

MAPK TBEH

THE PRINCE

AND THE

PAUPER

Марк Твен

The Prince and the Pauper

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Mark Twain

The Prince and the Pauper

Chapter I. The birth of the Prince and the Pauper

In the ancient city of London, on a certain autumn day in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, a boy was born to a poor family of the name of Canty, who did not want him. On the same day another English child was born to a rich family of the name of Tudor, who did want him. All England wanted him too. England had so longed for him, and hoped for him, and prayed God for him, that, now that he was really come, the people went nearly mad for joy. Mere acquaintances hugged and kissed each other and cried. Everybody took a holiday, and high and low, rich and poor, feasted and danced and sang, and got very mellow; and they kept this up for days and nights together. By day, London was a sight to see, with gay banners waving from every balcony and housetop, and splendid pageants marching along. By night, it was again a sight to see, with its great bonfires at every corner, and its troops of revellers making merry around them. There was no talk in all England but of the new baby, Edward Tudor, Prince of Wales, who lay lapped in silks and satins, unconscious of all this fuss, and not knowing that great lords and ladies were tending him and watching over him – and not caring, either. But there was no talk about the other baby, Tom Canty, lapped in his poor rags, except among the family of paupers whom he had just come to trouble with his presence.

Chapter II. Tom's early life

Let us skip a number of years.

London was fifteen hundred years old, and was a great town – for that day. It had a hundred thousand inhabitants – some think double as many. The streets were very narrow, and crooked, and dirty, especially in the part where Tom Canty lived, which was not far from London Bridge. The houses were of wood, with the second story projecting over the first, and the third sticking its elbows out beyond the second. The higher the houses grew, the broader they grew. They were skeletons of strong criss-cross beams, with solid material between, coated with plaster. The beams were painted red or blue or black, according to the owner's taste, and this gave the houses a very picturesque look. The windows were small, glazed with little diamond-shaped panes, and they opened outward, on hinges, like doors.

The house which Tom's father lived in was up a foul little pocket called Offal Court, out of Pudding Lane. It was small, decayed, and rickety, but it was packed full of wretchedly poor families. Canty's tribe occupied a room on the third floor. The mother and father had a sort of bedstead in the corner; but Tom, his grandmother, and his two sisters, Bet and Nan, were not restricted – they had all the floor to themselves, and might sleep where they chose. There were the remains of a blanket or two, and some bundles of ancient and dirty straw, but these could not rightly be called beds, for they were not organised; they were kicked into a general pile, mornings, and selections made from the mass at night, for service.

Bet and Nan were fifteen years old – twins. They were good-hearted girls, unclean, clothed in rags, and profoundly ignorant. Their mother was like them. But the father and the grandmother were a couple of fiends. They got drunk whenever they could; then they fought each other or anybody else who came in the way; they cursed and swore always, drunk or sober; John Canty was a thief, and his mother a beggar. They made beggars of the children, but failed to make thieves of them. Among, but not of, the dreadful rabble that inhabited the house, was a good old priest whom the King had turned out of house and home with a pension of a few farthings, and he used to get the children aside and teach them right ways secretly. Father Andrew also taught Tom a little Latin, and how to read and write; and would have done the same with the girls, but they were afraid of the jeers of their friends, who could not have endured such a queer accomplishment in them.

All Offal Court was just such another hive as Canty's house. Drunkenness, riot and brawling were the order, there, every night and nearly all night long. Broken heads were as common as hunger in that place. Yet little Tom was not unhappy. He had a hard time of it, but did not know it. It was the sort of time that all the Offal Court boys had, therefore he supposed it was the correct and comfortable thing. When he came home empty-handed at night, he knew his father would curse him and thrash him first, and that when he was done the awful grandmother would do it all over again and improve on it; and that away in the night his starving mother would slip to him stealthily with any miserable scrap or crust she had been able to save for him by going hungry herself, notwithstanding she was often caught in that sort of treason and soundly beaten for it by her husband.

No, Tom's life went along well enough, especially in summer. He only begged just enough to save himself, for the laws against mendicancy were stringent, and the penalties heavy; so he put in a good deal of his time listening to good Father Andrew's charming old tales and legends about giants and fairies, dwarfs and genii, and enchanted castles, and gorgeous kings and princes. His head grew to be full of these wonderful things, and many a night as he lay in the dark on his scant and offensive straw, tired, hungry, and smarting from a thrashing, he unleashed his imagination and soon forgot his aches and pains in delicious picturings to himself of the charmed life of a petted prince in a regal palace. One desire came in time to haunt him day and night: it was to see a real prince, with his own

eyes. He spoke of it once to some of his Offal Court comrades; but they jeered him and scoffed him so unmercifully that he was glad to keep his dream to himself after that.

He often read the priest's old books and got him to explain and enlarge upon them. His dreamings and readings worked certain changes in him, by- and-by. His dream-people were so fine that he grew to lament his shabby clothing and his dirt, and to wish to be clean and better clad. He went on playing in the mud just the same, and enjoying it, too; but, instead of splashing around in the Thames solely for the fun of it, he began to find an added value in it because of the washings and cleansings it afforded.

Tom could always find something going on around the Maypole in Cheapside, and at the fairs; and now and then he and the rest of London had a chance to see a military parade when some famous unfortunate was carried prisoner to the Tower, by land or boat. One summer's day he saw poor Anne Askew and three men burned at the stake in Smithfield, and heard an ex-Bishop preach a sermon to them which did not interest him. Yes, Tom's life was varied and pleasant enough, on the whole.

By-and-by Tom's reading and dreaming about princely life wrought such a strong effect upon him that he began to *act* the prince, unconsciously. His speech and manners became curiously ceremonious and courtly, to the vast admiration and amusement of his intimates. But Tom's influence among these young people began to grow now, day by day; and in time he came to be looked up to, by them, with a sort of wondering awe, as a superior being. He seemed to know so much! and he could do and say such marvellous things! and withal, he was so deep and wise! Tom's remarks, and Tom's performances, were reported by the boys to their elders; and these, also, presently began to discuss Tom Canty, and to regard him as a most gifted and extraordinary creature. Full-grown people brought their perplexities to Tom for solution, and were often astonished at the wit and wisdom of his decisions. In fact he was become a hero to all who knew him except his own family – these, only, saw nothing in him.

Privately, after a while, Tom organised a royal court! He was the prince; his special comrades were guards, chamberlains, equerries, lords and ladies in waiting, and the royal family. Daily the mock prince was received with elaborate ceremonials borrowed by Tom from his romantic readings; daily the great affairs of the mimic kingdom were discussed in the royal council, and daily his mimic highness issued decrees to his imaginary armies, navies, and viceroalties.

After which, he would go forth in his rags and beg a few farthings, eat his poor crust, take his customary cuffs and abuse, and then stretch himself upon his handful of foul straw, and resume his empty grandeurs in his dreams.

And still his desire to look just once upon a real prince, in the flesh, grew upon him, day by day, and week by week, until at last it absorbed all other desires, and became the one passion of his life.

One January day, on his usual begging tour, he tramped despondently up and down the region round about Mincing Lane and Little East Cheap, hour after hour, bare-footed and cold, looking in at cook-shop windows and longing for the dreadful pork-pies and other deadly inventions displayed there – for to him these were dainties fit for the angels; that is, judging by the smell, they were – for it had never been his good luck to own and eat one. There was a cold drizzle of rain; the atmosphere was murky; it was a melancholy day. At night Tom reached home so wet and tired and hungry that it was not possible for his father and grandmother to observe his forlorn condition and not be moved – after their fashion; wherefore they gave him a brisk cuffing at once and sent him to bed. For a long time his pain and hunger, and the swearing and fighting going on in the building, kept him awake; but at last his thoughts drifted away to far, romantic lands, and he fell asleep in the company of jewelled and gilded princelings who live in vast palaces, and had servants salaaming before them or flying to execute their orders. And then, as usual, he dreamed that *he* was a princeling himself.

All night long the glories of his royal estate shone upon him; he moved among great lords and ladies, in a blaze of light, breathing perfumes, drinking in delicious music, and answering the reverent

obeisances of the glittering throng as it parted to make way for him, with here a smile, and there a nod of his princely head.

And when he awoke in the morning and looked upon the wretchedness about him, his dream had had its usual effect – it had intensified the sordidness of his surroundings a thousandfold. Then came bitterness, and heart-break, and tears.

Chapter III. Tom's meeting with the Prince

Tom got up hungry, and sauntered hungry away, but with his thoughts busy with the shadowy splendours of his night's dreams. He wandered here and there in the city, hardly noticing where he was going, or what was happening around him. People jostled him, and some gave him rough speech; but it was all lost on the musing boy. By-and-by he found himself at Temple Bar, the farthest from home he had ever travelled in that direction. He stopped and considered a moment, then fell into his imaginings again, and passed on outside the walls of London. The Strand had ceased to be a country-road then, and regarded itself as a street, but by a strained construction; for, though there was a tolerably compact row of houses on one side of it, there were only some scattered great buildings on the other, these being palaces of rich nobles, with ample and beautiful grounds stretching to the river – grounds that are now closely packed with grim acres of brick and stone.

Tom discovered Charing Village presently, and rested himself at the beautiful cross built there by a bereaved king of earlier days; then idled down a quiet, lovely road, past the great cardinal's stately palace, toward a far more mighty and majestic palace beyond – Westminster. Tom stared in glad wonder at the vast pile of masonry, the wide-spreading wings, the frowning bastions and turrets, the huge stone gateway, with its gilded bars and its magnificent array of colossal granite lions, and other the signs and symbols of English royalty. Was the desire of his soul to be satisfied at last? Here, indeed, was a king's palace. Might he not hope to see a prince now – a prince of flesh and blood, if Heaven were willing?

