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# WHEN KNIGHTHOOD WAS IN FLOWER

BY CHARLES MAJOR

## PART I

### SUNDAY CALL LITERARY SECTION

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THE girls usually shared one couch, but during Mary's ill temper she had forced Jane to sleep alone. After a short silence Jane heard a sob from the other bed, then another, and another.

"Mary, are you weeping?" she asked. "Yes." "What is the matter, dear?" "Nothing," with a sigh. "Do you wish me to come to your bed?" "Yes, I do." So Jane went over and lay beside Mary, who put her arms gently about her neck.

"When will he leave?" whispered Mary, shyly confessing to her sister. "I do not know," responded Jane. "But he will see you before he goes."

"Do you believe he will?" "I know it," and with this consolation Mary softly wept herself to sleep. After this, for a few days, Mary was almost cheerful. Her irritable mood had vanished, but Jane could see that she was on the lookout for some one all the time, although she made the most paltry little efforts to conceal her watchfulness.

At last a meeting came about in this way: Next to the King's chamber was a luxuriously furnished little apartment, with a well-selected library. Here Brandon and I often went afterwards to read, as we were sure to be undisturbed.

Late one day Brandon had gone over to this quiet retreat, and, having selected a volume, took his place in a secluded little alcove half hidden in arras draperies. There was a cushioned seat along the wall and a small diamond-shaped window to furnish light.

He had not been there long when in came Mary. I cannot say whether she knew Brandon was there or not, but she was there and he was there, which is the only thing to the point, and, finding him, she stepped into the alcove before he was aware of her presence.

Brandon was on his feet in an instant, and with a bow was backing himself out most deferentially, to leave her in sole possession if she wished to rest.

"Master Brandon, you need not go; I will not hurt you. Besides, if this place is not large enough for us both I will go. I would not disturb you," she spoke with a tremulous voice and a quick, uneasy glance and started to move backward out of the alcove.

"Lady Mary, how you speak so? You know you must know—oh! I beg you—" But she interrupted him by taking his arm and drawing him to a seat beside her on the cushion. She could have drawn down the Colossus of Rhodes with the look she gave Brandon, so full was it of command, entreaty and promise.

"That's it; I don't know, but I want to know, and I want you to sit here beside me and tell me. I am going to be reconciled with you, despite the way you treated me when last we met. I am going to be friends with you whether you will or not. Now what do you say to that, sir?" She spoke with a fluttering little laugh of uneasy non-assurance, which showed that her heart was not nearly so confident nor so bold as her words would make believe. Poor Brandon, usually so ready, had nothing to say to that, but sat in helpless silence.

Was this the sum total of all his wise determinations made at the cost of so much pain and effort? Was this the end of the matter? "Lead me not into temptation!" He had done all he could. Heaven had not helped him, since here was temptation thrust upon him when least expected and when the way was so narrow he could not escape, but must meet it face to face.

Mary soon recovered her self-possession—women are better skilled in this art than men—and continued: "I am not intending to say one word about your treatment of me that day over in the forest, although it was very bad, and you have acted abominably ever since. Now is not that kind in me?" And she softly laughed as she peeped up at the poor fellow from beneath those sweeping lashes, with the premeditated purpose of tantalizing him, I suppose.

Over him, and it was never greater than at this moment. Her beauty had its sweetest quality, for the princess was

JULIA MARLOWE as MARY TUDOR

"I WILL GO TO SPAIN WITH YOU NOT AS A WOMAN BUT AS A MAN."

sunk and the woman was dominant, with flushed face and flashing eyes that caught a double lustre from the glowing love that made her heart beat so fast. Her gown, too, was the best she could have worn to show her charms. She must have known Brandon was there, and must have dressed especially to go to him. She wore her favorite long flowing outer sleeve, without the close fitting inner one. It was slit to the shoulder, and gave entrancing glimpses of her arms with every movement, leaving them almost bare when she lifted her hands, which was often, for she was full of gestures as a Frenchwoman. Her body was cut low both back and front, showing her large perfectly moulded throat and neck, like an alabaster pillar of beauty and strength, and disclosing her bosom just to its shadowy incursions, white and billowy as drifted snow. Her hair was thrown back in an attempt at a coil, though like her own rebellious and I will hand it to you. You can come to my rooms and get it or I will send it to you. Now tell me that I may. Quickly. And she was alive with enthusiastic interest.

"There now! you are kind again; as kind as even you can be. Be sure I thank you, although I say it only once," and he looked into her eyes with gaze she could not stand even for an instant. This was growing dangerous again, so, catching himself, he turned the conversation back into the bantering vein.

"Ah! you want to pay the debt that I may have no excuse to remain in it? Perhaps you are not so kind after all."

"Not no! you know better. But let me pay the debt. How much it is, to whom is it owing? Tell me at once, I command you."

"Please do, I beg—if I cannot command. Now I know you will; you would not make me beg twice for anything." She drew closer to him as she spoke, and put her arm coaxingly upon his arm. With an irresistible impulse he took the hand in his and lifted it to his lips in a lingering caress that could not be mistaken. It was all so quick and so full of fire and meaning that Mary took fright, and the Princess, for the moment, came uppermost.

"Master Brandon!" she exclaimed sharply and drew away her hand. Brandon dropped the hand and moved over on the seat. He did not speak, but turned his face from her and looked out of the window toward the river. Thus they sat in silence, Brandon's hand resting listlessly upon the cushion between them. Mary saw the eloquent movement away from her and his speaking attitude, with averted face; then the Princess went into eclipse, and the imperial woman was ascendant once more. She looked at him for a brief space with softening eyes, and, lifting her hand, put it back in his, saying:

"There it is again—if you want it." "Want it? Ah! This is too much! The hand would not satisfy me; it must be all, all! And he caught her to his arms with a violence that frightened her.

"Please don't, please! Not this time. Ah! have mercy, Charles! Well! There! There! There! Mary mother, forgive me." Then her woman spirit fell before the whirlwind of his passion, and she was on his breast, with her arms around his neck, paying the same tribute to the little blind god that he would have exacted from the lowliest maiden of the land. Just as though it were not the blood of fifty Kings and Queens that made so red and sweet, as sweet as nectar, those distillated, those lips which now so freely paid their dues in colored bliss.

Brandon held the girl for a moment or two, then fell upon his knees and buried his face in her lap.

"Heaven help me!" he cried. She pushed the hair back from his forehead with her hand, and as she fondled the curls leaned over him and softly whispered: "Heaven help us both; for I love you!"

He sprang to his feet. "Don't! don't! I pray you," he said wildly, and almost ran from her.

Mary followed him nearly to the door of the room, but when he turned he saw that she had stopped and was standing with her hands over her face, as if in tears. He went back to her and said: "I tried

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