

Chapter IX.Some Other Happy Interludes for the Children.

The heat of July 1647 brought the Plague back to London, and in his concern for safeguarding the health of his royal charges, Northumberland first moved them to another part of St. James' Palace, and then sought leave of Parliament to take them again to Syon House. This permission was given but soon revoked, when it was rumoured that another Royalist plot was afoot to secure the persons of the Princess and her brothers. Soon a deputation of four of its members was sent to the Commons to wait upon the Royal children. Northumberland conducted these gentlemen into their presence and introduced them, when their spokesman, one Sir John Burgoyne, thus bluntly addressed them :-

"Your Highnesses: the House of Commons has received the request of your Governor to remove you to Syon House, but we have received tidings that the King's party seeks to abduct you, hence we are sent to acquaint you that our honourable House has decided you will be safer in the heart of the city. Therefore we have arranged with Lord Car and one of ourselves to escort your Highnesses under a strong guard of the City Militia to the Mansion* of the Lord Mayor, Sir John Gayer, in Leadenhall, there to ask him to take temporary charge of you". So with a bow, the speaker ended and the Princess gravely responded :-

"Sir, we are in your power and must needs go where you send us".

When the deputation left, Northumberland told his charges that a Committee of both Houses was sitting to consider what foundation there was for the rumour of the plot, and to decide on their more permanent residence.

Happily for the poor children, they were not left long in the City, for the Army having obtained complete control of London, Parliament now considered they would be safe at Syon House. Almost concurrently with his children's removal there, the King was taken to Hampton Court,

* It was customary in the 17th century for the Lord Mayor to use his own home as his official residence during his mayoralty.

and orders were given that he and his children should be allowed to meet from time to time. In this the King took the initiative, and without letting the children know of the joy that was in store for them, he rose early on August 23rd, and called upon the officers of the guard to provide a troop to escort him to Syon House. In response to this request, an escort was ready for Charles at 7 a.m., and headed by an equerry, bareheaded, with the Parliamentary Commissioners on either side of him, and a troop of Cromwell's horse in the rear, the company set out for Syon House. The King's faithful servant, Sir Thomas Herbert, accompanied him, and from the diary he kept some details of this visit emerge.

Overcome with joy as they were at the King's unexpected arrival, before the children fell upon him to embrace him, they fell on their knees, "after their usual custom to ask his blessing", which he was always eager to give them. Charles was greatly relieved to find with what care and how honourably his dear children were treated by the Earl of Northumberland and his lady, to whom he expressed his heart-felt thanks. Whilst Charles conversed delightedly with them, the Commissioners went forth into the country towns around for provisions, since there was no adequate supply in the larder for the augmented party.

The King had been not unmoved when the Duke of Gloucester greeted him with :-

NP. "I know who you are this time, Father!" and ran eagerly to him. Charles questioned James, as the eldest, closely as to their health, and particularly wished to hear whether Elizabeth suffered at all from her leg, which he was grieved to see was still slightly crippled. Their dinner together was a most happy meal, though the Countess felt she had to apologise for what she described as its make-shift character. However, when she heard that the King would be returning on August 30th, she shewed what she could do when apprized beforehand, by providing a noble entertainment for Charles and his party, which, in its various members, amounted to a small court. The children, however, naturally preferred having their Father entirely to themselves, since in the presence of so many others, there could be no intimate talk between them.

Again, on September 7th, the Princess and her brothers, attended by the Countess, were with the King when the Commissioners of England and Scotland were announced. Charles decided that they should be shewn in and that the children should stay, as he thought it well they should have some experience of such negotiations to realise a little what he had to face.

At their next reunion, on September 13th and 16th, their meeting place was Hampton Court where the King was now confined, and there were further days also in that month when they were together there with him. Whilst Charles was happy in seeing his children playing about in the lovely gardens of the Palace, ~~and many~~ ^{the} a loyal subject, too, rejoiced to see the little family together again, ~~then~~ ^{the} King took the opportunity of having more serious intercourse with them.

A French writer records of the Princess about this time "that despite her tender age, she shewed a lively and penetrating spirit, and the most happy disposition for study. She was frail and delicate, but of an expressive and charming figure".

Her father would hold her lovingly in his arms whilst he exhorted her to endure patiently whatever trials might befall her, and to give all obedience to the Queen, her mother, excepting only in the case of her religion. Once again he spoke to her with the utmost solemnity on this subject.

"I charge you, dearest daughter, as you prize my blessing, never to listen or agree to any argument, whether from the side of Rome or of any of the sectaries, seeking to weaken your attachment to the Church of England. She is now sorely down-trodden and persecuted, and therefore has greater claim than ever upon the allegiance of her children".