At each side of the gilded gate stood a living statue – that is to say, an erect and stately and motionless man-at-arms, clad from head to heel in shining steel armour. At a respectful distance were many country folk, and people from the city, waiting for any chance glimpse of royalty that might offer. Splendid carriages, with splendid people in them and splendid servants outside, were arriving and departing by several other noble gateways that pierced the royal enclosure.

Poor little Tom, in his rags, approached, and was moving slowly and timidly past the sentinels, with a beating heart and a rising hope, when all at once he caught sight through the golden bars of a spectacle that almost made him shout for joy. Within was a comely boy, tanned and brown with sturdy outdoor sports and exercises, whose clothing was all of lovely silks and satins, shining with jewels; at his hip a little jewelled sword and dagger; dainty buskins on his feet, with red heels; and on his head a jaunty crimson cap, with drooping plumes fastened with a great sparkling gem. Several gorgeous gentlemen stood near – his servants, without a doubt. Oh! he was a prince – a prince, a living prince, a real prince – without the shadow of a question; and the prayer of the pauper-boy's heart was answered at last.

Tom's breath came quick and short with excitement, and his eyes grew big with wonder and delight. Everything gave way in his mind instantly to one desire: that was to get close to the prince, and have a good, devouring look at him. Before he knew what he was about, he had his face against the gate-bars. The next instant one of the soldiers snatched him rudely away, and sent him spinning among the gaping crowd of country gawks and London idlers. The soldier said, —

“Mind thy manners, thou young beggar!”

The crowd jeered and laughed; but the young prince sprang to the gate with his face flushed, and his eyes flashing with indignation, and cried out, —

“How dar'st thou use a poor lad like that? How dar'st thou use the King my father's meanest subject so? Open the gates, and let him in!”

You should have seen that fickle crowd snatch off their hats then. You should have heard them cheer, and shout, “Long live the Prince of Wales!”

The soldiers presented arms with their halberds, opened the gates, and presented again as the little Prince of Poverty passed in, in his fluttering rags, to join hands with the Prince of Limitless Plenty.

Edward Tudor said —

“Thou lookest tired and hungry: thou’st been treated ill. Come with me.”

Half a dozen attendants sprang forward to — I don’t know what; interfere, no doubt. But they were waved aside with a right royal gesture, and they stopped stock still where they were, like so many statues. Edward took Tom to a rich apartment in the palace, which he called his cabinet. By his command a repast was brought such as Tom had never encountered before except in books. The prince, with princely delicacy and breeding, sent away the servants, so that his humble guest might not be embarrassed by their critical presence; then he sat near by, and asked questions while Tom ate.

“What is thy name, lad?”

“Tom Canty, an’ it please thee, sir.”

“‘Tis an odd one. Where dost live?”

“In the city, please thee, sir. Offal Court, out of Pudding Lane.”

“Offal Court! Truly ‘tis another odd one. Hast parents?”

“Parents have I, sir, and a grand-dam likewise that is but indifferently precious to me, God forgive me if it be offence to say it — also twin sisters, Nan and Bet.”

“Then is thy grand-dam not over kind to thee, I take it?”

“Neither to any other is she, so please your worship. She hath a wicked heart, and worketh evil all her days.”

“Doth she mistreat thee?”

“There be times that she stayeth her hand, being asleep or overcome with drink; but when she hath her judgment clear again, she maketh it up to me with goodly beatings.”

A fierce look came into the little prince’s eyes, and he cried out —

“What! Beatings?”

“Oh, indeed, yes, please you, sir.”

“*Beatings!* — and thou so frail and little. Hark ye: before the night come, she shall hie her to the Tower. The King my father” —

“In sooth, you forget, sir, her low degree. The Tower is for the great alone.”

“True, indeed. I had not thought of that. I will consider of her punishment. Is thy father kind to thee?”

“Not more than Gammer Canty, sir.”

“Fathers be alike, mayhap. Mine hath not a doll’s temper. He smiteth with a heavy hand, yet spareth me: he spareth me not always with his tongue, though, sooth to say. How doth thy mother use thee?”

“She is good, sir, and giveth me neither sorrow nor pain of any sort. And Nan and Bet are like to her in this.”

“How old be these?”

“Fifteen, an’ it please you, sir.”

“The Lady Elizabeth, my sister, is fourteen, and the Lady Jane Grey, my cousin, is of mine own age, and comely and gracious withal; but my sister the Lady Mary, with her gloomy mien and — Look you: do thy sisters forbid their servants to smile, lest the sin destroy their souls?”

“They? Oh, dost think, sir, that *they* have servants?”

The little prince contemplated the little pauper gravely a moment, then said —

“And prithe, why not? Who helpeth them undress at night? Who attireth them when they rise?”

“None, sir. Would’st have them take off their garment, and sleep without — like the beasts?”

“Their garment! Have they but one?”

“Ah, good your worship, what would they do with more? Truly they have not two bodies each.”

“It is a quaint and marvellous thought! Thy pardon, I had not meant to laugh. But thy good Nan and thy Bet shall have raiment and lackeys enow, and that soon, too: my cofferer shall look to it. No, thank me not; ‘tis nothing. Thou speakest well; thou hast an easy grace in it. Art learned?”

“I know not if I am or not, sir. The good priest that is called Father Andrew taught me, of his kindness, from his books.”

“Know’st thou the Latin?”

“But scantly, sir, I doubt.”

“Learn it, lad: ’tis hard only at first. The Greek is harder; but neither these nor any tongues else, I think, are hard to the Lady Elizabeth and my cousin. Thou should’st hear those damsels at it! But tell me of thy Offal Court. Hast thou a pleasant life there?”

“In truth, yes, so please you, sir, save when one is hungry. There be Punch-and-Judy shows, and monkeys – oh such antic creatures! and so bravely dressed! – and there be plays wherein they that play do shout and fight till all are slain, and ‘tis so fine to see, and costeth but a farthing – albeit ‘tis main hard to get the farthing, please your worship.”

“Tell me more.”

“We lads of Offal Court do strive against each other with the cudgel, like to the fashion of the ‘prentices, sometimes.”

The prince’s eyes flashed. Said he —

“Marry, that would not I mislike. Tell me more.”

“We strive in races, sir, to see who of us shall be fleetest.”

“That would I like also. Speak on.”

“In summer, sir, we wade and swim in the canals and in the river, and each doth duck his neighbour, and splatter him with water, and dive and shout and tumble and —”

“’Twould be worth my father’s kingdom but to enjoy it once! Prithee go on.”

“We dance and sing about the Maypole in Cheapside; we play in the sand, each covering his neighbour up; and times we make mud pastry – oh the lovely mud, it hath not its like for delightfulness in all the world! – we do fairly wallow in the mud, sir, saving your worship’s presence.”

“Oh, prithee, say no more, ‘tis glorious! If that I could but clothe me in raiment like to thine, and strip my feet, and revel in the mud once, just once, with none to rebuke me or forbid, meseemeth I could forego the crown!”

“And if that I could clothe me once, sweet sir, as thou art clad – just once –”

“Oho, would’st like it? Then so shall it be. Doff thy rags, and don these splendours, lad! It is a brief happiness, but will be not less keen for that. We will have it while we may, and change again before any come to molest.”

A few minutes later the little Prince of Wales was garlanded with Tom’s fluttering odds and ends, and the little Prince of Pauperdom was tricked out in the gaudy plumage of royalty. The two went and stood side by side before a great mirror, and lo, a miracle: there did not seem to have been any change made! They stared at each other, then at the glass, then at each other again. At last the puzzled princeling said —

“What dost thou make of this?”

“Ah, good your worship, require me not to answer. It is not meet that one of my degree should utter the thing.”

“Then will I utter it. Thou hast the same hair, the same eyes, the same voice and manner, the same form and stature, the same face and countenance that I bear. Fared we forth naked, there is none could say which was you, and which the Prince of Wales. And, now that I am clothed as thou wert clothed, it seemeth I should be able the more nearly to feel as thou didst when the brute soldier – Hark ye, is not this a bruise upon your hand?”

“Yes; but it is a slight thing, and your worship knoweth that the poor man-at-arms –”

“Peace! It was a shameful thing and a cruel!” cried the little prince, stamping his bare foot. “If the King – Stir not a step till I come again! It is a command!”

In a moment he had snatched up and put away an article of national importance that lay upon a table, and was out at the door and flying through the palace grounds in his bannered rags, with a hot face and glowing eyes. As soon as he reached the great gate, he seized the bars, and tried to shake them, shouting —

“Open! Unbar the gates!”

The soldier that had maltreated Tom obeyed promptly; and as the prince burst through the portal, half-smothered with royal wrath, the soldier fetched him a sounding box on the ear that sent him whirling to the roadway, and said —

“Take that, thou beggar’s spawn, for what thou got’st me from his Highness!”

The crowd roared with laughter. The prince picked himself out of the mud, and made fiercely at the sentry, shouting —

“I am the Prince of Wales, my person is sacred; and thou shalt hang for laying thy hand upon me!”

The soldier brought his halberd to a present-arms and said mockingly —

“I salute your gracious Highness.” Then angrily – “Be off, thou crazy rubbish!”

Here the jeering crowd closed round the poor little prince, and hustled him far down the road, hooting him, and shouting —

“Way for his Royal Highness! Way for the Prince of Wales!”

Chapter IV. The Prince's troubles begin

After hours of persistent pursuit and persecution, the little prince was at last deserted by the rabble and left to himself. As long as he had been able to rage against the mob, and threaten it royally, and royally utter commands that were good stuff to laugh at, he was very entertaining; but when weariness finally forced him to be silent, he was no longer of use to his tormentors, and they sought amusement elsewhere. He looked about him, now, but could not recognise the locality. He was within the city of London – that was all he knew. He moved on, aimlessly, and in a little while the houses thinned, and the passers-by were infrequent. He bathed his bleeding feet in the brook which flowed then where Farringdon Street now is; rested a few moments, then passed on, and presently came upon a great space with only a few scattered houses in it, and a prodigious church. He recognised this church. Scaffoldings were about, everywhere, and swarms of workmen; for it was undergoing elaborate repairs. The prince took heart at once – he felt that his troubles were at an end, now. He said to himself, “It is the ancient Grey Friars’ Church, which the king my father hath taken from the monks and given for a home for ever for poor and forsaken children, and new-named it Christ’s Church. Right gladly will they serve the son of him who hath done so generously by them – and the more that that son is himself as poor and as forlorn as any that be sheltered here this day, or ever shall be.”

