prayer Book. This substitution wounded Princess Elizabeth deeply, but what touched the small Henry more closely, was the intolerant decree of the Commons that "all papists and disaffected persons" to be found amongst their attendants, all kind friends, should be dismissed.

Nor was this all, for Parliament (then dominated by Presbyterian influence,) ruled that none should replace those dismissed but such as were willing to sign the Solemn League and Covenant. Now this disloyal engagement, hypocritically professing with a purely lip-service "to defend the King's Majesty's person and authority", in actual fact led to armed rebellion against the King. Therefore it naturally hit almost the entire household, from the Countess of Roxburgh downwards, all of whom were devoted to the royal service.

So upset was the Princess by this ruling, that, though she was not yet eight years old, she wrote an appeal from this decree of the Commons to the House of Lords in these terms :-

"My Lords.

"I account myself very miserable that I must have my servants taken from me, and strangers put to me. You promised me that you would have a care of me, and I hope you will shew it, in preventing so great a grief as this would be to me. I pray, my Lords, consider of it, and give me cause to thank you, and to rest.

"Your loving friend,
Elizabeth".

"To the right honourable the lords and peers in parliament".

This letter the Princess herself gave to the Earl of Pembroke, as their Parliamentary custodian, who then presented it to the Upper House.

Whilst awaiting its outcome, Elizabeth was devoting herself as much as possible to her little brother, Henry, now four years old. When they were not at lessons, and whenever the weather permitted, his great delight was to watch the animals in St. James' Park. For King Charles had kept up the menagerie which his father had started there: the deer roamed under the trees, amongst which lived many a squirrel; ducks of all kinds as well as a few pelicans and solan geese were to be found on the water, and in their cages were lions, tigers, bears, and monkeys.

The Prince was a very good-looking boy, sturdily built, good-natured, quick and highly intelligent, and even at this early age, gave promise of that courage which in after life was to distinguish him. He was particularly attracted at first by the lions, as royal beasts, for he had noticed that lions formed both the crest and one of the supporters of the royal arms. Elizabeth had told him, when he remarked this, that as bravery was that animal's special distinction, it was fitting that they should thus be found on guard on the royal shield.

"Has Father got a unicorn here, too?" asked the little Duke, and was surprised when his sister told him it was only a make-believe animal.

Henry, child-like, was interested also in the capers of the monkeys which, secretly, Elizabeth considered too grotesque to be attractive. One day, when a small monkey had escaped from its cage, Henry, hastily followed by an alarmed attendant, ran after it and picked it up, thought it was rather big for him to hold.

"Oh, your Royal Highness, put down, I pray you, that horrid beast!" gasped the attendant. "He is like to bite you!"

"I'm sure you won't, will you, little fellow?" stoutly replied Henry addressing the monkey, which, as if in response, snatched off the Duke's hat; and springing to the ground, put it on his own head, causing the little boy to burst forth into a peal of laughter.

"Oh, what fun!" he cried. "The monkey thinks he is a prince now!"

Whilst he was speaking, one of the menagerie keepers hurried up, and apologising for the incident, recaptured the monkey, which then threw off the hat as he looked with sad, reproachful eyes at the Duke.

we | "Poor little creature!" exclaimed Henry, "why should he have to live in a cage any more than ~~us~~? I would like to take him home to live with me".

Here Elizabeth hastily interposed:

"Oh no, Henry, that would be very unkind to take it away from its father and mother".

"Well, we have to be without our Father and Mother!" argued the boy.

With a sharp pang at this reminder of the separation which she always so acutely felt, the Princess yet replied bravely:

"Well, I have you, Harry dear, but the monkey would have no little sister or brother".

"Perhaps he would like me just as well", persisted the small boy, looking regretfully after the keeper as he rapidly receded with the truant monkey.

To distract his attention, Elizabeth, taking his hand, led him away to the water-side, where, happily, a pelican at once absorbed his interest. Not unnaturally the bird's huge pouch fascinated the little boy, specially to see the pelican swallowing a fish. As they were leaving the lake, Elizabeth said to her brother:

"Before Parliament made our chapel so bare and ugly, there was an eagle lectern there which they threw away. Father told me once that in some of our churches there was what he called "a pelican-in-her-piety" instead of the eagle to support the Holy Bible. He said this shewed the bird pecking at her breast to feed with her own blood her little ones in the nest below her. This was to give the people a picture parable to remind them that so Jesus Christ shed His Blood for those who were made His children in Holy Baptism".

In such fashion did the Princess seize every opportunity to make good the teaching of which the Puritan Parliament had deprived the boy.

In the meantime, the House of Lords had gone into the subject of Elizabeth's letter, and finding the Commons had acted ultra vires and without any valid excuse, they voted their action a breach of privilege of the House of Peers. But the Commons, not to be suppressed, urged the necessity for the Committee of Enquiry appointed by the Lords to make changes and retrenchment in expenditure, alleging the household of St. James' was as "disorderly" as the garrison at Oxford, (which the King had made his capital).

When the Peers had completed their visitation, they made some reductions and drew up a list of proposed attendants, which they sent to the Commons for their approval. Many of the old household accepted the parliamentary conditions rather than desert their young charges - this to the Princess' infinite relief. But, alas, the staunch Countess of Roxburgh could not bring herself to follow her husband and son in their disloyalty, and the Countess of Dorset took her place as governess.

The rest of the establishment then confirmed, was on a generous scale, and included besides one household chaplain - "the reverend, pious, and learned Mr. Torshel", - six other puritanical preachers; Sir Theodore Mayerne, the King's physician; and special servants for Prince Henry. Everyone who accepted office under the new conditions had individually to swear "not to hinder the education of any of the King's children in the true Protestant religion, piety, and holiness of life", but to report to the Lords if aware of any such hindrance: to refrain from causing any defection between the King's children and Parliament, and to promise if any letter came from Oxford, or any other place concerning the removal of the children, to reveal it, and to refrain from any contact whatsoever with Oxford or any other of the King's quarters during this War, without leave of the parliamentary committee.

This body's rules and regulations laid down that prayers were to be made in the family, morning and afternoon, and that two sermons were to be preached on the Sundays - which henceforth became a day of misery for the poor children.