Elizabeth, with low voice but intensity of feeling, declared: "Nothing, dearest Father, shall move me from my steadfast adherence to our poor Church", to which the King made reply, ["You are indeed a true daughter of your Father, my Bess".

Charles further said to her that in the event of his death, she must yield the obedience she had given him to her brother, the Prince of Wales, who would then be her Sovereign; and that she must never contemplate any marriage without his and the Queen's sanction. This, too, Elizabeth faithfully promised.

NP. *They delighted to hear him play on the Viol da gamba on which he was a skilled performer.*

When the three children were together beside him, he asked if they still found the preachers as trying as previously. In this they were all emphatic, and the Princess spoke for them all when she said :

"Yes, indeed, Father. Next to our being separated from you, they are our greatest trial. Recently we had a long fulmination against 'pre-conceived prayers' from Master Stephen Marshall, a preacher of great power and most highly thought of by his Presbyterian party, so we were assured. Once, after he had prayed: 'Lord, purge Thy Church in England. Lord, set it up there: down with Prelacy, stablish liberty, make way for Christ', I was led to remonstrate with him. Said I, 'Sir, our Lord Himself has given us a "preconceived" prayer, and commanded us to pray after that fashion, saying Our Father. Yet you and your fellows never use that divine prayer".

"And what answered he, Sweetheart?" asked her Father, deeply interested.

"He said :

"We do not repeat it for which we have reason enough if it were but to claim our Christian liberty from a human imposition: there being no shadow of argument obliging us to use the very form of words, seeing the Evangelists themselves vary it, much less to use it like a charm at beginning and ending of services, Baptisms, Burials, Marriages, Churching of Women, which is really a profaning of it". To which I answered : "Sir, you wrest the Scriptures; yea, subvert the very command of Christ Himself, Very God as well as Very Man, and thus you blaspheme".

"Spoken like my own dear daughter!" was Charles' gratified comment. "The great guilt of the Lord's Prayer is that it is the warrant and original pattern of all set Liturgies in the Church".

"But, alas, Father, it made no difference", bewailed the Princess. "We still have to endure the hearing of such like perversions of Holy Scripture and of our Faith".

"Well, beloved daughter, it clearly makes no difference either, - on your side, but, as I know from my own experience, it is very hard to bear, but worst of all for little Henry to have to sit still through these tedious discourses".

"But I don't!" interjected the candid Henry. "I wriggle most of the time: I can't help it, it is all so dreary".

The King was very proud of his youngest son, for he was as accomplished as his sister, balancing his physical vigour with great powers of intellect, which like his sister, he inherited from his Father. Henry constantly asked the King many and varied questions, some of which Charles was at a loss to answer, as he laughingly confessed.

Northumberland was sometimes present during the less intimate of these conversations and the children often met not only members of the Cavalier party, but Parliament men and Army officers who came to see the King. Fairfax was often amongst these latter, and shewed quite an attachment to the Duke of Gloucester, admiring his forthright and manly disposition. He was particularly amused initially when the boy, standing and boldly confronting the tall dark man in his black armour, questioned him as to how he felt in it: was it not always cramping and very hot for summer wear?

One alone amongst the many callers opposed to the King, bent the knee to the royal children, as well as kissed their hands, as others did. This was a clumsily-built man, tall and uncouth, with a heavy face, "reddish and swollen", coarse of feature, and forbidding of expression - no less a person than the future regicide, General Cromwell. Yet even his flinty heart was affected by the sight of Charles with his children, which he afterwards described as the most touching sight he had ever beheld. But despite his respectful attitude towards the royal charges, Elizabeth instinctively felt, as with none other of those opposed to her Father, that by this remorseless man the King was already doomed. Yet she so restrained herself and maintained such courtesy towards him as to all others of her Father's opponents, that she won for herself the name of "Temperance".

As it drew into autumn Northumberland designed to remove his charges (as usual for the winter) to St. James' once again. Charles, naturally anxious that this move should not put an end to the one remaining joy of his life, in a letter dated October 10th, again sought the kindly offices of Fairfax to ensure their continuance. He asked, in view of the distance of Hampton Court from St. James' and the forthcoming of the winter, that the children might be allowed to stay with him for a day or two, at intervals of tendays. As previously, Fairfax secured the granting of this request, but when Northumberland heard this he expressed his intention of notifying Parliament whenever the children did set out for Hampton Court that he might be absolved of responsibility if anything happened to them.