He was soon in the midst of a crowd of boys who were running, jumping, playing at ball and leap-frog, and otherwise disporting themselves, and right noisily, too. They were all dressed alike, and in the fashion which in that day prevailed among serving-men and ‘prentices¹ – that is to say, each had on the crown of his head a flat black cap about the size of a saucer, which was not useful as a covering, it being of such scanty dimensions, neither was it ornamental; from beneath it the hair fell, unparted, to the middle of the forehead, and was cropped straight around; a clerical band at the neck; a blue gown that fitted closely and hung as low as the knees or lower; full sleeves; a broad red belt; bright yellow stockings, gartered above the knees; low shoes with large metal buckles. It was a sufficiently ugly costume.

The boys stopped their play and flocked about the prince, who said with native dignity —
“Good lads, say to your master that Edward Prince of Wales desireth speech with him.”

A great shout went up at this, and one rude fellow said —

“Marry, art thou his grace’s messenger, beggar?”

The prince’s face flushed with anger, and his ready hand flew to his hip, but there was nothing there. There was a storm of laughter, and one boy said —

“Didst mark that? He fancied he had a sword – belike he is the prince himself.”

This sally brought more laughter. Poor Edward drew himself up proudly and said —

“I am the prince; and it ill beseemeth you that feed upon the king my father’s bounty to use me so.”

This was vastly enjoyed, as the laughter testified. The youth who had first spoken, shouted to his comrades —

“Ho, swine, slaves, pensioners of his grace’s princely father, where be your manners? Down on your marrow bones, all of ye, and do reverence to his kingly port and royal rags!”

With boisterous mirth they dropped upon their knees in a body and did mock homage to their prey. The prince spurned the nearest boy with his foot, and said fiercely —

“Take thou that, till the morrow come and I build thee a gibbet!”

Ah, but this was not a joke – this was going beyond fun. The laughter ceased on the instant, and fury took its place. A dozen shouted —

¹ For Mark Twain’s note see below under the relevant chapter heading.

“Hale him forth! To the horse-pond, to the horse-pond! Where be the dogs? Ho, there, Lion! ho, Fangs!”

Then followed such a thing as England had never seen before – the sacred person of the heir to the throne rudely buffeted by plebeian hands, and set upon and torn by dogs.

As night drew to a close that day, the prince found himself far down in the close-built portion of the city. His body was bruised, his hands were bleeding, and his rags were all besmirched with mud. He wandered on and on, and grew more and more bewildered, and so tired and faint he could hardly drag one foot after the other. He had ceased to ask questions of anyone, since they brought him only insult instead of information. He kept muttering to himself, “Offal Court – that is the name; if I can but find it before my strength is wholly spent and I drop, then am I saved – for his people will take me to the palace and prove that I am none of theirs, but the true prince, and I shall have mine own again.” And now and then his mind reverted to his treatment by those rude Christ’s Hospital boys, and he said, “When I am king, they shall not have bread and shelter only, but also teachings out of books; for a full belly is little worth where the mind is starved, and the heart. I will keep this diligently in my remembrance, that this day’s lesson be not lost upon me, and my people suffer thereby; for learning softeneth the heart and breedeth gentleness and charity.”

The lights began to twinkle, it came on to rain, the wind rose, and a raw and gusty night set in. The houseless prince, the homeless heir to the throne of England, still moved on, drifting deeper into the maze of squalid alleys where the swarming hives of poverty and misery were massed together.

Suddenly a great drunken ruffian collared him and said —

“Out to this time of night again, and hast not brought a farthing home, I warrant me! If it be so, an’ I do not break all the bones in thy lean body, then am I not John Canty, but some other.”

The prince twisted himself loose, unconsciously brushed his profaned shoulder, and eagerly said —

“Oh, art *his* father, truly? Sweet heaven grant it be so – then wilt thou fetch him away and restore me!”

“*His* father? I know not what thou mean’st; I but know I am *thy* father, as thou shalt soon have cause to —”

“Oh, jest not, palter not, delay not! – I am worn, I am wounded, I can bear no more. Take me to the king my father, and he will make thee rich beyond thy wildest dreams. Believe me, man, believe me! – I speak no lie, but only the truth! – put forth thy hand and save me! I am indeed the Prince of Wales!”

The man stared down, stupefied, upon the lad, then shook his head and muttered —

“Gone stark mad as any Tom o’ Bedlam!” – then collared him once more, and said with a coarse laugh and an oath, “But mad or no mad, I and thy Gammer Canty will soon find where the soft places in thy bones lie, or I’m no true man!”

With this he dragged the frantic and struggling prince away, and disappeared up a front court followed by a delighted and noisy swarm of human vermin.

Chapter V. Tom as a Patrician

Tom Canty, left alone in the prince's cabinet, made good use of his opportunity. He turned himself this way and that before the great mirror, admiring his finery; then walked away, imitating the prince's high-bred carriage, and still observing results in the glass. Next he drew the beautiful sword, and bowed, kissing the blade, and laying it across his breast, as he had seen a noble knight do, by way of salute to the lieutenant of the Tower, five or six weeks before, when delivering the great lords of Norfolk and Surrey into his hands for captivity. Tom played with the jewelled dagger that hung upon his thigh; he examined the costly and exquisite ornaments of the room; he tried each of the sumptuous chairs, and thought how proud he would be if the Offal Court herd could only peep in and see him in his grandeur. He wondered if they would believe the marvellous tale he should tell when he got home, or if they would shake their heads, and say his overtaxed imagination had at last upset his reason.

At the end of half an hour it suddenly occurred to him that the prince was gone a long time; then right away he began to feel lonely; very soon he fell to listening and longing, and ceased to toy with the pretty things about him; he grew uneasy, then restless, then distressed. Suppose some one should come, and catch him in the prince's clothes, and the prince not there to explain. Might they not hang him at once, and inquire into his case afterward? He had heard that the great were prompt about small matters. His fear rose higher and higher; and trembling he softly opened the door to the antechamber, resolved to fly and seek the prince, and, through him, protection and release. Six gorgeous gentlemen-servants and two young pages of high degree, clothed like butterflies, sprang to their feet and bowed low before him. He stepped quickly back and shut the door. He said —

“Oh, they mock at me! They will go and tell. Oh! why came I here to cast away my life?”

He walked up and down the floor, filled with nameless fears, listening, starting at every trifling sound. Presently the door swung open, and a silken page said —

“The Lady Jane Grey.”

The door closed and a sweet young girl, richly clad, bounded toward him. But she stopped suddenly, and said in a distressed voice —

“Oh, what aileth thee, my lord?”

Tom's breath was nearly failing him; but he made shift to stammer out —

“Ah, be merciful, thou! In sooth I am no lord, but only poor Tom Canty of Offal Court in the city. Prithee let me see the prince, and he will of his grace restore to me my rags, and let me hence unhurt. Oh, be thou merciful, and save me!”

By this time the boy was on his knees, and supplicating with his eyes and uplifted hands as well as with his tongue. The young girl seemed horror-stricken. She cried out —

“O my lord, on thy knees? – and to *me!*”

Then she fled away in fright; and Tom, smitten with despair, sank down, murmuring —

“There is no help, there is no hope. Now will they come and take me.”

Whilst he lay there benumbed with terror, dreadful tidings were speeding through the palace. The whisper – for it was whispered always – flew from menial to menial, from lord to lady, down all the long corridors, from story to story, from saloon to saloon, “The prince hath gone mad, the prince hath gone mad!” Soon every saloon, every marble hall, had its groups of glittering lords and ladies, and other groups of dazzling lesser folk, talking earnestly together in whispers, and every face had in it dismay. Presently a splendid official came marching by these groups, making solemn proclamation —

“IN THE NAME OF THE KING!

Let none list to this false and foolish matter, upon pain of death, nor discuss the same, nor carry it abroad. In the name of the King!”

The whisperings ceased as suddenly as if the whisperers had been stricken dumb.

Soon there was a general buzz along the corridors, of “The prince! See, the prince comes!”

Poor Tom came slowly walking past the low-bowing groups, trying to bow in return, and meekly gazing upon his strange surroundings with bewildered and pathetic eyes. Great nobles walked upon each side of him, making him lean upon them, and so steady his steps. Behind him followed the court-physicians and some servants.

Presently Tom found himself in a noble apartment of the palace and heard the door close behind him. Around him stood those who had come with him. Before him, at a little distance, reclined a very large and very fat man, with a wide, pulpy face, and a stern expression. His large head was very grey; and his whiskers, which he wore only around his face, like a frame, were grey also. His clothing was of rich stuff, but old, and slightly frayed in places. One of his swollen legs had a pillow under it, and was wrapped in bandages. There was silence now; and there was no head there but was bent in reverence, except this man's. This stern-countenanced invalid was the dread Henry VIII. He said – and his face grew gentle as he began to speak —

“How now, my lord Edward, my prince? Hast been minded to cozen me, the good King thy father, who loveth thee, and kindly useth thee, with a sorry jest?”

Poor Tom was listening, as well as his dazed faculties would let him, to the beginning of this speech; but when the words ‘me, the good King’ fell upon his ear, his face blanched, and he dropped as instantly upon his knees as if a shot had brought him there. Lifting up his hands, he exclaimed —

“Thou the *King*? Then am I undone indeed!”

