

Chapter VI.Trying Times and more Changes of Residence.

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As soon as the new dispositions at St. James' Palace became known, the Royalists published a broadside ridiculing the unsuitability for young children of the tedious harangues of the ministers foisted upon Elizabeth and Henry. They quoted from a lengthy oration of one of the appointed chaplains, Stephen Marshall, a Presbyterian preacher of great fame amongst the sectaries.

His text was:-

"They shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel".

And this was part of his tirade.

"Not by might or an army but by my spirit, saith the Lord, must the building proceed, and then what art thou, O great mountain, thou great mountain of Popery, Prelacy, superstition, oppression, what art thou before my servants the builders? Who dare offer to hinder the building? I tell you, their number is numberless; I'll name some of them, the Anti-Christian, Prelatical, Malignant party who are in arms against us. You must all perish that have ill-will at Zion: this is the plague wherewith the Lord will smite you, your flesh must consume away, your eyes rot in their holes, your tongues consume away in your mouths, and to conclude your misery, you must be slain before his face and cast into a lake burning with fire and brimstone. Repent therefore of this, not only your folly but your madness, which now is your shame and is like to prove your confession. For the purgation and reformation of the Church, all the rubbish, all the dross, the anti-christian pelf and garbidge that the house of God is defiled with, you are to throw it out with Josiah into the brook Kidron, to bring back the people who have been misled into Arminianism, to Popery, to Superstition, to any of these abominable ways, to bring them back again to the knowledge of the Lord and their God".

On this the broadsheet commented:-

"Hark ye to these utterances of the truly godly and gracious Mr. Stephen Marshall, striving to instill venomous principles into these little princely heads!" "Not by an army", forsooth, saith this pious gentleman, is this work of

the devil to be accomplished. Prithee, then, what be the rebels-in-arms against Church and King if they be not an army? Is such hypocrisy like to commend the virulence of the Presbyterians or of the Independents, or of any other of the Sectaries to their Royal Highnesses? I trow not, yet what weariness of the flesh and sorrow of spirit must they suffer to endure these ravings, miscalling the faith of the Church and of the King, their Father?"

It was little wonder that the King was unusually anxious concerning all these domestic upheavals, and at his urgent desire, an enquiry was sent to the Earl of Essex, only to bring forth this insolent reply:-

"The Commons hopes that they should take as good care, both of the souls and bodies of his majesty's children as those at Oxford could have done" - a retort which in no wise reassured the King.

One day in the autumn of 1643, the Princess was playing Cat-and-Mouse with her brother, and in the capacity of the Mouse, trying to escape capture by the vigorous Cat, outran her frail strength and, falling, broke her leg. Her lady-of-the-bedchamber, Lady Southcote, hastened to pick her up, but finding she had fainted with her leg doubled beneath her, called upon the page in attendance to summon Sir Theodore Mayerne.

When, with all expedition, he arrived, he had her carefully lifted on a shutter and carried to her bed, where he skilfully and rapidly put her leg into splints. [His sister's accident was a heavy blow to the little Duke of Gloucester, thus robbed of his playmate, but Elizabeth did all in her power to console him, specially commending him to Amyas Yonge, the youngest of his pages. This kindly youth procured for him a hobby-horse, and astride upon it, wooden sword in hand, Henry would act as St. George, whilst Amyas, wriggling on the ground, enacted the dragon, snorting fiercely. [Of this game, the Prince never tired, but one day he bethought him that there should be a princess for him to rescue, and who, he thought, more proper for the part than his sister? But Lady Southcote tactfully persuaded him that since she was tied to bed with her leg in splints, for him to "rescue" her would do her great damage, but that he might nevertheless regard his sister as entirely safe under his protection as the patron saint of England. The boy's keen intelligence instantly perceived the truth of this, and he was content to proclaim to the "dragon" :-

"Aha, thou wicked beast, thy power is broken, for I have put a potent spell upon the fair Princess to guard her against thee, so thou canst not touch her".

At other times Henry would entertain his sister by telling her tales of Robin Hood and his merry men, repeating the stories his friend Amyas had told him.

