

{ Anno 1558. }

A merry story concerning the straye keeping of the Lady Elizabeth.

The straytnes of Syr Henry Benfield merely noted.

Lady Elizabeth with much ado, suffered to write to the Queene.

The cruell dealing of Syr Henry Benfield to the Lady Elizabeth reprooved.

The letters of the Lady Elizabeth sent to the Queene.

D. Owen and D. Wendye, Mayes Phiſitions, sent to the Lady Elizabeth.

And now by the way as digressing, or rather refreshing the reader, if it be lawfull in so serious a booke to recite a matter incident, & yet not impertinent to the same: occasion here moueth, or rather importeth me to touch brieflye what hapned in the same place and time by a certayne merry conceited man, being then about her grace: who noting the straye and strange keeping of his Lady and Mistres by the sayd Syr Henry Benfield, with so many lockes & doores, with such watch & ward about her, as was straunge & wonderful, sipped a Boate in the ward where her grace was: and whether to refresh her oppressed mind, or to notify her straye handling by Syr Henry, either els both, he took it vp on his necke, and followed her grace therewith as she was going into her lodging.

Which when the law, she asked him what he would do with it, willing to let it alone. Unto whom the sayd party answered: no by Saynt Mary (if it like your grace) will I not: for I can see well whether he be one of the Queenes frendes or no. I will carry hinc to Syr Henry Benfielde (God willing) to know what he is. So leaving her grace, he went with the Boate on his necke, and carryed it to Syr Henry Benfield, who when he saw him comming wery it, asked him halfe angerly what he had there.

Unto whom the party answered, sayings Syr (quoth he) I can not tell what he is. I pray you examine him, for I founde him in the place where my Ladys Graces was walking, and what talke they haue had I can not tell. For I understod him not, but he should seme to me to be some stranger, and I thinke verely a welchman, for he hath a white friske coate on his back. And so much as I being the Queenes Subject, and perceiuing the straye charge committed to you of her keeping, that no stranger should haue access to her without sufficient licence, I haue here found a stranger (what he is I cannot tell) in place where her Grace was walking: & therefore for the necessary discharge of my duety, I thought it good to bring the sayde stranger to you, to examine, as you see cause: and so he set him down. At which his words Syr Henry semed much displeasid, and sayd: well, well, you will neuer leaue this grace I see: and so they departed.

Now, to returne to the matter from whence we haue digressed, after her Grace had bene there a time, she made suite to the Counsell that she might be suffered to write to the Queene. which at last was permitted: So that Syr Henry Benfield brought her penne, inke, and paper: and standing by her while she wrote (which he straitly obserued) always she being wery, he would carry away her letters, and bring them agayne when she called for them. In the finishing thereof, he would haue bene messenger to the Queene of the same, whose request her grace denied, saying: one of her owne men should carry them, and that she would neither trust him, nor none of his therein.

When he answering agayne, said: none of them durst he so hold (he troved) to carry her letters, beyng in that case. Yes (quoth she) I am assured I haue none so dishonest that would deny my request in that behalf, but will be as willing to serue me now as before. well (sayd he) my commission is to the contrary, and I may not so suffer it. Her grace replying agayne, said: you charge me very oft with your commission. I pray God you may iustly answer the cruell dealing you vse towarde me.

Then he kneeling downe, desired her grace to thinke and consider how he was a seruant, & put in trust there by the Queene to serue her Maestie, protesting that if case were hers, he would as willingly serue her grace, as now he did the Queenes highnesse. For the which his answer her grace thanked him, desiring God that she might neuer haue neede of such seruantes as he was: declaring further to him, that his doynge towards her were not good nor answerable, but moze then all the friends he had would stand by.

To whome Sir Henry replied and sayde, that there was no remedy but his doynge must be answered, and so they should, trusting to make good accompt thereof. The cause which moued her grace so to say, was for that hee would not permit her letters to be carryed iij. or v. dayes after the writing thereof. But in fine hee was content to send for her Gentleman from the Towne of Woodstocke, demanding of him whether he durst enterprise the carriage of her Graces letters to the Queene, or no: & he answered, yea Sir, that I dare, and will withall my heart. Whereupon Sir Henry halfe, agaynst his stomacke, took them vnto him.

Then about the viij. of June came downe Doctour Owen and Doctour Wendye, sent by the Queene to her grace, for that she was sickly: who ministring to her, and letting her blood, carried there and attended on her grace v. or vi. dayes. When she being well amended, they returned

again to the Courte, making theyr good report to the Queene and the Counsaile of her graces behauiour and humblenesse towards the Queenes highnesse, which her Maestie hearing, took very thankfully: but the bishops therat repined, looked blacke in the mouch, and tolde the Queene, they manueiled that she submitted not her selfe to her maesties mercye, considering that shee had offended her highnesse.