This speech seemed to stun the King. His eyes wandered from face to face aimlessly, then rested, bewildered, upon the boy before him. Then he said in a tone of deep disappointment —

“Alack, I had believed the rumour disproportioned to the truth; but I fear me ‘tis not so.” He breathed a heavy sigh, and said in a gentle voice, “Come to thy father, child: thou art not well.”

Tom was assisted to his feet, and approached the Majesty of England, humble and trembling. The King took the frightened face between his hands, and gazed earnestly and lovingly into it awhile, as if seeking some grateful sign of returning reason there, then pressed the curly head against his breast, and patted it tenderly. Presently he said —

“Dost not know thy father, child? Break not mine old heart; say thou know'st me. Thou *dost* know me, dost thou not?”

“Yea: thou art my dread lord the King, whom God preserve!”

“True, true – that is well – be comforted, tremble not so; there is none here would hurt thee; there is none here but loves thee. Thou art better now; thy ill dream passeth – is't not so? Thou wilt not miscall thyself again, as they say thou didst a little while ago?”

“I pray thee of thy grace believe me, I did but speak the truth, most dread lord; for I am the meanest among thy subjects, being a pauper born, and ‘tis by a sore mischance and accident I am here, albeit I was therein nothing blameful. I am but young to die, and thou canst save me with one little word. Oh speak it, sir!”

“Die? Talk not so, sweet prince – peace, peace, to thy troubled heart – thou shalt not die!”

Tom dropped upon his knees with a glad cry —

“God requite thy mercy, O my King, and save thee long to bless thy land!” Then springing up, he turned a joyful face toward the two lords in waiting, and exclaimed, “Thou heard'st it! I am not to die: the King hath said it!” There was no movement, save that all bowed with grave respect; but no one spoke. He hesitated, a little confused, then turned timidly toward the King, saying, “I may go now?”

“Go? Surely, if thou desirest. But why not tarry yet a little? Whither would'st go?”

Tom dropped his eyes, and answered humbly —

“Peradventure I mistook; but I did think me free, and so was I moved to seek again the kennel where I was born and bred to misery, yet which harboureth my mother and my sisters, and so is home to me; whereas these pomps and splendours whereunto I am not used – oh, please you, sir, to let me go!”

The King was silent and thoughtful a while, and his face betrayed a growing distress and uneasiness. Presently he said, with something of hope in his voice —

“Perchance he is but mad upon this one strain, and hath his wits unmarred as toucheth other matter. God send it may be so! We will make trial.”

Then he asked Tom a question in Latin, and Tom answered him lamely in the same tongue. The lords and doctors manifested their gratification also. The King said —

“’Twas not according to his schooling and ability, but showeth that his mind is but diseased, not stricken fatally. How say you, sir?”

The physician addressed bowed low, and replied —

“It jumpeth with my own conviction, sire, that thou hast divined aright.”

The King looked pleased with this encouragement, coming as it did from so excellent authority, and continued with good heart —

“Now mark ye all: we will try him further.”

He put a question to Tom in French. Tom stood silent a moment, embarrassed by having so many eyes centred upon him, then said diffidently —

“I have no knowledge of this tongue, so please your majesty.”

The King fell back upon his couch. The attendants flew to his assistance; but he put them aside, and said —

“Trouble me not – it is nothing but a scurvy faintness. Raise me! There, ’tis sufficient. Come hither, child; there, rest thy poor troubled head upon thy father’s heart, and be at peace. Thou’lt soon be well: ’tis but a passing fantasy. Fear thou not; thou’lt soon be well.” Then he turned toward the company: his gentle manner changed, and baleful lightnings began to play from his eyes. He said —

“List ye all! This my son is mad; but it is not permanent. Over-study hath done this, and somewhat too much of confinement. Away with his books and teachers! see ye to it. Pleasure him with sports, beguile him in wholesome ways, so that his health come again.” He raised himself higher still, and went on with energy, “He is mad; but he is my son, and England’s heir; and, mad or sane, still shall he reign! And hear ye further, and proclaim it: whoso speaketh of this his distemper worketh against the peace and order of these realms, and shall to the gallows!.. Give me to drink – I burn: this sorrow sappeth my strength... There, take away the cup... Support me. There, that is well. Mad, is he? Were he a thousand times mad, yet is he Prince of Wales, and I the King will confirm it. This very morrow shall he be installed in his princely dignity in due and ancient form. Take instant order for it, my lord Hertford.”

One of the nobles knelt at the royal couch, and said —

“The King’s majesty knoweth that the Hereditary Great Marshal of England lieth attainted in the Tower. It were not meet that one attainted – ”

“Peace! Insult not mine ears with his hated name. Is this man to live for ever? Am I to be balked of my will? Is the prince to tarry uninstalled, because, forsooth, the realm lacketh an Earl Marshal free of treasonable taint to invest him with his honours? No, by the splendour of God! Warn my Parliament to bring me Norfolk’s doom before the sun rise again, else shall they answer for it grievously!”

Lord Hertford said —

“The King’s will is law;” and, rising, returned to his former place.

Gradually the wrath faded out of the old King’s face, and he said —

“Kiss me, my prince. There.. what fearest thou? Am I not thy loving father?”

“Thou art good to me that am unworthy, O mighty and gracious lord: that in truth I know. But – but – it grieveth me to think of him that is to die, and – ”

“Ah, ’tis like thee, ’tis like thee! I know thy heart is still the same, even though thy mind hath suffered hurt, for thou wert ever of a gentle spirit. But this duke standeth between thee and thine

honours: I will have another in his stead that shall bring no taint to his great office. Comfort thee, my prince: trouble not thy poor head with this matter.”

“But is it not I that speed him hence, my liege? How long might he not live, but for me?”

“Take no thought of him, my prince: he is not worthy. Kiss me once again, and go to thy trifles and amusements; for my malady distresseth me. I am aweary, and would rest. Go with thine uncle Hertford and thy people, and come again when my body is refreshed.”

Tom, heavy-hearted, was conducted from the presence, for this last sentence was a death-blow to the hope he had cherished that now he would be set free. Once more he heard the buzz of low voices exclaiming, “The prince, the prince comes!”

His spirits sank lower and lower as he moved between the glittering files of bowing courtiers; for he recognised that he was indeed a captive now, and might remain for ever shut up in this gilded cage, a forlorn and friendless prince, except God in his mercy take pity on him and set him free.

And, turn where he would, he seemed to see floating in the air the severed head and the remembered face of the great Duke of Norfolk, the eyes fixed on him reproachfully.

His old dreams had been so pleasant; but this reality was so dreary!

Chapter VI. Tom receives instructions

Tom was conducted to the principal apartment of a noble suite, and made to sit down – a thing which he was loth to do, since there were elderly men and men of high degree about him. He begged them to be seated also, but they only bowed their thanks or murmured them, and remained standing. He would have insisted, but his ‘uncle’ the Earl of Hertford whispered in his ear —

“Prithee, insist not, my lord; it is not meet that they sit in thy presence.”

The Lord St. John was announced, and after making obeisance to Tom, he said —

“I come upon the King’s errand, concerning a matter which requireth privacy. Will it please your royal highness to dismiss all that attend you here, save my lord the Earl of Hertford?”

Observing that Tom did not seem to know how to proceed, Hertford whispered him to make a sign with his hand, and not trouble himself to speak unless he chose. When the waiting gentlemen had retired, Lord St. John said —

“His majesty commandeth, that for due and weighty reasons of state, the prince’s grace shall hide his infirmity in all ways that be within his power, till it be passed and he be as he was before. To wit, that he shall deny to none that he is the true prince, and heir to England’s greatness; that he shall uphold his princely dignity, and shall receive, without word or sign of protest, that reverence and observance which unto it do appertain of right and ancient usage; that he shall cease to speak to any of that lowly birth and life his malady hath conjured out of the unwholesome imaginings of o’er-wrought fancy; that he shall strive with diligence to bring unto his memory again those faces which he was wont to know – and where he faileth he shall hold his peace, neither betraying by semblance of surprise or other sign that he hath forgot; that upon occasions of state, whensoever any matter shall perplex him as to the thing he should do or the utterance he should make, he shall show nought of unrest to the curious that look on, but take advice in that matter of the Lord Hertford, or my humble self, which are commanded of the King to be upon this service and close at call, till this commandment be dissolved. Thus saith the King’s majesty, who sendeth greeting to your royal highness, and prayeth that God will of His mercy quickly heal you and have you now and ever in His holy keeping.”

The Lord St. John made reverence and stood aside. Tom replied resignedly —

“The King hath said it. None may palter with the King’s command, or fit it to his ease, where it doth chafe, with deft evasions. The King shall be obeyed.”

Lord Hertford said —

“Touching the King’s majesty’s ordainment concerning books and such like serious matters, it may peradventure please your highness to ease your time with lightsome entertainment, lest you go wearied to the banquet and suffer harm thereby.”

Tom’s face showed inquiring surprise; and a blush followed when he saw Lord St. John’s eyes bent sorrowfully upon him. His lordship said —

“Thy memory still wrongeth thee, and thou hast shown surprise – but suffer it not to trouble thee, for ‘tis a matter that will not bide, but depart with thy mending malady. My Lord of Hertford speaketh of the city’s banquet which the King’s majesty did promise, some two months flown, your highness should attend. Thou recallest it now?”

“It grieves me to confess it had indeed escaped me,” said Tom, in a hesitating voice; and blushed again.

At this moment the Lady Elizabeth and the Lady Jane Grey were announced. The two lords exchanged significant glances, and Hertford stepped quickly toward the door. As the young girls passed him, he said in a low voice —

“I pray ye, ladies, seem not to observe his humours, nor show surprise when his memory doth lapse – it will grieve you to note how it doth stick at every trifle.”

Meantime Lord St. John was saying in Tom’s ear —

“Please you, sir, keep diligently in mind his majesty’s desire. Remember all thou canst —*seem* to remember all else. Let them not perceive that thou art much changed from thy wont, for thou knowest how tenderly thy old play-fellows bear thee in their hearts and how ‘twould grieve them. Art willing, sir, that I remain? – and thine uncle?”

