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IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROWN

A Novel

Jean Plaidy



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IN THE SHADOW OF
THE CROWN



JEAN PLAIDY

A NOVEL



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The Betrothal

I HAVE TAKEN FOR MY MOTTO “TIME UNVEILS TRUTH,” AND I believe that is often to be the case. Now that I am sick, weary and soon to die, I have looked back over my life which, on the whole, has been a sad and bitter one, though, like most people, I have had some moments of happiness. Perhaps it was my ill fortune to come into the world under the shadow of the crown, and through all my days that shadow remained with me—my right to it; my ability to capture it; my power to hold it.

No child's arrival could have been more eagerly awaited than mine. It was imperative for my mother to give the country an heir. She had already given birth to a stillborn daughter, a son who had survived his christening only to depart a few weeks later, another son who died at birth, and there had been a premature delivery. The King, my father, was beginning to grow impatient, asking himself why God had decided to punish *him* thus; my mother was silently frantic, fearing that the fault was hers. None could believe that my handsome father, godlike in his physical perfection, could fail where the humblest beggar in the streets could succeed.

I was unaware at the time, of course, but I heard later of all the excitement and apprehension that the hope of my coming brought with it.

Then, at four o'clock on the morning of the 18th of February in that year 1516, I was born in the Palace of Greenwich.

After the first disappointment due to my sex being of the wrong gender, there was general rejoicing—less joyous, of course, than if I had been a boy, but still I was alive and appeared to be healthy and as I believe my father remarked to my poor mother, who had just emerged from the exhaustion of difficult labor, the child was well formed, and they could have more...a boy next time, then quiverful.

Bells rang out. The King and Queen could at least have a child who had a chance of living. Perhaps some remembered that other child, the precious boy who had given rise to even greater rejoicing and a few weeks later had died in the midst of the celebrations for his birth. But I was here, a royal child, the daughter of the King and Queen, and until the longed-for boy arrived to displace me, I was heir to the throne.

I enjoyed hearing of my splendid baptism from both Lady Bryan, who was the lady mistress of the Household, and the Countess of Salisbury, who became my state governess. It had taken place on the third day after my birth, for according to custom christenings must take place as soon as possible but in case the child did not survive. It took place in Greyfriar's Church close to Greenwich Palace, and the silver font had been brought from Christ Church in Canterbury, for all the children of my grandparents, Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, had had this silver font at their baptisms, and it was fitting that it should be the same for me. Carpets had been laid from the Palace to the font, and the Countess of Salisbury had the great honor of carrying me in her arms.

My father had decreed that I should be named after his sister Mary. She had always been a favorite of his, even after her exploits in France the previous year which had infuriated him. It showed the depth of his affection for her that he could have given me her name when she had so recently

displeased him by marrying the Duke of Suffolk almost immediately after the death of her husband Louis XII of France. She was more or less in exile at the time of my christening, in disgrace and rather poor, for she and Suffolk had to pay back to my father the dowry which he had paid to the French. In the years to come I liked to remind myself of that unexpected softness in his nature, and I drew a little comfort from it.

My godfather was Cardinal Wolsey who, under the King, was the most important man in the country at that time. He gave me a gold cup; from my Aunt Mary, the wayward Tudor after whom I was named, I received a pomander. I loved it. It was a golden ball into which was inserted a paste of exquisite perfumes. I used to take it to bed with me and later I wore it at my girdle.

The best time of my life was my early childhood before I had an inkling of the storms which were to beset me. Innocence is a beautiful state when one believes that people are all good and one is prepared to love them all and expect that love to be returned. One is unaware that evil exists, so one does not look for it. But, alas, there comes the awakening.

A royal child has no secret life. He or she is watched constantly, and it is particularly so if that child is important to the state. I say this as no conceit. I was important because I was the only child of the King, and if my parents produced the desired boy, my importance would dwindle away. I should not have been watched over, inspected by ambassadors and received their homage due to the heir to the throne. It is difficult to understand when one is young that the adulation and respect are not for oneself but for the Crown.

There are vague memories in my mind, prompted no doubt by accounts I heard from members of my household; but I see myself at the age of two being taken up by my father, held high while he threw me up and caught me in his strong arms and held me firmly against his jewel-encrusted surcoat. I had felt no qualms that he would drop me. I never knew anyone exude power as my father did. As a child I believed him to be different from all others, a being apart. Of course, I had always seen him as the most powerful person in the kingdom—which undoubtedly he was—and my childish mind endowed him with divine qualities. He was not only a king; he was a god. My mother and Sir Henry Rowte, my priest, chaplain and Clerk of the Closet, might instruct me in my duties to One who was above us all, but in my early days that one was my father.

I was so happy to be held in his arms and to see my beloved mother standing beside me, laughing and happy, beautiful and contented with me.

I remember my father's carrying me to a man in red robes who reverently took my hand and kissed it. My father regarded this man with great affection, and it seemed wonderful to me that he should kiss my hand. It meant something. It pleased my father. I knew by that time that he was my godfather, the great Cardinal Wolsey.

That had been when I was exactly two years old. I think the ceremony must have been a recognition of that fact. It was not only the great Cardinal who kissed my hand. I was taken to the Venetian ambassador and he was presented to me. I had been told I had to extend my hand for him to kiss, which I did in the manner which had been taught me, and I knew this caused my father's mouth to turn up at the corners with approval. Several people were presented to me afterward and I believe I remember something of this. While I was in my father's arms, I saw a man in dark robes among the assembly. I knew him for a priest. Priests, I had been told, were holy men, good men. I was drawn to them all throughout my life. I wanted to see this one more closely, so I called out, "Priest, Priest. Come here, Priest."

There was astonishment among the company, and my father beckoned to the man to come forward. He did and stood before me. He took my hand and kissed it. I touched his dark robes and said: "Sta-

here, Priest.” The man smiled at me and, basking in my approval, he overcame his awe of the King and stammered out that the Princess Mary was a child of many gifts and the most bright and intelligent of her age he had ever seen.