All the while Elizabeth was confined to her bed the domestic chaplain, Mr. Torshel, continually sought to see her. But the Princess had accepted her accident as at least a deliverance from the Calvinistic preachments and wordy prayers of the intruded ministers, and succeeded in keeping him at bay so long as she kept her room. Admittance, however, could no longer be denied him when she was carried into her parlour, and there she was forced to receive him. L. At first obsequious, Torshel enquired after her well-being, to which Elizabeth made polite reply that her leg was mending well, and that she hoped soon to be about on crutches.

"It is your spiritual well-being that most concerns me, your Royal Highness, and I regret I was denied entry to your bed-chamber to minister to you".

"I thank you, sir, but as well as my Bible, I am happily provided with the Prayer Book, and good Dr. Lancelot Andrewe's book of devotions".

Torshel, at this answer, frowned, and shook his head.

"Alas, Madam, I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, thus clinging to the Liturgy, that mess of pottage overloaded with papistical superstitions and profane ceremonies, and to a book of vain prelatical vapouring, steeped in popery".

During this speech the little Princess shewed every sign of distress, yet she answered spiritedly and with forced humour:

"Sir, I have not learned the Christian Faith as you and your colleagues present it, nor would I. To us of the Church, that is a strange presentation indeed - a black lookout truly, to which the black cloak you wear at preaching doth surely give expression".

Before Torshel could make any reply, the door was opened, and in ran Henry, but came to a full stop at sight of the unwanted visitor. Deflected for the time being from trouncing the Princess, Torshel with a forced smile, impudently interrogated the Prince.

"Ah, your Highness, and what have you come about so hot-foot?"

"I have come to amuse my sister with a new tale of Robin Hood and Will Scarlet", answered the boy boldly.

"This is sad hearing, Sire, that you should give ear to profitless tales of an outlaw and a robber".

"I like Robin Hood", stoutly rejoined the little boy. "He was very kind to the poor, but I don't think he would have liked you".

At this forthright speech, both the preacher and the Princess were bereft of words, when, happily, the situation was relieved by the entry of Sir Theodore Mayerne, ushered in by a page, and followed by Lady Southcote. This opportune arrival of the physician obviously necessitated the departure of Mr. Torshel and the Prince alike, and the boy, eager to escape further admonitions from a man he disliked, scampered off to his nursery as fast as his legs could carry him.

In the summer of the next year, 1644, Sir Theodore Mayerne considered a change of air essential for the Princess to enable her to recuperate after her confinement with her crippled leg. So Parliament arranged with Sir John Danvers, then a colonel in the insurgent army, that the royal children should be taken to Danvers House at Chelsea. This man, who became one of the regicides, had acquired an imposing mansion adjacent to the house that had once been the home of Sir Thomas More. Danvers had furnished his house sumptuously, and had laid out his extensive gardens in Italian style.

To Chelsea, then, both brother and sister were moved, but they were strictly forbidden the usual honour of escort by a "court of guard" hitherto accorded to members of the Royal Family.

When he heard where they were going, and that Chelsea was upon the Thames, Henry had been very excited both at the prospect of exploring a new house and grounds, and of going on the river. So he was keenly disappointed when he was told that on no account would either of them be permitted the use of any boat. But the children's stay in Chelsea was curtailed by the appearance of the Plague in the neighbourhood, and then they were moved to the Palace of Whitehall, the air of which was considered more healthy than that of St. James'.

Both the children had been disappointed not to return to that palace where the animals in the park were so great attraction to them. Whilst Henry's chief affection went to

those in cages, and particularly still to the monkeys whose antics never failed to amuse him, it was the graceful deer and the squirrels which Elizabeth had best loved to watch.

Another change was soon to follow on the move to Whitehall, this time of their governess, for the health of the Countess of Derby had become so seriously impaired that the Lords recognised the necessity of making a new appointment. Before all the arrangements for the change could be completed, however, the Countess died. In her place the Countess of Northumberland was installed, with the Earl, ~~as~~ the leading peer on the parliamentarian side, as the governor of the royal children. He, Sir Algernon Percy, "the proudest man alive", had once been a friend of King Charles; and he and his wife were a pair whose aristocratic sentiments and feelings were well calculated to sympathise with their royal charges.

