

Chapter VII.

The Duke of York, captured, joins his Sister & Brother.

Henry whooped with joy when he heard they were returning to St. James', for though he had been very happy at Syon House, he did not consider dogs and horses the equivalent in interest of monkeys and bears. He was particularly eager to see again his pet monkey, which, when he wished to name it, Elizabeth had suggested he should call Yorick, as she saw that for the boy it was "a fellow of infinite jest".

On suitable occasions the Princess was careful to teach and instruct the boy in the Church Catechism, laying particular stress on the many points against which the Presbyterian and Independent preachers constantly inveighed. She had not failed to take him through the Baptismal Service, specially pointing out the admonition of his godparents to bring him to the bishop for Confirmation as soon as he knew his catechism.

"Alas, that we are both denied that privilege", sighed Elizabeth, "but did we only have the ministrations of a priest, we might receive the Holy Sacrament. ~~We~~ ^{are} at least ~~on~~ ready and desirous to be confirmed, and so there would be no hindrance".

The Princess found the greatest comfort in the collects for Sundays and Holy Days, which she knew by heart, and some of which she taught Henry. Every day each of them included in their prayers those for St. Philip and St. James, and for the 4th Sunday after Trinity, which Elizabeth felt covered their most immediate and constant needs.

Early in July 1646, the Earl of Northumberland asked the Princess to receive him, and after greetings had been exchanged, he began :-

"Your Royal Highness, you will, with your little brother, I am sure be pleased to welcome Prince James who will shortly be joining you here". He then hesitated before adding:- "For the King has surrendered Oxford, and under the terms of capitulation, he has handed Prince James over into the care of the Parliamentary Commissioners".

At this news, Elizabeth turned deadly white, and trembled visibly, but keeping herself in control, answered:-

"My Lord, the good news you bring us of our reunion with our brother James is wholly cancelled by the bad tidings you give of the King our Father's unhappy case. But tell me truly, is the King's person safe?"

The Earl, who like his wife, had become greatly attached to his royal charges, was able to reassure her on this point, and together with Lady Northumberland (who just then entered with Prince Henry), did all in his power to console her.

For Henry, the news that his brother James was soon coming to live with them, seemed the most exciting event of his life; but in face of his sister's anxiety about their Father, (which she could not completely conceal), he subdued his exuberance in her presence.

In accord with one of the articles of surrender, James, recently created Duke of York, and then thirteen years old, together with his household and goods, were conveyed to London in all due state. A train of coaches was furnished by the Earl of Northumberland, who with some Parliamentary deputies, courteously met the Prince on July 28th on the borders of the City, and escorted him and his following to St. James'. The fickle multitude, doubtless already duly depressed by the dour regime of Presbyterianism, turned out from all quarters, thronging to see James, and strewing the road with flowers and sweet herbs, whilst rending the air with their acclamations. Again in accord with their undertakings, the Commons made a liberal allowance for James' maintenance, but they required all his retinue to be dismissed, and replaced by others, including a special tutor, chosen by Northumberland. In exchange for this luxury, in such contrast to the poverty he had known at Oxford, James found his liberty had been forfeited.

Mixed indeed were Elizabeth's feelings on the arrival of James. Whilst it meant a very great deal to her to have the added companionship of an older brother, one, too, who could give her the latest news of the King and Queen; yet it was most painful for her to hear of the overthrow of the Royalist cause, and to realise James was now, like herself and Henry, in the hands of the enemy. Often, her slender frame all aquiver, she would declare passionately to her elder brother :-

"Oh, James, were I but a boy, no matter what powers were opposed to me, I would not rest until I had escaped from our Father's foes and had gone to his help!"

James, who was appreciating to the full the creature comforts he was now enjoying, thus rallied, would shrug his shoulders in a gesture of helplessness. In vain did his sister, using every art, strive to goad him into action - till he received a letter from the King.

In this letter Charles urged James to make his escape, either to join him at Newcastle or his mother in France, if he could do so without any great risk to himself. Unfortunately, however, this letter fell into the hands of Northumberland who felt it his duty to report it to Parliament. Questioned on the subject, so artless were James' replies to his governor, that Northumberland was able to persuade Parliament to overlook the matter. They did so, but charged the Earl to keep a closer watch over James in future. This he engaged to do, but stated in Parliament that so many were the plots being hatched to further the boy's escape, that he could not be answerable for his safe custody. When, further, the Earl attributed these plots to emissaries from the King (who were constantly visiting the royal children), their governor was enjoined to forbid them all access in future. Nevertheless, in the winter of 1646-7, James, warmly encouraged by his sister, made several abortive attempts to escape.

Both the Princess and the Duke of Gloucester listened eagerly to all that James could tell them of the Civil War. Whilst Henry could not hear too many details of the fighting; of his brother's part in it, and how he narrowly escaped capture at Edgehill, Elizabeth's supreme concern, as always, was for news of their Father.