Tom signified assent with a gesture and a murmured word, for he was already learning, and in his simple heart was resolved to acquit himself as best he might, according to the King’s command.

In spite of every precaution, the conversation among the young people became a little embarrassing at times. More than once, in truth, Tom was near to breaking down and confessing himself unequal to his tremendous part; but the tact of the Princess Elizabeth saved him, or a word from one or the other of the vigilant lords, thrown in apparently by chance, had the same happy effect. Once the little Lady Jane turned to Tom and dismayed him with this question, —

“Hast paid thy duty to the Queen’s majesty to-day, my lord?”

Tom hesitated, looked distressed, and was about to stammer out something at hazard, when Lord St. John took the word and answered for him with the easy grace of a courtier accustomed to encounter delicate difficulties and to be ready for them —

“He hath indeed, madam, and she did greatly hearten him, as touching his majesty’s condition; is it not so, your highness?”

Tom mumbled something that stood for assent, but felt that he was getting upon dangerous ground. Somewhat later it was mentioned that Tom was to study no more at present, whereupon her little ladyship exclaimed —

“‘Tis a pity, ‘tis a pity! Thou wert proceeding bravely. But bide thy time in patience: it will not be for long. Thou’lt yet be graced with learning like thy father, and make thy tongue master of as many languages as his, good my prince.”

“My father!” cried Tom, off his guard for the moment. “I trow he cannot speak his own so that any but the swine that kennel in the styes may tell his meaning; and as for learning of any sort soever — ”

He looked up and encountered a solemn warning in my Lord St. John’s eyes.

He stopped, blushed, then continued low and sadly: “Ah, my malady persecuteth me again, and my mind wandereth. I meant the King’s grace no irreverence.”

“We know it, sir,” said the Princess Elizabeth, taking her ‘brother’s’ hand between her two palms, respectfully but caressingly; “trouble not thyself as to that. The fault is none of thine, but thy distemper’s.”

“Thou’rt a gentle comforter, sweet lady,” said Tom, gratefully, “and my heart moveth me to thank thee for’t, an’ I may be so bold.”

Once the giddy little Lady Jane fired a simple Greek phrase at Tom. The Princess Elizabeth’s quick eye saw by the serene blankness of the target’s front that the shaft was overshot; so she tranquilly delivered a return volley of sounding Greek on Tom’s behalf, and then straightway changed the talk to other matters.

Time wore on pleasantly, and likewise smoothly, on the whole. Snags and sandbars grew less and less frequent, and Tom grew more and more at his ease, seeing that all were so lovingly bent upon helping him and overlooking his mistakes. When it came out that the little ladies were to accompany him to the Lord Mayor’s banquet in the evening, his heart gave a bound of relief and delight, for he felt that he should not be friendless, now, among that multitude of strangers; whereas, an hour earlier, the idea of their going with him would have been an insupportable terror to him.

Tom’s guardian angels, the two lords, had had less comfort in the interview than the other parties to it. They felt much as if they were piloting a great ship through a dangerous channel; they were on the alert constantly, and found their office no child’s play. Wherefore, at last, when the ladies’ visit was drawing to a close and the Lord Guilford Dudley was announced, they not only felt that their charge had been sufficiently taxed for the present, but also that they themselves were not

in the best condition to take their ship back and make their anxious voyage all over again. So they respectfully advised Tom to excuse himself, which he was very glad to do, although a slight shade of disappointment might have been observed upon my Lady Jane's face when she heard the splendid stripling denied admittance.

There was a pause now, a sort of waiting silence which Tom could not understand. He glanced at Lord Hertford, who gave him a sign – but he failed to understand that also. The ready Elizabeth came to the rescue with her usual easy grace. She made reverence and said —

“Have we leave of the prince's grace my brother to go?”

Tom said —

“Indeed your ladyships can have whatsoever of me they will, for the asking; yet would I rather give them any other thing that in my poor power lieth, than leave to take the light and blessing of their presence hence. Give ye good den, and God be with ye!” Then he smiled inwardly at the thought, “Tis not for nought I have dwelt but among princes in my reading, and taught my tongue some slight trick of their broidered and gracious speech withal!”

When the illustrious maidens were gone, Tom turned wearily to his keepers and said —

“May it please your lordships to grant me leave to go into some corner and rest me?”

Lord Hertford said —

“So please your highness, it is for you to command, it is for us to obey. That thou should'st rest is indeed a needful thing, since thou must journey to the city presently.”

He touched a bell, and a page appeared, who was ordered to desire the presence of Sir William Herbert. This gentleman came straightway, and conducted Tom to an inner apartment. Tom's first movement there was to reach for a cup of water; but a silk-and-velvet servitor seized it, dropped upon one knee, and offered it to him on a golden salver.

Next the tired captive sat down and was going to take off his buskins, timidly asking leave with his eye, but another silk-and-velvet discomforter went down upon his knees and took the office from him. He made two or three further efforts to help himself, but being promptly forestalled each time, he finally gave up, with a sigh of resignation and a murmured “Beshrew me, but I marvel they do not require to breathe for me also!” Slipped, and wrapped in a sumptuous robe, he laid himself down at last to rest, but not to sleep, for his head was too full of thoughts and the room too full of people. He could not dismiss the former, so they stayed; he did not know enough to dismiss the latter, so they stayed also, to his vast regret – and theirs.

Tom's departure had left his two noble guardians alone. They mused a while, with much head-shaking and walking the floor, then Lord St. John said —

“Plainly, what dost thou think?”

“Plainly, then, this. The King is near his end; my nephew is mad – mad will mount the throne, and mad remain. God protect England, since she will need it!”

“Verily it promiseth so, indeed. But.. have you no misgivings as to.. as to.”

The speaker hesitated, and finally stopped. He evidently felt that he was upon delicate ground. Lord Hertford stopped before him, looked into his face with a clear, frank eye, and said —

“Speak on – there is none to hear but me. Misgivings as to what?”

“I am full loth to word the thing that is in my mind, and thou so near to him in blood, my lord. But craving pardon if I do offend, seemeth it not strange that madness could so change his port and manner? – not but that his port and speech are princely still, but that they *differ*, in one unweighty trifle or another, from what his custom was aforetime. Seemeth it not strange that madness should filch from his memory his father's very lineaments; the customs and observances that are his due from such as be about him; and, leaving him his Latin, strip him of his Greek and French? My lord, be not offended, but ease my mind of its disquiet and receive my grateful thanks. It haunteth me, his saying he was not the prince, and so – ”

“Peace, my lord, thou utterest treason! Hast forgot the King’s command? Remember I am party to thy crime if I but listen.”

St. John paled, and hastened to say —

“I was in fault, I do confess it. Betray me not, grant me this grace out of thy courtesy, and I will neither think nor speak of this thing more. Deal not hardly with me, sir, else am I ruined.”

“I am content, my lord. So thou offend not again, here or in the ears of others, it shall be as though thou hadst not spoken. But thou need’st not have misgivings. He is my sister’s son; are not his voice, his face, his form, familiar to me from his cradle? Madness can do all the odd conflicting things thou seest in him, and more. Dost not recall how that the old Baron Marley, being mad, forgot the favour of his own countenance that he had known for sixty years, and held it was another’s; nay, even claimed he was the son of Mary Magdalene, and that his head was made of Spanish glass; and, sooth to say, he suffered none to touch it, lest by mischance some heedless hand might shiver it? Give thy misgivings easement, good my lord. This is the very prince – I know him well – and soon will be thy king; it may advantage thee to bear this in mind, and more dwell upon it than the other.”

After some further talk, in which the Lord St. John covered up his mistake as well as he could by repeated protests that his faith was thoroughly grounded now, and could not be assailed by doubts again, the Lord Hertford relieved his fellow-keeper, and sat down to keep watch and ward alone. He was soon deep in meditation, and evidently the longer he thought, the more he was bothered. By-and-by he began to pace the floor and mutter.

“Tush, he *must* be the prince! Will any be in all the land maintain there can be two, not of one blood and birth, so marvellously twinned? And even were it so, ‘twere yet a stranger miracle that chance should cast the one into the other’s place. Nay, ‘tis folly, folly, folly!”

Presently he said —

“Now were he impostor and called himself prince, look you *that* would be natural; that would be reasonable. But lived ever an impostor yet, who, being called prince by the king, prince by the court, prince by all, *denied* his dignity and pleaded against his exaltation? *No!* By the soul of St. Swithin, no! This is the true prince, gone mad!”

Chapter VII. Tom's first royal dinner

Somewhat after one in the afternoon, Tom resignedly underwent the ordeal of being dressed for dinner. He found himself as finely clothed as before, but everything different, everything changed, from his ruff to his stockings. He was presently conducted with much state to a spacious and ornate apartment, where a table was already set for one. Its furniture was all of massy gold, and beautified with designs which well-nigh made it priceless, since they were the work of Benvenuto. The room was half-filled with noble servitors. A chaplain said grace, and Tom was about to fall to, for hunger had long been constitutional with him, but was interrupted by my lord the Earl of Berkeley, who fastened a napkin about his neck; for the great post of Diaperers to the Prince of Wales was hereditary in this nobleman's family. Tom's cupbearer was present, and forestalled all his attempts to help himself to wine. The Taster to his highness the Prince of Wales was there also, prepared to taste any suspicious dish upon requirement, and run the risk of being poisoned. He was only an ornamental appendage at this time, and was seldom called upon to exercise his function; but there had been times, not many generations past, when the office of taster had its perils, and was not a grandeur to be desired. Why they did not use a dog or a plumber seems strange; but all the ways of royalty are strange. My Lord d'Arcy, First Groom of the Chamber, was there, to do goodness knows what; but there he was – let that suffice. The Lord Chief Butler was there, and stood behind Tom's chair, overseeing the solemnities, under command of the Lord Great Steward and the Lord Head Cook, who stood near. Tom had three hundred and eighty-four servants beside these; but they were not all in that room, of course, nor the quarter of them; neither was Tom aware yet that they existed.