People remember that occasion more for the manner in which I summoned the priest than that it was my second birthday and that the King was showing his love for me and that he was becoming reconciled to the fact that he might never have a legitimate son to follow him, which would make me his daughter, his heir.

I was at that time at Ditton in Buckinghamshire. On the other side of the river was Windsor Castle and there was frequent traffic between the two places. I looked forward to those occasions when the ferryman rowed us across the river. I had my household governed by the Countess of Salisbury, who was a mother to me when my own beloved mother was not able to be with me. She deplored the absences, I knew, and had made me understand that she loved me dearly, and in spite of my reverence for my father, she was the person I loved best in the whole world.

Whenever she visited the household, she and the Countess would talk of me. My mother wanted to know everything I did and said and wore. She made me feel cherished; and the greatest sorrow of my early life was due to those occasions when we had to part.

She would say: “Soon we shall be together again and when I am not here the lady Countess will be your mother in my place.”

“There can only be one mother,” I told her gravely.

“That is so, my child,” she answered. “But you love the Countess as she loves you, and you must do everything she tells you and above all remember that she is there... for me.”

I did understand. I was wise for my years. I had, as Alice Wood, the laundress used to say, “an old head on little shoulders.”

Soon after that, when I was two years and eight months old, my first betrothal took place.

A son had been born to François Premier, the King of France, and my father and the Cardinal believed that it would strengthen the friendship between our two countries if a marriage was arranged for us. Although I was almost exactly two years older—the Dauphin was born on the 28th of February 1518—we were of an age. I had no notion of what this was all about. I do vaguely remember the splendid ceremony at Greenwich Palace, largely because of the clothes I had to wear. They were heavy and prickly; my gown was of cloth of gold, and my black velvet cap so encrusted with jewels that it could scarcely support its weight. My prospective bridegroom, being only eight months old, was naturally spared the ceremony and a somewhat solemn-looking Admiral Bonnivet represented him. I remember the heavy diamond ring he put on my finger.

The great Cardinal celebrated Mass. I was too uncomfortable in my unwieldy garments to do anything but pleased when it was all over.

The Countess told me that it was a very important occasion and it meant that one day I should be Queen of France. I need not be alarmed. The ceremony would not be repeated until the Dauphin was fourteen years old—by which time I should be sixteen... eons away in time. Then I should go to France to be prepared for the great honor of queenship.

My mother did not share in the general rejoicing. I learned at an early age that she did not like the French.

I was three years old when an event took place which was of the greatest importance to my mother and therefore to me, although, of course, at this stage of my life I was blissfully ignorant of it and the storms which had begun to cast a cloud over my parents' marriage.

Later I heard all about it.

I had sensed that there had been a certain disappointment at my birth because I was not a boy, and was aware some time before my third birthday that there was an expectancy in the Court which had seeped into my household. People whispered. I caught a word here and there. I think I must have been rather precocious. I suppose any child in my position would have been. I did not know what the undercurrents meant but I did somehow sense that they were there.

My mother was ill and I heard it murmured that this was yet another disappointment, though "it would only have been a girl. The King was angry; the Queen was desolate. It was yet another case of hope unfulfilled.

"Well, there is time yet," I heard it said. "And after all there is the little Princess."

And then a boy was born—not to my mother, though. He was a very important boy, but he could not displace me. He was flawed in some way. He was—I heard the word spoken with pity and a touch of contempt—a bastard.

But there was something special about this bastard.

I learned the story later. Bessie Blount was not the King's first mistress. How my poor mother must have suffered! She, the daughter of proud Isabella and Ferdinand, to be forced to accept such a state of affairs. Men were not faithful... kings in particular... but they should veil their infidelities with discretion. I heard many tales of Bessie Blount; how she was the star of the Court, how she sang more prettily and danced more gracefully than any other; and how the King, tiring of his Spanish Queen who, in any case was more than five years his senior, was like every other man at Court fascinated by her.

There had been another woman before Bessie Blount's arrival on the scene. She was the sister of the Duke of Buckingham and was at Court with her husband. The Duke of Buckingham considered himself more royal than the Tudors. His father was descended from Thomas of Woodstock, who was the son of Edward III, and his mother had been Catherine Woodville, sister to Elizabeth, Queen of Edward IV. So he had good reasons—particularly as the Plantagenets were inclined to regard the Tudors as upstarts. My own dear Countess of Salisbury was very proud of her Plantagenet ancestry but she was wise enough not to talk of it.

However, the erring lady's sister-in-law discovered what was happening and reported it to her husband the Duke, who was incensed that a member of his family should so demean herself as to become any man's mistress, even if that man was the King. Being so conscious of his heritage, he was not the man to stand aside and had gone so far as to upbraid the King. It was really quite a storm and I could imagine the interest it aroused throughout the Court and the anguish it brought to my mother.

The woman was taken to a convent by her brother and kept there. The King and the Duke quarrelled with the result that Buckingham left the Court for a while. I suppose it was not considered to be a very serious incident but I believe it was the first time my mother had been aware that the King looked elsewhere for his comfort.

The Bessie Blount affair was quite another matter—no hole in the corner affair this. My father was now petulantly showing his discontent. All those years of marriage and only one child—and that a girl—to show for it! Something was wrong and, as my father could never see any fault in himself, he blamed my mother. He convinced himself that he had nobly married his brother's widow; when she was helpless, he had played the gallant knight as he loved to do in his masques and charades, and of chivalry he had married her. And how had she repaid him? By producing children who did not survive... apart from one daughter. It was unacceptable in his position. He must have heirs because the country needed them. He had been cheated.

There was no longer pleasure to be found in the marriage bed. God had not made him a monk, so ~~was only natural that he, so bitterly disappointed in his marriage, should turn aside for a little~~ relaxation to enable him to deal effectively with matters of state.

So there was the delectable Bessie, the star of the Court, so enchanting, desired by many. It was natural that she should comfort my father.

Perhaps it would not have been so important if Bessie had not become pregnant; and even that itself could not have made such a stir. But Bessie produced a boy—a healthy boy! The King's son—but, alas, born on the wrong side of the blanket, as they say.

