

BY
WHAT AUTHORITY ?

By

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the Love of Jesus," etc.



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*Tremans
Horsted Keynes
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PART I

CHAPTER I

THE SITUATION

To the casual Londoner who lounged, intolerant and impatient, at the blacksmith's door while a horse was shod, or a cracked spoke mended, Great Keynes seemed but a poor backwater of a place, compared with the rush of the Brighton road eight miles to the east from which he had turned off, or the whirling cauldron of London City, twenty miles to the north, towards which he was travelling.

The triangular green, with its stocks and horse-pond, overlooked by the grey benignant church-tower, seemed a tame exchange for seething Cheapside and the crowded ways about the Temple or Whitehall; and it was strange to think that the solemn-faced rustics who stared respectfully at the gorgeous stranger were of the same human race as the quick-eyed, voluble townsmen who chattered and laughed and grimaced over the news that came up daily from the Continent or the North, and was tossed to and fro, embroidered and discredited alternately, all day long.

And yet the great waves and movements that, rising in the hearts of kings and politicians, or in the sudden strokes of Divine Providence, swept over Europe and England, eventually always rippled up into this placid country village; and the lives of Master Musgrave, who had retired upon his earnings, and of old Martin, who cobbled the ploughmen's shoes, were definitely affected and changed by the plans of far-away Scottish gentlemen, and the

hopes and fears of the inhabitants of South Europe. Through all the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign, the menace of the Spanish Empire brooded low on the southern horizon, and a responsive mutter of storm sounded now and again from the north, where Mary Stuart reigned over men's hearts, if not their homes ; and lovers of secular England shook their heads and were silent as they thought of their tiny country, so rent with internal strife, and ringed with danger.

For Great Keynes, however, as for most English villages and towns at this time, secular affairs were so deeply and intricately interwoven with ecclesiastical matters that none dared decide on the one question without considering its relation to the other ; and ecclesiastical affairs, too, touched them more personally than any other, since every religious change scored a record of itself presently within the church that was as familiar to them as their own cottages.

On none had the religious changes fallen with more severity than on the Maxwell family that lived in the Hall, at the upper and southern end of the green. Old Sir Nicholas, though his convictions had survived the tempest of unrest and trouble that had swept over England, and he had remained a convinced and a stubborn Catholic, yet his spiritual system was sore and inflamed within him. To his simple and obstinate soul it was an irritating puzzle as to how any man could pass from the old to a new faith, and he had been known to lay his whip across the back of a servant who had professed a desire to try the new religion.

His wife, a stately lady, a few years younger than himself, did what she could to keep her lord quiet, and to save him from incurring by his indiscretion any further penalties beyond the enforced journeys before the Commission, and the fines inflicted on all who refused to attend their parish church. So the old man devoted himself to his estates and the further improvement of the house and gardens, and to the inculcation of sound religious principles into the minds of his two sons who were living at home with their parents ; and strove to hold his tongue, and his hand, in public.

The elder of these two, Mr. James as he was commonly called, was rather a mysterious personage to the village, and to such neighbours as they had. He was often in town, and when at home, although extremely pleasant and courteous, never talked about himself and seemed to be only very moderately interested in the estate and the country-life generally. This, coupled with the fact that he would presumably succeed his father, gave rise to a good deal of gossip, and even some suspicion.

His younger brother Hubert was very different ; passionately attached to sport and to outdoor occupations, a fearless rider, and in every way a kindly, frank lad of about eighteen years old. The fifth member of the family, Lady Maxwell's sister, Mistress Margaret Torridon, was a quiet-faced old lady, seldom seen abroad, and round whom, as round her eldest nephew, hung a certain air of mystery.

The difficulties of this Catholic family were considerable. Sir Nicholas' religious sympathies were, of course, wholly with the spiritual side of Spain, and all that that involved, while his intense love of England gave him a horror of the Southern Empire that the sturdiest patriot might have envied. And so with his attitude towards Mary Stuart and her French background. While his whole soul rose in loathing against the crime of Darnley's murder, to which many of her enemies proclaimed her accessory, it was kindled at the thought that in her or her child, lately crowned as James VI. of Scotland, lay the hope of a future Catholic succession ; and this religious sympathy was impassioned by the memory of an interview a few years ago, when he had kissed that gracious white hand, and looked into those alluring eyes, and, kneeling, stammered out in broken French his loyalty and his hopes. Whether it was by her devilish craft as her enemies said, or her serene and limpid innocence as her friends said, or by a maddening compound of the two, as later students have said—at least she had made the heart and confidence of old Sir Nicholas her own.

But there were troubles more practical than these mental struggles ; it was a misery, beyond describing, to this old man and his wife to see the church, where once they had worshipped and received the sacraments, given over to

what was, in their opinion, a novel heresy, and the charge of a schismatic minister. There, in the Maxwell chapel within, lay the bones of their Catholic ancestors; and there they had knelt to adore and receive their Saviour; and now for them all was gone, and the light was gone out in the temple of the Lord. In the days of the previous Rector matters were not so desperate; it had been their custom to receive from his hands at the altar-rail of the Church hosts previously consecrated at the Rectory; for the incumbent had been an old Marian priest who had not scrupled so to relieve his Catholic sheep of the burden of recusancy, while he fed his Protestant charges with bread and wine from the Communion table. But now all that was past, and the entire family was compelled year by year to slip off into Hampshire shortly before Easter for their annual duties, and the parish church that their forefathers had built, endowed and decorated, knew them no more.