All those that were present had been well drilled within the hour to remember that the prince was temporarily out of his head, and to be careful to show no surprise at his vagaries. These 'vagaries' were soon on exhibition before them; but they only moved their compassion and their sorrow, not their mirth. It was a heavy affliction to them to see the beloved prince so stricken.

Poor Tom ate with his fingers mainly; but no one smiled at it, or even seemed to observe it. He inspected his napkin curiously, and with deep interest, for it was of a very dainty and beautiful fabric, then said with simplicity —

“Prithee, take it away, lest in mine unheedfulness it be soiled.”

The Hereditary Diaperer took it away with reverent manner, and without word or protest of any sort.

Tom examined the turnips and the lettuce with interest, and asked what they were, and if they were to be eaten; for it was only recently that men had begun to raise these things in England in place of importing them as luxuries from Holland. His question was answered with grave respect, and no surprise manifested. When he had finished his dessert, he filled his pockets with nuts; but nobody appeared to be aware of it, or disturbed by it. But the next moment he was himself disturbed by it, and showed discomposure; for this was the only service he had been permitted to do with his own hands during the meal, and he did not doubt that he had done a most improper and unprincely thing. At that moment the muscles of his nose began to twitch, and the end of that organ to lift and wrinkle. This continued, and Tom began to evince a growing distress. He looked appealingly, first at one and then another of the lords about him, and tears came into his eyes. They sprang forward with dismay in their faces, and begged to know his trouble. Tom said with genuine anguish —

“I crave your indulgence: my nose itcheth cruelly. What is the custom and usage in this emergence? Prithee, speed, for 'tis but a little time that I can bear it.”

None smiled; but all were sore perplexed, and looked one to the other in deep tribulation for counsel. But behold, here was a dead wall, and nothing in English history to tell how to get over it. The Master of Ceremonies was not present: there was no one who felt safe to venture upon this uncharted sea, or risk the attempt to solve this solemn problem. Alas! there was no Hereditary

Scratcher. Meantime the tears had overflowed their banks, and begun to trickle down Tom's cheeks. His twitching nose was pleading more urgently than ever for relief. At last nature broke down the barriers of etiquette: Tom lifted up an inward prayer for pardon if he was doing wrong, and brought relief to the burdened hearts of his court by scratching his nose himself.

His meal being ended, a lord came and held before him a broad, shallow, golden dish with fragrant rosewater in it, to cleanse his mouth and fingers with; and my lord the Hereditary Diaperer stood by with a napkin for his use. Tom gazed at the dish a puzzled moment or two, then raised it to his lips, and gravely took a draught. Then he returned it to the waiting lord, and said —

“Nay, it likes me not, my lord: it hath a pretty flavour, but it wanteth strength.”

This new eccentricity of the prince's ruined mind made all the hearts about him ache; but the sad sight moved none to merriment.

Tom's next unconscious blunder was to get up and leave the table just when the chaplain had taken his stand behind his chair, and with uplifted hands, and closed, uplifted eyes, was in the act of beginning the blessing. Still nobody seemed to perceive that the prince had done a thing unusual.

By his own request our small friend was now conducted to his private cabinet, and left there alone to his own devices. Hanging upon hooks in the oaken wainscoting were the several pieces of a suit of shining steel armour, covered all over with beautiful designs exquisitely inlaid in gold. This martial panoply belonged to the true prince – a recent present from Madam Parr the Queen. Tom put on the greaves, the gauntlets, the plumed helmet, and such other pieces as he could don without assistance, and for a while was minded to call for help and complete the matter, but bethought him of the nuts he had brought away from dinner, and the joy it would be to eat them with no crowd to eye him, and no Grand Hereditaries to pester him with undesired services; so he restored the pretty things to their several places, and soon was cracking nuts, and feeling almost naturally happy for the first time since God for his sins had made him a prince. When the nuts were all gone, he stumbled upon some inviting books in a closet, among them one about the etiquette of the English court. This was a prize. He lay down upon a sumptuous divan, and proceeded to instruct himself with honest zeal. Let us leave him there for the present.

Chapter VIII. The Question of the Seal

About five o'clock Henry VIII. awoke out of an unrefreshing nap, and muttered to himself, "Troublous dreams, troublous dreams! Mine end is now at hand: so say these warnings, and my failing pulses do confirm it." Presently a wicked light flamed up in his eye, and he muttered, "Yet will not I die till *He* go before."

His attendants perceiving that he was awake, one of them asked his pleasure concerning the Lord Chancellor, who was waiting without.

"Admit him, admit him!" exclaimed the King eagerly.

The Lord Chancellor entered, and knelt by the King's couch, saying —

"I have given order, and, according to the King's command, the peers of the realm, in their robes, do now stand at the bar of the House, where, having confirmed the Duke of Norfolk's doom, they humbly wait his majesty's further pleasure in the matter."

The King's face lit up with a fierce joy. Said he —

"Lift me up! In mine own person will I go before my Parliament, and with mine own hand will I seal the warrant that rids me of —"

His voice failed; an ashen pallor swept the flush from his cheeks; and the attendants eased him back upon his pillows, and hurriedly assisted him with restoratives. Presently he said sorrowfully —

"Alack, how have I longed for this sweet hour! and lo, too late it cometh, and I am robbed of this so coveted chance. But speed ye, speed ye! let others do this happy office sith 'tis denied to me. I put my Great Seal in commission: choose thou the lords that shall compose it, and get ye to your work. Speed ye, man! Before the sun shall rise and set again, bring me his head that I may see it."

"According to the King's command, so shall it be. Will't please your majesty to order that the Seal be now restored to me, so that I may forth upon the business?"

"The Seal? Who keepeth the Seal but thou?"

"Please your majesty, you did take it from me two days since, saying it should no more do its office till your own royal hand should use it upon the Duke of Norfolk's warrant."

"Why, so in sooth I did: I do remember... What did I with it?.. I am very feeble... So oft these days doth my memory play the traitor with me... 'Tis strange, strange —"

The King dropped into inarticulate mumblings, shaking his grey head weakly from time to time, and gropingly trying to recollect what he had done with the Seal. At last my Lord Hertford ventured to kneel and offer information —

"Sire, if that I may be so bold, here be several that do remember with me how that you gave the Great Seal into the hands of his highness the Prince of Wales to keep against the day that —"

"True, most true!" interrupted the King. "Fetch it! Go: time flieth!"

Lord Hertford flew to Tom, but returned to the King before very long, troubled and empty-handed. He delivered himself to this effect —

"It grieveth me, my lord the King, to bear so heavy and unwelcome tidings; but it is the will of God that the prince's affliction abideth still, and he cannot recall to mind that he received the Seal. So came I quickly to report, thinking it were waste of precious time, and little worth withal, that any should attempt to search the long array of chambers and saloons that belong unto his royal high —"

A groan from the King interrupted the lord at this point. After a little while his majesty said, with a deep sadness in his tone —

"Trouble him no more, poor child. The hand of God lieth heavy upon him, and my heart goeth out in loving compassion for him, and sorrow that I may not bear his burden on mine old trouble-weighted shoulders, and so bring him peace."

He closed his eyes, fell to mumbling, and presently was silent. After a time he opened his eyes again, and gazed vacantly around until his glance rested upon the kneeling Lord Chancellor. Instantly his face flushed with wrath —

“What, thou here yet! By the glory of God, an’ thou gettest not about that traitor’s business, thy mitre shall have holiday the morrow for lack of a head to grace withal!”

The trembling Chancellor answered —

“Good your Majesty, I cry you mercy! I but waited for the Seal.”

“Man, hast lost thy wits? The small Seal which aforetime I was wont to take with me abroad lieth in my treasury. And, since the Great Seal hath flown away, shall not it suffice? Hast lost thy wits? Begone! And hark ye – come no more till thou do bring his head.”

The poor Chancellor was not long in removing himself from this dangerous vicinity; nor did the commission waste time in giving the royal assent to the work of the slavish Parliament, and appointing the morrow for the beheading of the premier peer of England, the luckless Duke of Norfolk.

Chapter IX. The river pageant

At nine in the evening the whole vast river-front of the palace was blazing with light. The river itself, as far as the eye could reach citywards, was so thickly covered with watermen's boats and with pleasure-barges, all fringed with coloured lanterns, and gently agitated by the waves, that it resembled a glowing and limitless garden of flowers stirred to soft motion by summer winds. The grand terrace of stone steps leading down to the water, spacious enough to mass the army of a German principality upon, was a picture to see, with its ranks of royal halberdiers in polished armour, and its troops of brilliantly costumed servitors flitting up and down, and to and fro, in the hurry of preparation.

Presently a command was given, and immediately all living creatures vanished from the steps. Now the air was heavy with the hush of suspense and expectancy. As far as one's vision could carry, he might see the myriads of people in the boats rise up, and shade their eyes from the glare of lanterns and torches, and gaze toward the palace.

A file of forty or fifty state barges drew up to the steps. They were richly gilt, and their lofty prows and sterns were elaborately carved. Some of them were decorated with banners and streamers; some with cloth-of-gold and arras embroidered with coats-of-arms; others with silken flags that had numberless little silver bells fastened to them, which shook out tiny showers of joyous music whenever the breezes fluttered them; others of yet higher pretensions, since they belonged to nobles in the prince's immediate service, had their sides picturesquely fenced with shields gorgeously emblazoned with armorial bearings. Each state barge was towed by a tender. Besides the rowers, these tenders carried each a number of men-at-arms in glossy helmet and breastplate, and a company of musicians.