A ripple of excitement ran through the Court, so obvious that even I, a child of three years, was conscious of it.

When my mother visited me, I noticed a sadness in her. It grieved me momentarily but when she saw this she was determined to hide it and became more merry than she usually was.

I forgot it. But later, of course, looking back, I saw that it was, in a way, the beginning.

The boy was named Henry after his father. He was a bright and goodlooking child, and the King was proud of him. He was known as Henry Fitzroy so that none should forget whose son he was. Bessie was married to Sir Gilbert Talboys, a man of great wealth, for it was considered fitting that as she was a mother she should be a wife. The boy must have the best and his father saw much of him. My mother used to talk to me about it during those dark days when the King's Secret Matter was, in spite of the appellation, the most discussed subject at Court.

When I was four years old, my parents went to France. There was a great deal of excitement about this visit because it was meant to mark a new bond of friendship between France and England. The King of France and my father were going to show the world that they were allies; but mainly they were telling this to the Emperor Charles, who was the rival of them both.

I wondered whether they would take me with them. But they did not. Instead I was sent to Richmond. This was a change from Ditton, although I had my household with me and the Countess and Lady Bryan were in charge. But the Countess did try to impress on me that it was different because my parents were out of the country and that put me into a more important position than I should have been in if they were here. I tried to grasp what this meant but the Countess seemed to decide that she could not explain. I heard her say to Lady Bryan, “How can this be expected of a child?”

There was a great deal of talk about what was happening in France and there were descriptions of splendid tournaments and entertainments. The occasion was referred to as “The Field of the Cloth of Gold,” which conjured up visions of great grandeur in my mind. My mother told me later that it was not all they had thought it was while it was in progress.

I have always deplored the fact that I missed great events and that they came to me by hearsay. I often told myself that, if I had been present, if I could have experienced these important occasions when they happened, I could have learned much and been able to deal more skillfully with my own problems when they arose.

It was while my parents were in France that three high-ranking Frenchmen came to the Court.

This threw the Countess into an agony of doubt. I heard her discussing the matter with Sir Henry Rowte.

“Of course, we have to consider her position. But such a child...Oh, no, it would be impossible, at least yet...”

Sir Henry said, “Her extreme youth must be considered by everyone. Surely...”

“But who is to receive them? She is... who she is...”

I understood that they were talking about me.

A decision was arrived at. The Countess came to my schoolroom where I was having a lesson on the virginals.

“Princess,” she said, “important gentlemen have come from France. If the King or Queen were here they would receive them, but as you know, they are in France. So ... as their daughter ... you must greet these arrivals.”

It did not occur to me that this would be difficult, and I suppose, as I felt no fear, I carried off the meeting in a manner which, on account of my youth, surprised all who beheld it. I knew how to hold out my hand to be kissed. I knew that I must smile and listen to what was said and, if I did not understand, merely go on smiling. It was easy.

I was aware of their admiration, and the Countess looked on, pursing her lips and nodding her head a little as she did when she was pleased.

One of the gentlemen asked me what I liked doing most. I considered a while and then said that I liked playing on the virginals.

Would I play for him? he asked.

I said I would.

I heard afterward that everyone marvelled at my skill in being able to play a tune without a fault. They said they had never known one so young such a good musician.

The Countess was gratified. She said my parents would be delighted to hear how I had entertained their guests during their absence.

Often during the years that followed, I would look back on those early days and fervently wish that I had never had to grow up.

In due course my parents returned from France. There was still a great deal of talk about the brilliant meeting of the two kings. I kept my ears open and heard scraps of conversation among the courtiers when I was with the Court. I learned how the two kings had vied with each other, how they were determined to show the world—and the Emperor Charles—that they were the best of friends. When they were in church together, each king had stood aside for the other to kiss the Bible first, and at length the King of France had prevailed on the King of England to do so, as he was a guest on French soil. My mother and the Queen of France had been equally careful of each other's feelings. I knew my mother had great sympathy with Queen Claude. I heard the whispers: François was a libertine with whom no woman was safe, and poor crippled Claude had a great deal to endure.

That occasion when the King of France had forced his way into my father's bedroom when he was in bed was much discussed. My father had said, “I am your prisoner,” but the King of France had charmingly replied, “Nay, I am your valet.” And he had handed him his shirt. It was all elaborate play acting to show the amity there was between them and to warn the Emperor Charles—who was a most ambitious young man—that he would have to face the might of the two countries, so he had better not think about attacking one of them.

On that occasion my father gave François a valuable jeweled collar, and François responded by giving him a bracelet of even greater value. That was how it was at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Each king had to outdo the other; and because of the shift in interests, because of the wily and unpredictable games they played, very soon it became clear to both participants that the entire venture had been an enormous waste of time and riches.

When my mother returned from France, young as I was, I detected that she was not happy.

understood later that she did not like the French; she did not trust François—and how right she was proved to be in that. Moreover, she had been most uneasy because the entire farce of the Field of the Cloth of Gold had been an act of defiance against the Emperor Charles. My mother was Spanish and although she was devoted to my father, she could not forget her native land. She had loved her mother as passionately as I was to love her and she me. It could not give her any pleasure, considering her strong family feeling, to witness her husband joining up with an ally in order to stand against her own nephew.

At this time there were three men of power astride Europe; they were François Premier of France, Charles, Emperor, the ruler of Spain, Austria and the Netherlands, and my father, the King of England. They were all more or less the same age—young, ambitious, determined to outdo each other. There was a similarity between François and my father; Charles was different. Not for him the extravagances, the lavish banquets, the splendid tournaments, the glittering garments. He was quiet and serious.

My mother was torn between husband and nephew. It grieved her greatly to think of them as enemies. She could not, of course, explain this to me at that time.

