

Chapter X.Some Royal Letters: With the King at Hampton Court,
& how the Duke of York escaped.

Soon after the return of the Princess and her brothers to St. James', Elizabeth received the two following letters from her Father enclosed in those to the Duke of York.

Hampton Court,
20 October 1647.

"Dear daughter,

"This is to assure you that it is not through forgetfulness that I have not all this time sent for you; the reason of which and when you shall come, shall be told you by your brother James this evening, and so God bless you.

Your loving father,

"Charles R."

"Kiss your brother Harry and my Lady Northumberland for me".

Hampton Court,
27 October 1647.

"Dear daughter,

"This is to assure you that it is not through forgetfulness, or any want of kindness, that I have not all this time sent for you, but for such reasons as it is fitter for you to imagine, (which you may easily do), than to write; but now I hope to see you upon Friday or Saturday next, as your brother James can more particularly tell you; to whom referring you, I rest.

Your loving father,

"Charles R."

Such treasures did the Princess account these two letters that they never left her person, for even to look upon her father's writing was a solace to her in her captivity ~~and~~ away from him.

It was a Saturday in late October, 1647, when she and her brothers were again in Northumberland's coach on their way to Hampton Court. This meeting had all the freshness on both sides as on previous occasions, for these reunions never staled with repetition.

As they all walked through the Palace with their Father, the Princess observed :

"Previously, I thought I preferred Hampton Court before any of the other places in which we have been confined. Now I know it will always have first place in my heart".

"Why is that, Sweetheart?" asked Charles.

"Can you ask, Father?" answered the Princess.
"Because it will henceforth always hold memories of our stay with you here".

At this the King stooped to kiss her on her forehead.

"We have much for which to thank Cardinal Wolsey if only in the way of buildings. Besides most of this, it was he who, as I expect you know, erected our Palace at Whitehall".

"Yes, Father, but I so much prefer the situation of this".

"I wonder how you would have liked his Cardinal College, now Christ's House, which was my headquarters at Oxford? I am sure you would have thought its chapel, created the Cathedral for the Diocese of Oxford, very lovely. God preserve it from the hands of the rebel vandals!"

With Father and daughter thus conversing, the boys accompanying them, they progressed through "my Lord Cardinal's Lodgings". They admired the linen-fold panelling of the ante-chamber: passed into his Privy Chamber, with fine plain panelling, and then at the end of the Long Gallery, into Wolsey's Closet, and one of his state rooms. The King pointed out to them all the

painted panels representing the Last Supper, the Scourging, the Bearing of the Cross and the Resurrection, and thanked God that they had escaped the destroying hands of the Puritans.

As they stood before the fireplace and read Wolsey's motto, Dominus michi adjutor, Charles observed :

"A goodly motto indeed, but I fear me, little in the mind of the Cardinal, for, whom, too late, he realised it was from the King rather than from the Almighty that he had looked for help, or rather, for advancement".

Not desirous to see the Chapel Royal again as dismantled and mutilated by the Puritans, the King paused at the entrance to the gallery leading to it.

"This is called the Haunted Gallery", said the King, but before he could get any further, Henry burst in:

"Oh, Father, with a real ghost?"

"Yes, son, that of Queen Catherine Howard".

"Do tell us about her, Father", now begged the Duke of York, equally interested with his brother in so exciting a subject.

"The poor lady had been arrested and condemned to death for misconduct, and knowing the King was hearing Mass in the Chapel, she made a desperate attempt to gain him there to plead for mercy. But before she could enter the chapel, she was seized and carried away shrieking, later to be beheaded on Tower Hill".

"Poor lady!" sighed Elizabeth, whilst Henry eagerly asked: "Father, have you ever seen her or heard her shriek?"

"Yes, one night I did both see and hear her. I took it for an omen".

"Were you not afraid, Father?" asked Henry again. "What did you do?"

"No, son, I was not afraid. I grieved for the poor unquiet spirit, and prayed that she might have rest and peace".

"Amen!" murmured Elizabeth.

The sleeping apartments assigned to the royal children, like those of the King, opened off the Long Gallery, in which were stationed two sentinels to keep guard over Charles. After her first night, the King asked his daughter how she had slept.

"I fared not very well, Father", answered Elizabeth, "for the soldiers disquieted me continually with their heavy tramping".

At once Charles sent a page to summon Colonel Whalley, their commanding officer, to his presence, and then asked him to instruct his men to be more quiet in the fulfilment of their night duty.

"Sire", replied the Roundhead Colonel, a cousin of Cromwell, "that they have thus made their presence heard is against my express orders, for I bade them refrain from every noise. I will again repeat my commands that her Highness be not again disquieted".