The advance-guard of the expected procession now appeared in the great gateway, a troop of halberdiers. They were dressed in striped hose of black and tawny, velvet caps graced at the sides with silver roses, and doublets of murrey and blue cloth, embroidered on the front and back with the three feathers, the prince's blazon, woven in gold. Their halberd staves were covered with crimson velvet, fastened with gilt nails, and ornamented with gold tassels. Filing off on the right and left, they formed two long lines, extending from the gateway of the palace to the water's edge. A thick rayed cloth or carpet was then unfolded, and laid down between them by attendants in the gold-and-crimson liveries of the prince. This done, a flourish of trumpets resounded from within. A lively prelude arose from the musicians on the water; and two ushers with white wands marched with a slow and stately pace from the portal. They were followed by an officer bearing the civic mace, after whom came another carrying the city's sword; then several sergeants of the city guard, in their full accoutrements, and with badges on their sleeves; then the Garter King-at-arms, in his tabard; then several Knights of the Bath, each with a white lace on his sleeve; then their esquires; then the judges, in their robes of scarlet and coifs; then the Lord High Chancellor of England, in a robe of scarlet, open before, and purpled with minever; then a deputation of aldermen, in their scarlet cloaks; and then the heads of the different civic companies, in their robes of state. Now came twelve French gentlemen, in splendid habiliments, consisting of pourpoints of white damask barred with gold, short mantles of crimson velvet lined with violet taffeta, and carnation coloured hauts-de-chausses, and took their way down the steps. They were of the suite of the French ambassador, and were followed by twelve cavaliers of the suite of the Spanish ambassador, clothed in black velvet, unrelieved by any ornament. Following these came several great English nobles with their attendants.'

There was a flourish of trumpets within; and the Prince's uncle, the future great Duke of Somerset, emerged from the gateway, arrayed in a 'doublet of black cloth-of-gold, and a cloak of crimson satin flowered with gold, and ribanded with nets of silver.' He turned, doffed his plumed cap, bent his body in a low reverence, and began to step backward, bowing at each step. A prolonged trumpet-blast followed, and a proclamation, "Way for the high and mighty the Lord Edward, Prince of Wales!" High aloft on the palace walls a long line of red tongues of flame leapt forth with a thunder-

crash; the massed world on the river burst into a mighty roar of welcome; and Tom Canty, the cause and hero of it all, stepped into view and slightly bowed his princely head.

He was 'magnificently habited in a doublet of white satin, with a front-piece of purple cloth-of-tissue, powdered with diamonds, and edged with ermine. Over this he wore a mantle of white cloth-of-gold, pounced with the triple-feathered crest, lined with blue satin, set with pearls and precious stones, and fastened with a clasp of brilliants. About his neck hung the order of the Garter, and several princely foreign orders;' and wherever light fell upon him jewels responded with a blinding flash. O Tom Canty, born in a hovel, bred in the gutters of London, familiar with rags and dirt and misery, what a spectacle is this!

Chapter X. The Prince in the toils

We left John Canty dragging the rightful prince into Offal Court, with a noisy and delighted mob at his heels. There was but one person in it who offered a pleading word for the captive, and he was not heeded; he was hardly even heard, so great was the turmoil. The Prince continued to struggle for freedom, and to rage against the treatment he was suffering, until John Canty lost what little patience was left in him, and raised his oaken cudgel in a sudden fury over the Prince's head. The single pleader for the lad sprang to stop the man's arm, and the blow descended upon his own wrist. Canty roared out —

“Thou'lt meddle, wilt thou? Then have thy reward.”

His cudgel crashed down upon the meddler's head: there was a groan, a dim form sank to the ground among the feet of the crowd, and the next moment it lay there in the dark alone. The mob pressed on, their enjoyment nothing disturbed by this episode.

Presently the Prince found himself in John Canty's abode, with the door closed against the outsiders. By the vague light of a tallow candle which was thrust into a bottle, he made out the main features of the loathsome den, and also the occupants of it. Two frowsy girls and a middle-aged woman cowered against the wall in one corner, with the aspect of animals habituated to harsh usage, and expecting and dreading it now. From another corner stole a withered hag with streaming grey hair and malignant eyes. John Canty said to this one —

“Tarry! There's fine mummeries here. Mar them not till thou'st enjoyed them: then let thy hand be heavy as thou wilt. Stand forth, lad. Now say thy foolery again, an thou'st not forgot it. Name thy name. Who art thou?”

The insulted blood mounted to the little prince's cheek once more, and he lifted a steady and indignant gaze to the man's face and said —

“'Tis but ill-breeding in such as thou to command me to speak. I tell thee now, as I told thee before, I am Edward, Prince of Wales, and none other.”

The stunning surprise of this reply nailed the hag's feet to the floor where she stood, and almost took her breath. She stared at the Prince in stupid amazement, which so amused her ruffianly son, that he burst into a roar of laughter. But the effect upon Tom Canty's mother and sisters was different. Their dread of bodily injury gave way at once to distress of a different sort. They ran forward with woe and dismay in their faces, exclaiming —

“Oh, poor Tom, poor lad!”

The mother fell on her knees before the Prince, put her hands upon his shoulders, and gazed yearningly into his face through her rising tears. Then she said —

“Oh, my poor boy! Thy foolish reading hath wrought its woeful work at last, and ta'en thy wit away. Ah! why did'st thou cleave to it when I so warned thee 'gainst it? Thou'st broke thy mother's heart.”

The Prince looked into her face, and said gently —

“Thy son is well, and hath not lost his wits, good dame. Comfort thee: let me to the palace where he is, and straightway will the King my father restore him to thee.”

“The King thy father! Oh, my child! unsay these words that be freighted with death for thee, and ruin for all that be near to thee. Shake of this gruesome dream. Call back thy poor wandering memory. Look upon me. Am not I thy mother that bore thee, and loveth thee?”

The Prince shook his head and reluctantly said —

“God knoweth I am loth to grieve thy heart; but truly have I never looked upon thy face before.”

The woman sank back to a sitting posture on the floor, and, covering her eyes with her hands, gave way to heart-broken sobs and wailings.

“Let the show go on!” shouted Canty. “What, Nan! – what, Bet! mannerless wenches! will ye stand in the Prince’s presence? Upon your knees, ye pauper scum, and do him reverence!”

He followed this with another horse-laugh. The girls began to plead timidly for their brother; and Nan said —

“An thou wilt but let him to bed, father, rest and sleep will heal his madness: prithee, do.”

“Do, father,” said Bet; “he is more worn than is his wont. To-morrow will he be himself again, and will beg with diligence, and come not empty home again.”

This remark sobered the father’s joviality, and brought his mind to business. He turned angrily upon the Prince, and said —

“The morrow must we pay two pennies to him that owns this hole; two pennies, mark ye – all this money for a half-year’s rent, else out of this we go. Show what thou’st gathered with thy lazy begging.”

The Prince said —

“Offend me not with thy sordid matters. I tell thee again I am the King’s son.”

A sounding blow upon the Prince’s shoulder from Canty’s broad palm sent him staggering into goodwife Canty’s arms, who clasped him to her breast, and sheltered him from a pelting rain of cuffs and slaps by interposing her own person. The frightened girls retreated to their corner; but the grandmother stepped eagerly forward to assist her son. The Prince sprang away from Mrs. Canty, exclaiming —

“Thou shalt not suffer for me, madam. Let these swine do their will upon me alone.”

This speech infuriated the swine to such a degree that they set about their work without waste of time. Between them they belaboured the boy right soundly, and then gave the girls and their mother a beating for showing sympathy for the victim.

“Now,” said Canty, “to bed, all of ye. The entertainment has tired me.”

The light was put out, and the family retired. As soon as the snorings of the head of the house and his mother showed that they were asleep, the young girls crept to where the Prince lay, and covered him tenderly from the cold with straw and rags; and their mother crept to him also, and stroked his hair, and cried over him, whispering broken words of comfort and compassion in his ear the while. She had saved a morsel for him to eat, also; but the boy’s pains had swept away all appetite – at least for black and tasteless crusts. He was touched by her brave and costly defence of him, and by her commiseration; and he thanked her in very noble and princely words, and begged her to go to her sleep and try to forget her sorrows. And he added that the King his father would not let her loyal kindness and devotion go unrewarded. This return to his ‘madness’ broke her heart anew, and she strained him to her breast again and again, and then went back, drowned in tears, to her bed.

As she lay thinking and mourning, the suggestion began to creep into her mind that there was an undefinable something about this boy that was lacking in Tom Canty, mad or sane. She could not describe it, she could not tell just what it was, and yet her sharp mother-instinct seemed to detect it and perceive it. What if the boy were really not her son, after all? Oh, absurd! She almost smiled at the idea, spite of her griefs and troubles. No matter, she found that it was an idea that would not ‘down,’ but persisted in haunting her. It pursued her, it harassed her, it clung to her, and refused to be put away or ignored. At last she perceived that there was not going to be any peace for her until she should devise a test that should prove, clearly and without question, whether this lad was her son or not, and so banish these wearing and worrying doubts. Ah, yes, this was plainly the right way out of the difficulty; therefore she set her wits to work at once to contrive that test. But it was an easier thing to propose than to accomplish. She turned over in her mind one promising test after another, but was obliged to relinquish them all – none of them were absolutely sure, absolutely perfect; and an imperfect one could not satisfy her. Evidently she was racking her head in vain – it seemed manifest that she must give the matter up. While this depressing thought was passing through her mind, her ear caught the regular breathing of the boy, and she knew he had fallen asleep. And while she listened,

the measured breathing was broken by a soft, startled cry, such as one utters in a troubled dream. This chance occurrence furnished her instantly with a plan worth all her laboured tests combined. She at once set herself feverishly, but noiselessly, to work to relight her candle, muttering to herself, "Had I but seen him *then*, I should have known! Since that day, when he was little, that the powder burst in his face, he hath never been startled of a sudden out of his dreams or out of his thinkings, but he hath cast his hand before his eyes, even as he did that day; and not as others would do it, with the palm inward, but always with the palm turned outward – I have seen it a hundred times, and it hath never varied nor ever failed. Yes, I shall soon know, now!"