When my parents returned from France, after a short stay with them I went back to Ditton Park; but the following Christmas I was with them. Although I dearly loved the Countess of Salisbury, Lady Bryan and all my household, I looked forward with great pleasure to being with my parents. My father was such a glittering figure, and it delighted me, even at that early age, to see how he inspired a certain awe in everyone near him; even the greatest men, like the Cardinal, whom all respected and feared, bowed to my father. He had a loud laugh and when he was merry his face would light up with joy and everyone around him would be happy. I had seen him, though rarely, in a less than merry mood. Then his eyes would be like two little points of blue ice and his mouth would be such a small thin line that I thought it would disappear altogether. A terrible fear would descend on the company and it appeared to me that everyone would try to shrink out of sight. It was awesome and terrible. Someone usually hurried me out of the way at such times.

So, while I worshipped him, I did experience a little fear even in those days. But that only made him the more godlike.

With my mother I felt safe and happy always. She was dignified and aloof, as became a queen, but always warm and loving toward me and while I was proud to have such a glittering, all-powerful father, I was more deeply contented in the love of my mother.

That Christmas I spent with them was one I remember well. There were so many presents—not only from my parents but from the ladies and gentlemen of the Court. I remember the gold cup because it came from the Cardinal, and the silver flagons I think were from Princess Katharine Plantagenet, who was quite old, being the daughter of my great-grandfather, King Edward IV. In contrast to these valuable presents was one from a poor woman of Greenwich. She had made a little rosemary bush for me all hung with gilt spangles. It gave me as much pleasure as any.

My mother made it a Christmas to delight me and sent for a company of children to act plays for me. I remember some of those plays well. They were written by a man called John Heywood who was later to make quite a success with his dramatic works.

Those early years were spent mainly in the calm serenity of Ditton, with occasional visits to my parents. These memories are of laughter, music and dancing, of cooks and scullions rushing hither and thither with great dishes of beef, mutton, capons, boars' heads and suckling pigs, and in fact any meal it was possible to think of; of eating, drinking and general merrymaking, with my father always at the center. He could sing and hold the company spellbound—perhaps as much by his royalty as his talent.

but there was no doubt that in the dance he could leap higher than any; he was indefatigable. No stranger, seeing him for the first time, could have doubted that he was the King and master of us all.

I was proud to be his daughter, and if I could have had one wish it would have been that my sex might be changed, so that I could be the boy who would have delighted him as Henry Fitzroy did and so rid my mother of that look of anxiety which I saw more and more frequently in her face.

But perhaps Henry Fitzroy felt something of the same, for he could not give my father complete pleasure because he was illegitimate. So he was flawed even as I was.

Shortly after my parents returned from France, something happened which caused anxiety to my godmother, the Countess of Salisbury. At my tender age I was aware only of a ripple of disturbance and it was not until later that I understood what it meant.

It concerned Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, whose rank brought him close to the King, and on the surface they were good friends. Just before the party went to France, Buckingham had entertained the King lavishly at Penshurst. I heard people talking about the masques and banquets which had been of such splendor as to surpass even those given by the King himself.

Buckingham was not a wise man. He could never forget his royal descent and would remind people of it in any way which offered itself. He should have remembered that, although he was so proud of it in the mind of a Tudor it could arouse certain suspicions. A clever man would have been more subtle but from what I heard of Buckingham he had never been that. The King might enjoy the entertainments while they lasted, but afterward might he not ask himself: Why should this man seek to outdo royalty? The answer was, because he regarded himself as equally royal... no, not equally, more so.

It was true that the Tudors' grip on the crown was not as secure as they would wish. My grandfather Henry VII, had seized it when he defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485; and many would have said that his claim to it was not a very strong one. Buckingham was one of those. Later I was to see my father's eyes narrow as he contemplated such men. At that time he was more tolerant than he became later. Then he delighted in the approval of his subjects, but later he only wished them to accept his rule. It was up to them to like it or risk his displeasure. My father was a man who changed a great deal over the years. At this time he was only just passing out of that phase in which he appeared to be full of bonhomie and good will toward men, which made him the most popular monarch men remembered. It was the growing discord in his marriage which was changing him; he was turning from a satisfied man to a disgruntled one, and that affected his nature and consequently his attitude toward his subjects.

Buckingham had powerful connections in the present as well as the past. He was married to the daughter of the Percys, the great lords of the North. His son—his only one—had married the Countess of Salisbury's daughter, so that made a family connection between him and my godmother. Small wonder that she was worried. He had three daughters, one of whom had married into the Norfolk family, one to the Earl of Westmorland and the third to Lord Abergavenny. So it was clear that Buckingham was well connected.

Someone said of him, "My lord Buckingham is a nobleman who would be a royal ruler."

Knowing my father, now I can guess that such a remark would set up warning signals in his mind. His father had been plagued by pretenders to the throne—Perkin Warbeck, Lambert Simnel, to name the two most important. A king who sits warily on the throne has to be careful.

Buckingham was a stupid man. It was a great mistake to antagonize Wolsey. Obsessed by his nobility, I suppose it was natural that he should resent a man of lowly birth who had climbed so high that the King relied on his judgment and had more affection for him than he had for the greater

nobleman in the land.

He should have had more sense than to pit his wits against Wolsey. Precarious as his position was with the King, he could not afford to challenge the cleverest man in the kingdom.

For some time my father must have been toying with the idea of ridding himself of the arrogant Buckingham who, in time, would doubtless be laying claim to the throne.

Matters came to a head over a simple incident, as such matters do.

It was the custom for one of the highest-ranking nobles to hold the basin while the King washed his hands. This was Buckingham's duty. Wolsey was standing beside the King, chatting amiably to him as they did together, for if my father liked someone he never hesitated to show it and would allow that person all sorts of privileges; and when the King had finished washing his hands, Wolsey attempted to use the basin too.

Buckingham was incensed that he should be holding the basin for a lowborn son of a butcher, as he called him. Wolsey's father had owned land in Ipswich and may have bred sheep and cattle; if so, he doubtless sold the carcasses. In any case the epithet "Butcher's Cur" was often bestowed on him by his many enemies and frequently used by those jealous of his power. The Duke tilted the basin and poured the water onto Wolsey's shoes.