With words of thanks both from the King and his daughter, with a bow, Whalley withdrew. But again on the second night, as her Father discovered when he questioned her, she, always prone to sleeplessness, had again been deterred from sleeping by the guards. For a second time Charles, when Whalley was again summoned before him, informed him that the Princess had found there was no improvement in the night before - there was still much clattering of the guards. The King then suggested, as the soldiers on duty had declared that they could not be any quieter, and had expressed surprise that anyone could have heard their pacing, that they should be stationed further away.

"Then, Sire, I should require you to give me your parole not to escape".

To this the King answered: "You had my engagement. I will not renew it. Keep your guards".

When Whalley had retired, the Princess said to the King :

"When I lay awake last night, Father, I suddenly saw the figure of a woman appear at the foot of my bed, as though she had floated in through the closed door. She was wearing a gown with closely fitting bodice, tight sleeves puffed at the top, a long flowing skirt, and a puffed cap with a pleated lappel falling round it. She was looking down at some child she bore in her arms. Do you know who she would be?"

"You appear to have seen Mrs. Sibell Penn, Sweet-heart. She was King Edward VI's foster-mother and nurse, and is said to haunt this wing. I have never seen her myself and I hope her coming to you is of no evil portent. Did she alarm you?"

"Oh, no Father! I prayed for her repose, as you did for poor Queen Catherine's. Why does young King Edward's nurse haunt his birthplace now?"

"I have never heard, daughter, but I know from others that she has been seen from time to time".

That afternoon, the royal children wrenching themselves apart from their Father once again, were borne back to St. James'.

8 In the meantime Cromwell's ~~cunning~~ was at work with characteristic astuteness. He had realised that as long as Charles lived, his life was in danger, but not wishing to be known as the agent of the King's death, if he could help it, he laid his plans to trap the King to his own undoing. After the departure of the royal children from Hampton Court, therefore, Whalley, hand in glove with his infamous cousin, on October 31st ostentatiously doubled the guards over the King there. It is on contemporary record, too, that Cromwell and his son-in-law, General Ireton, had announced their intention of restoring Charles to the Throne, and that Cromwell had subsequently strongly re-iterated this intention. These assertions, however, and a letter addressed to the King, warning him of plots against his life and purporting to come from a "dutiful subject", signing "E.R." but generally attributed to Cromwell, were but subterfuges to conceal his real intentions. This letter Whalley, on November 11th, shewed to the King, for it suggested he should make his escape, and to facilitate this, the wily Colonel quietly withdrew all his guards on the night of November 11th. Of this opportunity Charles consequently availed himself, as the royal children soon heard, but their delight at this news, was speedily turned into consternation when they learnt he had been made a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle.

From Carisbrooke, the King carried on a clandestine correspondence with his daughter, and a letter from her to him which was intercepted in February, 1648, was as follows:-

"Most dear Father,

"The greatest terrestrial joy that can be to me, is to hear that you are in health and prosperity, and nothing hath been such a terror to me that I have not

heard from you so frequently as formerly; all that I can have to support my thoughts is to conceive that the letters are miscarried". Here followed a message in cypher but a contemporary statement affirmed that :

"in the conclusion of the letter the high-born lady concludes with a pious and pithy prayer for his majesty, that God would restore him to those rights which his revolted subjects now illegally and conscionably detain from him, and in his good time to open the eyes of the deluded people of England, now at length to consider in what an intricate labyrinth they are, and that only the clue of loyalty can guide them out; and she then closes all with a direful anathema against all his cursed enemies".**

Considering at once what they could do to help their Father, the Princess and the Duke of York agreed that every endeavour must now be made to effect his escape abroad there to join his brother Charles, in accordance with the King's frequent injunctions. But it was clear that only by the exercise of strategy could an escape prove successful, since so often previously had the attempts made by the Duke, failed. Not only so, but since the King's escape from Hampton Court, Parliament had sent orders to Northumberland commanding him to take double care of the trio; and already, an abortive attempt at the beginning of the year 1648, had resulted in the Duke of York never being without the surveillance of a staff faithful to the Parliament.

One morning when Elizabeth and James were together after breakfast, the Princess said to her brother:

"When I was wakeful in the night, a plan occurred to me for successfully accomplishing your escape. Every evening now we will play hide-and-seek until our governor and everyone else has become entirely accustomed to this our diversion. Then when we are sure it has been generally accepted as purely a game, you will go into hiding one night: Henry will hunt for you everywhere all the while, but will not find you, for you will have got free. I will prepare some of my clothes for you, and hide them where you will know to find them, so that you may disguise yourself in them in order to safely reach the water-side. I heard them remarking in the Palace that a Dutch boat had been seen there for a month past, and if you can get on board, the Captain, I am sure, will take you back with him to our sister in Holland. We had better say nothing to Harry of the object of our game, lest he inadvertently lets out our secret".