They had learned from James that the Queen had returned to England, and after various adventures in the north, had joined the Court at Oxford. He said they had all taken farewell of her again in 1644, and that soon afterwards she had given them a new sister, "Minette", who had been taken to join their Mother at the French Court after her escape from Exeter. But it was the tale of the King's misfortunes that distressed Elizabeth most, and he was never out of her thoughts.

The Princess, however, would never allow her heart-ache to deflect her from the amusement of her brothers, specially of Henry, during the long winter nights. Now, however, that her broken leg had mended, it was rather shorter than her other, so she could no longer play with ease in running-about-games. But she would join her brothers, augmented by one or two of the pages, in playing Hunt-the-Slipper; and after Henry was in bed, she and James would engage in a game of chess, in which they found themselves well matched.

March, 1647, saw another change of residence for the royal captives, though it was to last for little more than two months. After all suitable preparation had been made for their reception, they were taken to Hampton Court Palace, which the Princess was interested to hear had been built by great Cardinal Wolsey. Her brothers, however, regretted that no wild animals were kept there, though they found a very novel amusement in trying to make their way through the hornbeam maze which had been planted in Henry VIII's reign. This new exercise was too fatiguing for Elizabeth to attempt, but the first warm days of opening June allowed her to sit and watch the butterflies in the Tudor garden which she greatly enjoyed.

Often by the riverside, the boys watched enviously the various craft plying on the Thames, for they themselves were not allowed to go out in a boat as they longed to do. Nor were they ever permitted to go to the water's side alone, for whenever they went in the direction of the river, some watchful attendant would appear and accompany them on the reasonable pretext of being at hand lest one or other should fall into the water.

But with their sister, both Princes found an interest in the Clock Court. For there, set in Queen Anne Boleyn's Gateway, they were fascinated to watch the astronomical clock which had been made for Henry VIII. Not only did the dial - nearly eight feet in diameter - indicate the hour, month, day of the month, and the number of days past since the beginning of the year, but actually the phases of the moon, and the time of high water at London Bridge.

Soon, however, yet another change broke abruptly upon the royal children. Always a light sleeper, Elizabeth had been wakened by the clatter of an armed horseman riding up to the Palace entrance at 11 p.m. on June 5th, and she at once felt that something was amiss. So she was scarcely surprised when she and her brothers were aroused unusually early next morning and told that the Earl of Northumberland wished to have speech with them. With great regret he told them that the stir last night was caused by a messenger from the Parliament, peremptorily ordering the immediate return to St. James' of the Princess and the two Dukes.

Addressing himself to Elizabeth, the Earl said:

"The reason for this untoward move, your Royal Highness, is that His Majesty having been surrendered by the Scots - for a consideration - to Parliament, was seized from them by a troop of horsemen whilst on his way to London. So I am grieved to have to tell you, dear Madam, that the King is now the Army's prisoner, and it is to save you all from the same fate that I have orders at once to take you back to St. James'. I greatly regret this unexpected transfer, since no preparation could have been made to receive you fittingly in these circumstances. So I beg you will forgive the unready state we must expect to find when we reach that Palace".

"Oh, my dear Lord!" exclaimed Elizabeth, "little do I care for our circumstances - it is of our beloved Father that I am thinking".

Northumberland once again did all in his power to reassure her, but it was a dispirited little company that arrived late that afternoon at their old quarters. But Elizabeth's essentially heroic and unselfish spirit never failed her in her duty to her brothers, for she recognised that Henry, at least, was still too young to realise the import of his Father's being in the hands of the insurgent Army.

About a month after this return to St. James', the King who, under strong Army escort, had been permitted to go to Windsor, expected to find his children there. For he had requested Parliament that they might join him at the Castle for a few days, so that bitter was his disappointment to find that his request had been callously refused.

Northumberland, who heard of this, was careful to say nothing of it to the children, ^{he being} desirous of sparing the Princess further distress and her brothers' disappointment.

Despondently the King had returned from Windsor to Caversham where was General Fairfax. To him Charles gave expression of his acute frustration, and Fairfax, whose influence was very powerful, promised to do all he could to ensure that the King should meet his children. So on July 4, 1647, Charles wrote to the Duke of York commanding him to ask leave of both Lords and Commons for him, his sister, and brother, to meet their Father somewhere, and to tell them that Fairfax had promised that no attempt should be made by the Army to seize them. James instantly complied with his Father's command, sending the King's letter addressed to both Houses, and on his own behalf, and that of his brother and sister, begged that they might

have an interview with the King. Fairfax, also in a letter, seconded the request, and himself guaranteed the safe return of the children after a two-day's absence. The House of Lords at once gave their consent, and after some hesitation, the Commons followed suit, but made it conditional upon Northumberland escorting his charges.