The King was amused and nothing was made of the incident at the time, but naturally it was not brushed aside. Wolsey would not forget; Buckingham had to be taught a lesson; and as the King was already uneasy about Buckingham's pretensions to royalty, it was not difficult to bring a charge against him.

Men in high positions can be sure of one thing: they have many enemies. It was not long before a case was brought against Buckingham and he was committed to the Tower on a charge of treason.

I believe it was easy to prove a case against him. He was supposed to have listened to prophecies of the King's death and his own succession to the crown and of even expressing an intention to kill my father, but that was mainly hearsay. The King wanted to be rid of him. He would always be a menace. He must have remembered the uneasiness of his own father, and Buckingham was condemned as a traitor. He was beheaded on Tower Hill, and his body was buried in the church of Austin Friars.

I should not have known anything of this at the time, as I was only five years old, but I was aware of the effect it had on the Countess, for the Duke's son was her son-in-law and it was a family tragedy. The Countess was a clever woman. She knew that the Duke had not lost his head because of treasonable acts. He had died because of his closeness to the throne. And she herself? She was even closer. Her father had been the brother of Edward IV. My father was the grandson of that Edward through his mother, so they were closely related; but the Countess through the male line.

My dear Countess, being astute and a very wise woman, would have realized that the Duke was a very foolish man who had himself to blame for a great deal of his misfortunes. But also it would have been brought home to her that, in view of her own royal connections, she was in a very precarious position.

Children are perceptive and perhaps, being brought up as I had been, I was particularly so. But I do remember that time and I was very conscious of a change in the Countess. She must have been a very worried woman.

One day my mother arrived at Ditton. I was then six years old but being close to events such as the birth of Henry Fitzroy and the death of the Duke of Buckingham, I was beginning to acquire a greater understanding than would have been expected from one of my tender years.

My mother looked happy and, having been mildly conscious of the Countess's distress and that my

mother had previously been anxious about something, I rejoiced to see her so.

She embraced the Countess and they talked together for a while. Then I was brought to them. My mother kissed me with great affection.

The Countess said, "I doubt not that Your Grace will wish to talk to the Princess alone."

"Oh yes," replied my mother. "I can scarcely wait to impart the good news."

When we were alone, she sat down and drew me to her. I stood beside her, her arms encircling me. I watched the happiness in her eyes and eagerly waited to hear this good news.

"My dearest child," she said, "you are to be betrothed."

I was puzzled. I thought I was betrothed. When I was sixteen I was to go to France to learn how to be Queen of that country when I married the boy who was now Dauphin.

"Yes, my lady," I said. "I know I am."

She shook her head. "You do not understand, dear child. This is wonderful news. You are going to marry the Emperor Charles."

The Emperor Charles! But he was our enemy! The Field of the Cloth of Gold had taken place to let him know how friendly we were with my future father-in-law, the King of France.

"But, my lady," I stammered, "what of the Dauphin?"

My mother smiled tenderly at me. "That, my dearest, is over, and it greatly pleases me that this should be. It would have been a great tragedy. But let us rejoice. The Emperor Charles is the greatest ruler in Europe... next to your father," she added quickly. "He is half Spanish... the son of my own dear sister Juana. It is what I have always wanted for you."

I glowed with pleasure. If my mother wanted it, it must be good. And it was wonderful to see her so happy.

"Does my father wish this?" I asked.

She laughed. "He wishes it...or it would not be. You see, it is better for our country to be friendly with the Emperor than with France. Everything is good about this match. You are half Spanish through me ... and the Emperor is through his mother. Friendship with the Emperor is better for England. The alliance with France brought us no good. It would have ruined the wool trade which is so important for England for our wool goes to Flanders, and Flanders is in the dominions of the great Emperor Charles—as is so much of Europe. But you are too young to understand..."

"Oh no, my lady. I want to know. I want to know ... all."

She took my face in her hands and kissed it. "This is a happy day for me," she said.

So if it was a happy day for her, it must be for me, too.

After that my mother, Lady Salisbury and Lady Bryan talked to me often about the Emperor. They made me feel that I was the most fortunate girl in the world because I was to be his bride.

He was powerful; he was clever; he was handsome; he was everything that a young girl could hope for in a husband. By great good fortune I had been saved from a match with the wicked and corrupt King of France, and now I was to be awarded the greatest prize in Christendom.

My bridegroom-to-be was twenty-three years old. I was six, so there did seem to be a certain disparity in our ages. This was nothing, my mother told me. I would soon grow up. I wanted to say that Charles would grow too and as I grew older so must he. In seven years, they told me, when I was fourteen, Charles would be in his prime.

It was wonderful to see everyone happy; so I was happy, too, for I believed that everything that

pleased my mother must be good and right and please me.

One day she told me that Charles was so delighted with everything he had heard of me that he was coming to England to see me for himself and that if I pleased him there would be a formal betrothal.

I was a little anxious that I might not please him, but the Countess soothed my anxieties with a tender smile. "You are your father's daughter, Princess," she said. "That is enough to please anyone."

All the women of the household used to talk of my romance with the Emperor Charles.

"The Princess is in love," they would say. "I declare she is always dreaming about her bridegroom. And who can wonder? Such a bridegroom! The great Emperor himself."

It was a game to me. I laughed with them. It seemed wonderful to be in love because it made everyone so happy.

My mother came to Ditton. She was very excited.

"I have wonderful news for you, little daughter. The Emperor will soon be here."

I clasped my hands. I should see him... this wonderful creature, this god who, in my mind, would be rather like my father but not frightening, tender like my mother, in spite of the fact that he was so powerful—or almost—as my father.

"Yes," said my mother. "Although at this time he is engaged in a war, he is coming to see you."

It seemed marvelous. No one told me that it was *because* he was engaged in a war, because he wanted my father's support against the French, that he had agreed to take me as his bride, even though he would have to wait years before I could take up that position, and that in his mind this was something which might never happen.

I believed then that he loved me. I had been told so, and it did not occur to me, at that time, that my elders did not always mean what they said. They had told me that I was going to live happily with him for the rest of my life, and this would begin as soon as I was old enough to go to him. What could be more enticing than a rosy future in the far distance, so that I could contemplate it with a comfortable pleasure knowing that nothing could be changed for many years?