About this time, her Grace was requested by a secreete frende, to submit her selfe to the Queenes maestie, which would be very well taken, and to her great quiet & commoditie. Unto whom she answered, that she would neuer submitte her selfe to them to whom she neuer offended. For (quoth she) if I haue offended and am gilty, I then craue no mercy, but the law, which I am certaine (quoth she) I should haue had ere this, if it could be proued by me. For I know my selfe: I thank God to be out of the danger thereof, wishing that I were as cleare out of the pearle of impienities, and then I am assured I should not be locked and bolted vp within walles and doores as I am. God graue them a better minde when it pleaseth him.

About this time was there a great consulting among the Bishops and Gentlemen touching a Marriage for her Grace, which some of the Spanyardes wished to be with some stranger, that she might go out of the Realme with her portion: some saying one thing, and some an other. A Lord (who shall be here namelesse) being there, at last sayd, that the King should neuer haue any quiet common wealth in Englande, vnlesse her head were stricken from the shoulders, whereunto the Spanyardes answered, saying: God forbid that her king and master should haue that minde to consent to such a mischief.

This was the curious answer of the Spanyardes to the Englishmen, speaking after that sorte against theyr owne country. From that day the Spanyardes neuer left of their good persuasions to the king, that the like honour he should neuer obtaine, as he should in deliuering the Lady Elizabeths grace out of prison: whereby at length she was happily released from the same. Here is a plaine and euident example of the good clemencie and nature of the King and his Counsellors towards her grace (praised be God therefore) who moued their heartes therein. When hereupon shee was sente for shortly after to come to Hampton Court.

But before her removing away from Woodstocke, we will a litle stay to declare in what dangers her life was in during this time shee there remained: first thorough fire, which began to kindle betwene the boordes and seeling vnder the chamber where shee lay, whether by a sparke of fire, gotten into a crampe, or whether of purpose by some that meant her no good, the Lord doth knowe. Neuertheless a worshipfull Knight of Wrothshire, whiche was there ioynd the same time with Syr Henry Benfield in keeping that Labye (who then took vp the boordes and quashed the fire) verely supposed it to be done of purpose.

Furthermore it is thought, and also affirmed (if it be true) of one Paule Deny a keeper of Woodstocke, a notorious ruffin and a butcherly wretch, that he was appoynted to kill sayd Lady Elizabeth: who both sawe the man being often in her sight, and also knewe thereof.

An other time, one of the priuite chamber, a great man about the Queene, and chiefe darling of Steven Bardiber, named master James Waller, came to Blandenbridge a mile from Woodstocke, with 20. or 30. priuite coats, and sent for Syr Henry Benfield to come and speake with him. But, as God would, which disposed all things after the purpose of his owne will, so it happened, that a litle before the sayd Syr Henry Benfield was sent for by post to the Counsell, leaving straight word behinde him with his brother, that no man, what so euer hee were, thought comming with a Bill of the Queenes hand, or any other warrant, should haue access to her before his retourn agayne. By reason wherof it so fell out, that Mr. Benfields brother comming to him at the Bridge, would suffer him in no case to approche in, who otherwife (as is supposed) was appoynted violently to murder the innocent Lady.

In the life of Steven Bardiber wee declared before, page 1787. howe that the Ladie Elizabeth beyng in the Tower, a wytt came downe, subscribed with certaine handes of the Counsell for her execution, which if it were certaine, as it is reported, winchester (no doubt) was deuiser of that mischieuous drift: and doubtlesse the same A-chitophel had brought his impious purpose that daye to passe, had not the fatherly providence of almighty God, (who is alwayes stronger then the deuil) stirred vp Mr. Bridges, Lieutenantaunte the same time of the Tower, to come in halt to the Queene, to geue certificate thereof, and to knowe further her consent touching her sisters deathe, whercup-

The Popish Prelates requested against the Lady Elizabeth.

Lady Elizabeth requested to submit her selfe to the Queene.

Counsell of the Papistes to marry the Lady Elizabeth to a Spanyard. Wicked counsell geuen of the Lord Paget agaynst the Lady Elizabeth, Spanyardes more fauorable to Lady Elizabeth then some English men.

Lady Elizabeth in daunger of fire.

Lady Elizabeth in daunger of killing.

An other conspiracye of murder agaynst Lady Elizabeth.

Lady Elizabeth preferred by the Lordes providence from execution in the Tower. Winchester platforme overthrowen. Whereof before pag. 1787.