By this time she had crept to the slumbering boy's side, with the candle, shaded, in her hand. She bent heedfully and warily over him, scarcely breathing in her suppressed excitement, and suddenly flashed the light in his face and struck the floor by his ear with her knuckles. The sleeper's eyes sprang wide open, and he cast a startled stare about him – but he made no special movement with his hands.

The poor woman was smitten almost helpless with surprise and grief; but she contrived to hide her emotions, and to soothe the boy to sleep again; then she crept apart and communed miserably with herself upon the disastrous result of her experiment. She tried to believe that her Tom's madness had banished this habitual gesture of his; but she could not do it. "No," she said, "his *hands* are not mad; they could not unlearn so old a habit in so brief a time. Oh, this is a heavy day for me!"

Still, hope was as stubborn now as doubt had been before; she could not bring herself to accept the verdict of the test; she must try the thing again – the failure must have been only an accident; so she startled the boy out of his sleep a second and a third time, at intervals – with the same result which had marked the first test; then she dragged herself to bed, and fell sorrowfully asleep, saying, "But I cannot give him up – oh no, I cannot, I cannot – he *must* be my boy!"

The poor mother's interruptions having ceased, and the Prince's pains having gradually lost their power to disturb him, utter weariness at last sealed his eyes in a profound and restful sleep. Hour after hour slipped away, and still he slept like the dead. Thus four or five hours passed. Then his stupor began to lighten. Presently, while half asleep and half awake, he murmured —

"Sir William!"

After a moment —

"Ho, Sir William Herbert! Hie thee hither, and list to the strangest dream that ever.. Sir William! dost hear? Man, I did think me changed to a pauper, and.. Ho there! Guards! Sir William! What! is there no groom of the chamber in waiting? Alack! it shall go hard with — "

"What aileth thee?" asked a whisper near him. "Who art thou calling?"

"Sir William Herbert. Who art thou?"

"I? Who should I be, but thy sister Nan? Oh, Tom, I had forgot! Thou'rt mad yet – poor lad, thou'rt mad yet: would I had never woke to know it again! But prithee master thy tongue, lest we be all beaten till we die!"

The startled Prince sprang partly up, but a sharp reminder from his stiffened bruises brought him to himself, and he sank back among his foul straw with a moan and the ejaculation —

"Alas! it was no dream, then!"

In a moment all the heavy sorrow and misery which sleep had banished were upon him again, and he realised that he was no longer a petted prince in a palace, with the adoring eyes of a nation upon him, but a pauper, an outcast, clothed in rags, prisoner in a den fit only for beasts, and consorting with beggars and thieves.

In the midst of his grief he began to be conscious of hilarious noises and shoutings, apparently but a block or two away. The next moment there were several sharp raps at the door; John Canty ceased from snoring and said —

"Who knocketh? What wilt thou?"

A voice answered —

"Know'st thou who it was thou laid thy cudgel on?"

“No. Neither know I, nor care.”

“Belike thou’lt change thy note eftsoons. An thou would save thy neck, nothing but flight may stead thee. The man is this moment delivering up the ghost. ’Tis the priest, Father Andrew!”

“God-a-mercy!” exclaimed Canty. He roused his family, and hoarsely commanded, “Up with ye all and fly – or bide where ye are and perish!”

Scarcely five minutes later the Canty household were in the street and flying for their lives. John Canty held the Prince by the wrist, and hurried him along the dark way, giving him this caution in a low voice —

“Mind thy tongue, thou mad fool, and speak not our name. I will choose me a new name, speedily, to throw the law’s dogs off the scent. Mind thy tongue, I tell thee!”

He growled these words to the rest of the family —

“If it so chance that we be separated, let each make for London Bridge; whoso findeth himself as far as the last linen-draper’s shop on the bridge, let him tarry there till the others be come, then will we flee into Southwark together.”

At this moment the party burst suddenly out of darkness into light; and not only into light, but into the midst of a multitude of singing, dancing, and shouting people, massed together on the river frontage. There was a line of bonfires stretching as far as one could see, up and down the Thames; London Bridge was illuminated; Southwark Bridge likewise; the entire river was aglow with the flash and sheen of coloured lights; and constant explosions of fireworks filled the skies with an intricate commingling of shooting splendours and a thick rain of dazzling sparks that almost turned night into day; everywhere were crowds of revellers; all London seemed to be at large.

John Canty delivered himself of a furious curse and commanded a retreat; but it was too late. He and his tribe were swallowed up in that swarming hive of humanity, and hopelessly separated from each other in an instant. We are not considering that the Prince was one of his tribe; Canty still kept his grip upon him. The Prince’s heart was beating high with hopes of escape, now. A burly waterman, considerably exalted with liquor, found himself rudely shoved by Canty in his efforts to plough through the crowd; he laid his great hand on Canty’s shoulder and said —

“Nay, whither so fast, friend? Dost canker thy soul with sordid business when all that be leal men and true make holiday?”

“Mine affairs are mine own, they concern thee not,” answered Canty, roughly; “take away thy hand and let me pass.”

“Sith that is thy humour, thou’lt *not* pass, till thou’st drunk to the Prince of Wales, I tell thee that,” said the waterman, barring the way resolutely.

“Give me the cup, then, and make speed, make speed!”

Other revellers were interested by this time. They cried out —

“The loving-cup, the loving-cup! make the sour knave drink the loving-cup, else will we feed him to the fishes.”

So a huge loving-cup was brought; the waterman, grasping it by one of its handles, and with the other hand bearing up the end of an imaginary napkin, presented it in due and ancient form to Canty, who had to grasp the opposite handle with one of his hands and take off the lid with the other, according to ancient custom. This left the Prince hand-free for a second, of course. He wasted no time, but dived among the forest of legs about him and disappeared. In another moment he could not have been harder to find, under that tossing sea of life, if its billows had been the Atlantic’s and he a lost sixpence.

He very soon realised this fact, and straightway busied himself about his own affairs without further thought of John Canty. He quickly realised another thing, too. To wit, that a spurious Prince of Wales was being feasted by the city in his stead. He easily concluded that the pauper lad, Tom Canty, had deliberately taken advantage of his stupendous opportunity and become a usurper.

Therefore there was but one course to pursue – find his way to the Guildhall, make himself known, and denounce the impostor. He also made up his mind that Tom should be allowed a reasonable time for spiritual preparation, and then be hanged, drawn and quartered, according to the law and usage of the day in cases of high treason.

Chapter XI. At Guildhall

The royal barge, attended by its gorgeous fleet, took its stately way down the Thames through the wilderness of illuminated boats. The air was laden with music; the river banks were beruffled with joy-flames; the distant city lay in a soft luminous glow from its countless invisible bonfires; above it rose many a slender spire into the sky, incrustated with sparkling lights, wherefore in their remoteness they seemed like jewelled lances thrust aloft; as the fleet swept along, it was greeted from the banks with a continuous hoarse roar of cheers and the ceaseless flash and boom of artillery.

To Tom Canty, half buried in his silken cushions, these sounds and this spectacle were a wonder unspeakably sublime and astonishing. To his little friends at his side, the Princess Elizabeth and the Lady Jane Grey, they were nothing.

Arrived at the Dowgate, the fleet was towed up the limpid Walbrook (whose channel has now been for two centuries buried out of sight under acres of buildings) to Bucklersbury, past houses and under bridges populous with merry-makers and brilliantly lighted, and at last came to a halt in a basin where now is Barge Yard, in the centre of the ancient city of London. Tom disembarked, and he and his gallant procession crossed Cheapside and made a short march through the Old Jewry and Basinghall Street to the Guildhall.

Tom and his little ladies were received with due ceremony by the Lord Mayor and the Fathers of the City, in their gold chains and scarlet robes of state, and conducted to a rich canopy of state at the head of the great hall, preceded by heralds making proclamation, and by the Mace and the City Sword. The lords and ladies who were to attend upon Tom and his two small friends took their places behind their chairs.

At a lower table the Court grandees and other guests of noble degree were seated, with the magnates of the city; the commoners took places at a multitude of tables on the main floor of the hall. From their lofty vantage-ground the giants Gog and Magog, the ancient guardians of the city, contemplated the spectacle below them with eyes grown familiar to it in forgotten generations. There was a bugle-blast and a proclamation, and a fat butler appeared in a high perch in the leftward wall, followed by his servitors bearing with impressive solemnity a royal baron of beef, smoking hot and ready for the knife.

After grace, Tom (being instructed) rose – and the whole house with him – and drank from a portly golden loving-cup with the Princess Elizabeth; from her it passed to the Lady Jane, and then traversed the general assemblage. So the banquet began.

By midnight the revelry was at its height. Now came one of those picturesque spectacles so admired in that old day. A description of it is still extant in the quaint wording of a chronicler who witnessed it:

‘Space being made, presently entered a baron and an earl appareled after the Turkish fashion in long robes of bawdikin powdered with gold; hats on their heads of crimson velvet, with great rolls of gold, girded with two swords, called scimitars, hanging by great bawdricks of gold. Next came yet another baron and another earl, in two long gowns of yellow satin, traversed with white satin, and in every bend of white was a bend of crimson satin, after the fashion of Russia, with furred hats of gray on their heads; either of them having an hatchet in their hands, and boots with pykes’ (points a foot long), ‘turned up. And after them came a knight, then the Lord High Admiral, and with him five nobles, in doublets of crimson velvet, voyded low on the back and before to the cannell-bone, laced on the breasts with chains of silver; and over that, short cloaks of crimson satin, and on their heads hats after the dancers’ fashion, with pheasants’ feathers in them. These were appareled after the fashion of Prussia. The torchbearers, which were about an hundred, were appareled in crimson satin and green, like Moors, their faces black. Next came in a mommarye. Then the minstrels, which were disguised, danced; and the lords and ladies did wildly dance also, that it was a pleasure to behold.’

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