It seemed so simple as my inexperienced imagination grappled with the scraps of information I had received. I saw the wicked King François, with his long nose and satanic eyes, who had betrayed my father at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, who, all the time he had been professing friendship, was trying to humiliate him, who had greeted him as brother merely because he wanted help against that knight of shining virtue, the Emperor Charles.

In due course Charles arrived in England. It was June, four months after my sixth birthday. I was at Greenwich, in a state of immense excitement because this most wonderful being would in due course arrive here and I should come face to face with him.

The Countess talked continually of him—of what I must do, of how I must not speak unless spoken to. I must practice the virginals, for he would surely wish to hear me play. I danced well, but I must dance better. I must outshine all other dancers. He would be interested in my learning perhaps more than my social graces. He was that sort of man. So I must be at my best in every way. There were discussions with the seamstress. What should I wear for the great occasion?

I was in a fever of excitement.

"The Princess is in love," giggled the women.

Each day I awaited his arrival and was disappointed.

"Why does he not come?" I demanded of Lady Salisbury.

"Your father will not let him go," she replied. "You see, the Emperor is a very great ruler. He is a

important in his own country as your father is here. They will have much to speak of. Your father will wish to give him great entertainments and, although the Emperor would rather come to see his bride, etiquette demands that he must partake in all the banquets, witness the masques and enjoy the pleasures which have been prepared for him. That is why he cannot come immediately."

There were accounts of what was happening. London, I heard, was eager to welcome the Emperor. I thought this was because everyone was aware of his excellence. I did not know that our recent friendship with the French had threatened the trade in wool which was our country's greatest export and that the merchants realized that alliance with the Emperor was more beneficial to us than that with France. I did not know that the Emperor was most anxious for England's support against his enemy King François and that there was nothing more calculated to make firm alliances between countries than marriages. I also did not know that betrothals were undertaken with an ease only to be compared with that with which they were set aside when it was expedient to do so.

How could I at the age of six be expected to know such things? It is only by bitter experience that one learns.

So I listened to the reports of the meeting between my father and the Emperor, and I could visualize the banners in the streets, the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen, so splendidly attired, all the citizens of London, and the King and the Queen riding out to welcome my betrothed, surrounded by their retinues of noblemen, each trying to outdo the others in his glory.

I imagined the pageants, the speeches of welcome, the plays performed for the Emperor's enjoyment. I wished that I could see them: the wonderful tableaux which sprang to life as the Emperor approached, representing the two rulers embracing. There was one, I heard, representing England. It was quite magical. It was of the countryside and depicted birds and animals, and above it was an image of God with a banner proclaiming: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are the children of God."

Every day I heard of the tournaments and masques which were performed for the Emperor's pleasure. They were very extravagant and many of them reviled the wicked French and depicted the determination of the new allies to suppress the sly François.

"The Emperor," said the Countess, "is a very serious young man. It is said that he would prefer the talk of diplomacy, but the King is determined to show him how he welcomes his friends."

What the Emperor wanted was something more than a mockery of the French; he wanted more than sympathetic talk; he wanted action from my father; in other words, he wanted the English to declare war on France; and in exchange for this he was ready to be betrothed to the King's daughter.

My mother came to Greenwich. There was great excitement. At last it was about to happen. I was to see my bridegroom.

My mother was all smiles and happiness. She said to me, "He is coming to see you. Your father and he have come to an agreement. All is going well." Then she took me into her arms. "This is the dearest wish of my life. My dear sister's boy and my own daughter. If I could only tell you what this means to me!"

She was brisk suddenly. "Now we must prepare," she told me. "We must be ready when he comes. We must not disappoint him. We must make sure that you are all that he has been led to believe you are."

There was little time left. I practiced the virginals. I danced, twirling as I had never twirled before and in due course I donned the most splendid garments I had ever worn and was standing beside my mother when the barge containing my betrothed came sailing along the river to Greenwich.

I could hear the music and the cheering of the people on the banks of the river. I felt my mother's reassuring touch on my shoulder.

“Soon now, daughter,” she murmured. “Soon he will be here.”

He stood there beside my father in the barge. The contrast was great. Every man looked insignificant beside my father so I was accustomed to that. In cloth of gold with diamonds in his bonnet my father scintillated; and with him was the Cardinal in his magnificent red. Charles...he was so different. His clothes were black and somber, lightened only by the heavy gold chain about his neck. But when he took off his cap I saw how fair his hair was, and I thought: He is as kingly as my father and he does not need fine clothes to remind people of this. They had told me that I was in love with him and I believed I was. It suddenly seemed to me that there was something more dignified in his garments that were somber than those of a gaudy richness. Such thoughts might have been disloyal to my father, but I had to remember that I was in love. I must be, because they had told me so; and I was happy to see my mother so contented.

My mother and he looked at each other in silence for a few moments, then they embraced.

He spoke to her in Spanish and she answered him. There was a trill of happiness in her voice. She told me afterward that meeting him brought back memories of her childhood and her sister and dear mother. His first words were of the happiness it gave him to see his dear aunt and his charming cousin whom he already loved.

Then he knelt and, as I had been told to do, I stretched out my hand; he took it and kissed it.

I was able to study him. He was tallish, though no man looked tall beside my father. Being so fair he did not look Spanish. His father had been Austrian and one of the handsomest men in Europe. He had been known as “Philip the Fair.” Charles was very pale, and his eyes were of light blue. His teeth were a little discolored and he had a heavy jaw which I learned he had inherited from the Hapsburgs. He was not handsome after the manner of my father, but his eyes were gentle and his smile told me that he liked me.

My father was watching with good humor, so I knew that all was well. It was a happy time. I played the virginals for him; I danced; and he looked on with approval.

People said: “The Princess is enchanting.”

I suppose those were some of the happiest days of my life.