Although with the advent of the Northumberlands, the royal staff again came under review, no great changes were made in their persons, such consideration had the Earl shewn for his charges, insisting also that they should be treated as befitted the children of a King.

The Princess was quick to recognise a courteous and considerate gentleman in the Earl, and soon feeling at home with him, as with his Countess, she spoke to him of what was never out of her mind.

"My Lord, can you give me any news of the King, our Father? It is so very long ago since we last saw him, and there has been no word from him".

This question considerably embarrassed the Earl who was anxious to spare the little girl's feelings as much as possible. He had a few years ago vainly sought to bring about a reconciliation between Charles and the Parliament, and in view of the present situation of constant Royalist defeats in the field, all he could do was to return a vague answer as sympathetic and consolatory as he could make it.

The Earl was as careful as his predecessor had been to withhold all current news, as wholly unfavourable to Church and King, from Elizabeth; and had specially charged every member of the children's retinue to observe this veto. Then to make this easier, and to ensure that no word of Archbishop Laud's execution should fall on Elizabeth's ears, the Earl deciding it would be wise to remove the children from such a bustling centre as Whitehall, took the children and their household to Syon House, Isleworth, one of his country seats.

Here, in the tranquility of this riverside mansion and in its secluded grounds, Elizabeth passed the happiest summer she had known since her separation from her parents. With her enquiring mind she was interested, though somewhat shocked, to hear from the Countess of the alienation from religious uses that the house had suffered. For her governess told that Syon had originally been an abbey founded by Henry V, and that it was the richest nunnery in the kingdom when it was suppressed. She told the Princess that the nuns were of the Bridgetine Order, founded by St. Bridget, a queen of Sweden, and that the old mulberry trees in the grounds had been planted in the days of the convent.

Upon the lively and vigorous Henry his attendants had to keep careful watch, lest he should lose himself running about the 25 acres in which the house was set. Besides the old mulberry trees, the grounds were rich in cedars, cypresses and acacias, and when the excellent wall fruit ripened, Henry was delighted to be allowed to pick some for his sister as well to eat a reasonable quantity himself. A feature of the gardens which never failed to fascinate him was the fountain, which the Earl ordered should constantly play for his amusement.

There is still to be seen the letter which, in the autumn of this year, Elizabeth wrote to her sister Mary of Orange - the only autograph of hers known to exist. This is the letter :-

"Dear Sister,

"I am glad of so fit an opportunity to present my love to you. I intended to have sent you some venison, but being prevented at this time, I hope I shall have it ready to entertain you at the Hague, when you return. Pray believe me to be,

"Your most affectionate sister,

Elizabeth".

Sept. 11. 1645.

"To my dear sister, Princess Mary".

On this very date, there was a discussion in the Commons on the subject of the monies voted for the upkeep of the royal children. This had been of a generous nature since the Earl of Northumberland's appointment as governor, but now it was decided that the sum must be nearly halved.

To enable this reduced allowance to meet essential expenses, the membership of the establishment had to be curtailed. At the same time it was left to the Earl to select any of the royal residences in town for the transference of the Princess and her brother.

There appears to have been no cavilling in the matter of refurbishing of the selected palace, for Northumberland was given free access to the royal stores from which to make such selection as he chose of furniture, plate, tapestries and such other equipment as he considered necessary and agreeable to the taste of the little Princess. Knowing the children's preference for St. James', the Earl after that palace had been got ready for their reception, brought them there from Syon House.

Such was the affectionate respect and genuine kindness with which Northumberland and his wife treated their royal charges, relieving them of all oversight except their own, that the sense of their virtual imprisonment was greatly lessened. Indeed the Earl and Countess found the sister and brother quite irresistible.

The gentleness and affectionate nature of the Princess, allied to her lively and penetrating spirit: her studious nature and great learning, (which, however, she never obtruded), all made a great appeal to them, apart from her attractive looks and naturally gracious personality. They also took to their hearts her little brother, whose sturdy figure with his chubby cheeks and determined mouth, was in striking contrast to the frail delicacy of his sister. So far as she could be happy parted from her beloved Father and without any news of him, Elizabeth made herself happy in the love of her little brother.

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