**

(This "close" does not read at all like the Princess.

M.E.M.D.)

James agreed that his sister had suggested a most hopeful means of regaining his liberty, and Henry was only asked if he would like to play hide-and-seek at night.

"Oh, yes, it will be fun!" he eagerly replied.

So that evening, in the presence of the Earl, his wife and all the attendants, when, as had been agreed amongst them, the Princes shewed no inclination to settle to any of their usual occupations, Elizabeth suggested a game of hide-and-seek for them all. Her brothers at once acclaimed the proposal, and the Duke of York agreed to go in search of the other two, after he had closed his eyes and counted some hundreds. Henry soon managed to creep "home" uncaught, and was very jubilant about it, but it was not long before James found his sister only half-hidden behind some long cloaks hanging up on the wall.

So henceforth, evening after evening the game was played, but soon it became a case of both searching for James as he hid in such ingenious fashion. Elizabeth, as the directing spirit, had told James that she did not consider it would be safe for him to attempt his escape till they had been playing the game for a least ten days, so that all might be well accustomed to it. Then, when a day seemed opportune, she would tell him.

Meanwhile the attendants and all in the Palace derived great amusement in watching the royal children at the game, for they had the whole Palace to range over; and they laughed over the ingenuity shewn by the Duke of York when his hiding places were at last disclosed, and Henry proclaimed where they had found him. Over and over again it took the Princess and Prince Henry over an hour to discover their brother, such strange hiding places did he choose. Once, after a very long search, the Princess discovered him taking the place of a bolster on one of the servant's beds; at another time, Henry found him beneath a heap of clothes put for washing in a big basket. Thus the ground was prepared for the momentous day of escape.

The Princess decided on the night of Friday, April 21st, 1648, a day when Northumberland had been away from the Palace. Returning that evening, he visited them as usual about eight o'clock, and after a few pleasant words, bade them good-night and betook himself to his own apartments. Elizabeth then retired to her bedchamber, where the Duke of York followed her, and chatted light-heartedly with her and her attendants. Then before wishing her good-night, he said he intended giving Harry a good two-hour's hunt before they,

too, went to bed. But with so many attendants present, he could say no more to his sister, nor take any farewell of her.

James, in conjunction with his sister, having made his plans carefully, at once made his way to the servants' hall, where, singling out the gardener, he asked for a specific key, saying he wished to hide in his room. The man, feeling highly flattered at being thus chosen, at once gave James the key, for he and his fellow-servants had found great entertainment in these royal games extending into their quarters.

No sooner had the Prince received the key, than, after retrieving his disguise from its hiding place and assuming it, he speedily made his way down the garden, opened the gate, locked it behind him, and in due course triumphantly gained the "Dutch boat," *↑ Ride, anchored off Tillyary**

Meanwhile, Henry was hunting everywhere for his brother so deadly in earnest that all who saw him were greatly amused by his intentness. Then, at 9.30, in accordance with his nightly custom, Northumberland came to escort the Princes to bed, only to hear that the Duke of York was still in hiding. No suspicions were aroused till at last, the innocent Henry, tired with his futile exertions, was disposed to give up the hunt, when one of the servants whispered that his brother had taken the key of the gardener's cottage. His flagging interest thus revived, Henry at once ran into the garden, only to find the gates locked, and it was sometime before they could be forced open. Then, to the consternation of all concerned, no trace of the Duke of York could be found, and at once Northumberland dispersed the household in all directions in search of him, but in vain.

This time, indeed, he had made good his escape, and no one thought of questioning his sister who alone could have told them how it had been planned. With what trepidation she passed the long hours until she was assured James was safely away, no one could say, for she bravely bore up under her great anxiety, acting a part she was very far from feeling.

Northumberland, having next day reported to Parliament the Duke of York's escape, was duly exonerated, and given permission to remove the Princess and the Duke of Gloucester whenever he saw fit, either to Hampton Court or

* See footnote at the end of this chapter.

Syon House. He chose the latter, and though previously they had always passed the winter at St. James', North-umberland soon after James' escape, moved them to his Thames-side mansion that his charges might be spared as much as possible hearing tidings of the mock trial of their Father. To this the Earl had been entirely opposed, for he was aghast at the idea of the King appearing before a tribunal of his own subjects, and spoke stoutly against the proceedings.

Footnote. One, Colonel Bampfylde, a secret agent, arranged & carried out all the elaborate details of the Duke of York's escape. In this he was aided by several others, notably by three, & of these^a Miss Murray has left a record. A coach & then a boat to the Old Swan stairs, near London Bridge, were the vehicles of his escape & finally a barge took him from the stairs to the Dutch vessel.