It seemed that he was with us for a long time. When I look back, I feel sure that he looked without amusement upon those merry masques. When my father entered the great hall in an assumed disguise—as if his royal dignity could ever have been concealed; he was himself and there was none other like him—Charles would rather have been discussing ways of defeating the French than partaking in frivolous dances.

He was always kind and attentive to me. We rode together. He told my mother that I must learn the Spanish tongue, and she agreed with him. She had spoken it with me now and then, so that I was not entirely ignorant of it—a fact which pleased Charles very much.

AFTER A WEEK or so at Greenwich, we traveled to Windsor, where the matrimonial treaty was signed. It was a very solemn ceremony presided over by the Cardinal, and when it ended I was the affianced bride of the Emperor, destined one day to rule over many lands.

It was awe-inspiring, and I thought I should be happy for the rest of my days.

I learned that I was to be married when I was twelve years old.

England had declared war on France, and my father and the Emperor had agreed as to how they would divide that country between them when they had conquered it.

I was dismayed when I heard that Charles wished me to go to Spain that I might be brought up the Spanish manner. Fortunately my parents would not allow this. I was delighted and flattered that they did not want to part with me.

My father said that, if I was to be brought up as a Spanish lady, who better to supervise the upbringing than my own mother?

I could see that the idea delighted her, for she could spend more time with me than previously her duties as Queen had allowed her to.

There always had been a special love between my mother and me and as we grew closer she talked to me more openly than she had before. I was growing up; and she was delighted that I was destined for Spain.

“My dearest child,” she said. “I always knew that a daughter has to leave her mother at some time. I left mine to come to England. But I shall know that you will be in Spain, my country... the land where I spent my childhood, and you will go there as a bride. You will love Spain, Mary. You will love it because it was your mother's home and you will love it for itself and because it will become yours. We are more serious than the English. We are more restrained ... more formal. Your father is one who understands the English love—although in truth he is half Welsh ... but he has become an ideal Englishman. He is greatly loved by his subjects. You, my child, are more as I am. Spain will be your natural home. I am so happy for you.”

She talked then of her mother and her father, Isabella and Ferdinand. “My mother was the most wonderful lady I ever knew. She was a great ruler and a loving mother. It is not always easy to be both. You are an only child.” I saw the look of terror pass over her face, and it frightened me. “I was the youngest of the family,” she went on. “I had a brother and three sisters. I was happy in my family and in spite of the fact that my mother was much engaged in matters of state, she had always time to spend with us, to listen to what we had to say and to make us understand that, whatever else she was, she was first our mother.”

Her sad eyes looked back to those days and I saw them light up with the pleasure which comes from happy memories, even though they must be tinged with sorrow because they are past.

“I was only five...more or less your age... when my sister Isabel was betrothed in Seville to Alfonso of Portugal. It was a grand ceremony. My sisters Juana and Maria were with me. Two years later I was present at the triumphant entry into Granada. That was when my parents had driven out the Moors. They were stirring times... and yet I remember more clearly our family life than these great events.”

“You must have been sad, my lady, to leave it.”

“Ah, my dear child, how sad I was...and how frightened! I was sixteen years old when I set sail for England. I came to marry your Uncle Arthur, you know. Poor Arthur, he died soon after our marriage.”

“And then you married my father.”

“Yes, but it was not until some time after.” She shut her eyes as though this was something too painful to contemplate.

“So you have had two husbands, my lady.”

“Arthur was not really a husband. Well, we had gone through the ceremony but he was too young for marriage, and all the time we were together he was ill...so ill.”

“You loved him, did you?”

She hesitated. “He was a kind, good boy, but he was so sick...so different from your father. It was hard to believe that they were brothers. We were sent down to Ludlow because, as he was Prince of

Wales, he must have his own Court. We had only been there a few months when he died. Poor Arthur his was a sad life. And then your father, who had been destined for the Church, became the Prince of Wales and future King.”

“It is hard to imagine my father's being anything but King, and certainly not a priest.”

She nodded. “Yes. He was made for kingship. Ah, I grow sad, thinking of the old days, and now we have so much for which we can rejoice. You are going to be happy, my daughter. And we have to prepare you for your future. I am glad Dr. Linacre is with us. He was tutor to Prince Arthur and I know his value.”

I liked Dr. Linacre. He was a very old man—a scholar as well as a doctor of medicine. He had written several books—chiefly on grammar. There was one he had produced for Prince Arthur and he had done another for me. He was rather feeble now and very different from Johannes Ludovicus Vive whom my mother had brought from Spain to supervise my studies.

With the coming of this man, my life changed. It was my first encounter with a fanatic. He was pale, aesthetic and lean. He was one of those people who enjoy tormenting themselves as well as other people. It was his firm belief that we were not set on Earth to enjoy our lives, and that there was great virtue in suffering. The more thorny our earthly path, the greater glory we should come to in Heaven. He was completely different from my father, who, while he always kept a wary and placating eye on the life to come, had a great determination to enjoy his time on Earth; and I was sure I believed that it was God's will, since he had been endowed with special means to do so. They had one thing in common though; they were both tyrants, but I did not discover this in my father until later. It is amazing, looking back, how clearly one sees things. My firm belief in the Catholic Faith and my conviction that all those who diverged from it were sinners who deserved to die were instilled into me at an early age—and I could never rid myself of them. My frail health might have been due to long hours spent over my books and anxiety to please my exacting tutor.

My half-sister Elizabeth, who at this time was not born, but who later became so important in my life that she seemed at times to dominate it, was given a similar education, but she was different. She never felt the same fidelity to religion; she had her eyes set on one goal throughout her life; she wanted to rule the country, and rarely did she stray from the path of selfinterest. She would have been a Catholic if that was what people wanted. She was not there to plague me at this time, but later I did fall into the habit of comparing myself with her.

Vives had made it clear that if he was to have charge of my education, he must have complete control. My mother was absolutely under his influence. He was Spanish and I was to be Spanish. From my marriage with her nephew, she could find consolation for all that she had suffered in England. As for my father, he was immersed in his own schemes at this time and they did not include me... only when I became a minor nuisance, but this was not so at this early stage.

He had said, “If the Emperor could search all Christendom for a mistress to bring up the Prince Mary and frame her after the manner of Spain, who could be found more meet than the Queen's Grace her mother, who comes of the royal House of Spain and who, for the affection she beareth the Emperor, will nurture her and bring her up to his satisfaction.”

It sounded very flattering to my mother, and I was delighted that he was anxious that I should not go to Spain as the Emperor wished. In my innocence I thought it was a measure of my father's love for me.

How bitter I became later and it was small wonder. In fact, he did not wish me to go because in his heart he was already wondering whether the match would ever take place and whether he should soon reverse his loyalties and it would be the French for whom he would show friendship, which could

mean offering up his daughter on a different sacrificial altar.

But at that time I lived in my dreams, and I must obey the rules which Vives had drawn up and submitted to my parents. I must be governed by these rules, and there must be no divergence from them. Then he said I should remember my mother's domestic example of probity and wisdom and except if all human expectations fail, I should be holy and good by necessity.

My mother had been brought up most virtuously, but she had had sisters and a brother, and I used to long for some of my own. If only I had a sister—someone to play with, to share things with. I knew enough to realize that I was echoing the wishes of my parents.

I had been rather fond of stories of romance and chivalry. It had been pleasant after lessons and outdoor exercise to settle down and read with the Countess or perhaps Margaret Bryan.

When Vives heard this he was shocked. "Idle books!" he declared. "There shall be an end to this. If there are stories for recreation, they must be from the Bible, though the classical and historical might be permitted occasionally."

Everything I did must be with the object of improving my mind. Fiction was out of the question. No more romances, such as Lancelot du Lac and Pyramus and Thisbe. I might read the story of the patient Griselda, for this would strengthen my character.

Card-playing was definitely forbidden. I must not preoccupy myself with finery of any sort. Instead of gloating over silks and fine brocades, I should commit to memory certain Greek and Latin passages which would be set for me; and I was recommended to repeat them at night until I was word perfect. Only then could I go to bed with the knowledge that I had earned my rest.

I was spending a great deal of time at my desk. I had always been a studious child and fond of learning, but I did want a chance to be out of doors, to train my goshawk, perhaps to play games with other children. I grew rather pale. I was already a little thin.

The Countess was worried. She had long conversations with my mother. "The Princess is but a child," she said. "There is too much work and too little play."

"She has to be trained for a great role," explained my mother. "Johannes Ludovicus Vives is one of the greatest living scholars. We must keep to his rules or he will turn his back on us and go back to Spain."

"Better that than the Princess's health should suffer."

My mother began to worry about my health but she felt that Vives must not be offended.

The Countess was adamant. There were occasions when she remembered that she was a Plantagenet and this was one of them. She declared that she would not be responsible for my health if the rules were not relaxed a little.

"It is true that the Princess must study," she said, "but she is already beyond the standard expectations of a princess of her age. There should be leisure in everyone's life, particularly for the young."

She so thoroughly alarmed my mother that I did study less. Sometimes I think they were right to drive me, for although my health has at times been frail, I was always able to enjoy the company of some of the wisest men in the kingdom, which must have been due to my excellent education.

When the question of my being overstrained was brought to the notice of Vives, he pointed out that the daughters of Sir Thomas More were examples of educated women, and they could be regarded as a lesson to all. Sir Thomas's daughter Margaret was the most highly educated woman of the time and she was in good health. When I learned something of the More household, I realized that in such a happy family, which was full of fun and laughter, learning had been something to be enjoyed; and Sir Thomas would never force his children to do what they did not wish to. It was not that I did not wa

to learn. I did. It was just that I was often so tired and in danger of falling asleep at my desk.

All the time I thought of the Emperor Charles. I built up a picture of a hero in my mind. My mother, the Countess and all the women of the household constantly told me how much I loved my future husband. He was always in my thoughts. When I read my books, when I translated my Latin passages I thought of him and how proud he would be of me.

THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS continued for two years, until I was nine years old. It was the year 1526—an eventful one for me because, I suppose, during it I grew up. I ceased to be an innocent child, for many things were revealed to me.

I had been vaguely aware that a great deal had been happening in Europe during that time. I had known that my father and my beloved Emperor were friends and allies and that we were at war with that wicked man of Europe whose evil schemes the heroes were determined to suppress. That was François Premier.

One day I saw my mother in a state of great excitement. It was good news, she told me. The war would soon be over. François, attempting to take Pavia, had been captured and was now the Emperor's prisoner in Madrid.

It was wonderful. It was good triumphing over evil, which I believed to be always the case in the end.

“Your father and the Emperor will now jointly invade France, and between them they will share the land.”

I listened, starry-eyed.

The Cardinal came to see me. I was not sure that I liked him. He was always rather unctuous but at the same time giving an impression that it would be unwise to cross him.

He kissed my hand with reverence and asked after my health. Then he told me he had brought something to show me. He opened a case and in it was a magnificent emerald ring.

“It is very beautiful,” I said.

“His Grace, your father, and I believe it is time you showed the Emperor your true feelings for him. I know you regard him with great tenderness.”

“Yes, my lord Cardinal.”

He smiled at me. “That is well. Did you know that the emerald is often a gift bestowed by lovers? It is said that the brilliant green will fade if the lover who receives it is unfaithful. Would you not like to send this to the Emperor as a token of your love for him?”

“Oh yes,” I said. “Yes, I should like to do that.”

He smiled benignly. “I have written a letter telling him that your love for His great Eminence has raised such a passion in you that it is confirmed by jealousy, which is the first sign and token of love.”

“Perhaps one should not say that, there being no cause for jealousy.”

“Ah, but you would be jealous if there was a cause.”

“Oh ... mayhap,” I agreed.

“Then it shall be sent. I am sure the emerald will retain its brilliant green for many a year.”

So the emerald was sent and the Cardinal visited me again to tell me that when the Emperor received the ring he had said he would wear it for the sake of the Princess. Those were his very words.

The Cardinal seemed very satisfied, smiling inwardly, it seemed to me, by which I mean not at all but at his secret thoughts.

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