But the present Rector, the Reverend George Dent, was far from a bigot; and the Papists were more fortunate than perhaps, in their bitterness, they recognised; for the minister was one of the rising Anglican school, then strange and unfamiliar, but which has now established itself as the main representative section of the Church of England. He welcomed the effect but not the rise of the Reformation, and rejoiced that the incrustations of error had been removed from the lantern of the faith. But he no less sincerely deplored the fanaticism of the Puritan and Genevan faction. He exulted to see England with a church truly her own at last, adapted to her character, and freed from the avarice and tyranny of a foreign despot who had assumed prerogatives to which he had no right. But he revered the Episcopate, he wore the prescribed dress, he used the thick singing-cakes for the Communion, and he longed for the time when nation and Church should again be one; when the nation should worship through a Church of her own shaping, and the Church share the glory and influence of her lusty partner and patron.

But Mrs. Dent had little sympathy with her husband's views; she had assimilated the fiery doctrines of the

Genevan refugees, and to her mind her husband was balancing himself to the loss of all dignity and consistency in an untenable position between the Popish priesthood on the one side and the Gospel ministry on the other. It was an unbearable thought to her that through her husband's weak disposition and principles his chief parishioners should continue to live within a stone's throw of the Rectory in an assured position of honour, and in personal friendliness to a minister whose ecclesiastical status and claims they disregarded. The Rector's position then was difficult and trying, no less in his own house than elsewhere.

The third main family in the village was that of the Norrises, who lived in the Dower House, that stood in its own grounds and gardens a few hundred yards to the north-west of the village green. The house had originally been part of the Hall estate; but it had been sold some fifty years before. The present owner, Mr. Henry Norris, a widower, lived there with his two children, Isabel and Anthony, and did his best to bring them up in his own religious principles. He was a devout and cultivated Puritan, who had been affected by the New Learning in his youth, and had conformed joyfully to the religious changes that took place in Edward's reign. He had suffered both anxiety and hardships in Mary's reign, when he had travelled abroad in the Protestant countries, and made the acquaintance of many of the foreign reformers—Beza, Calvin, and even the great Melancthon himself. It was at this time, too, that he had lost his wife. It had been a great joy to him to hear of the accession of Elizabeth, and the re-establishment of a religion that was sincerely his own; and he had returned immediately to England with his two little children, and settled down once more at the Dower House. Here his whole time that he could spare from his children was divided between prayer and the writing of a book on the Eucharist; and as his children grew up he more and more retired into himself and silence and communing with God, and devoted himself to his book. It was beginning to be a great happiness to him to find that his daughter Isabel, now about seventeen years old, was growing up into active sympathy with his princi-

ples, and that the passion of her soul, as of his, was a tender deep-lying faith towards God, which could exist independently of outward symbols and ceremonies. But unlike others of his school he was happy too to notice and encourage friendly relations between Lady Maxwell and his daughter, since he recognised the sincere and loving spirit of the old lady beneath her superstitions, and knew very well that her friendship would do for the girl what his own love could not.

The other passion of Isabel's life at present lay in her brother Anthony, who was about three years younger than herself, and who was just now more interested in his falcons and pony than in all the religious systems and human relationships in the world, except perhaps in his friendship for Hubert, who besides being three or four years older than himself, cared for the same things.

And so relations between the Hall and the Dower House were all that they should be, and the path that ran through the gardens of the one and the yew hedge and orchard of the other was almost as well trodden as if all still formed one estate.

As for the village itself, it was exceedingly difficult to gauge accurately the theological atmosphere. The Rector despaired of doing so. It was true that at Easter the entire population, except the Maxwells and their dependents, received communion in the parish church, or at least professed their willingness and intention to do so unless prevented by some accident of the preceding week; but it was impossible to be blind to the fact that many of the old beliefs lingered on, and that there was little enthusiasm for the new system. Rumours broke out now and again that the Catholics were rising in the north; that Elizabeth contemplated a Spanish or French marriage with a return to the old religion; that Mary Stuart would yet come to the throne; and with each such report there came occasionally a burst of joy in unsuspected quarters. Old Martin, for example, had been overheard, so a zealous neighbour reported, blessing Our Lady aloud for her mercies when a passing traveller had insisted that a religious league was in progress of formation between France and Spain,

and that it was only a question of months as to when mass should be said again in every village church; but then on the following Sunday the cobbler's voice had been louder than all in the metrical psalm, and on the Monday he had paid a morning visit to the Rectory to satisfy himself on the doctrine of Justification, and had gone again, praising God and not Our Lady, for the godly advice received.

But again, three years back, just before Mr. Dent had come to the place, there had been a solemn burning on the village-green of all such muniments of superstition as had not been previously hidden by the priest and Sir Nicholas; and in the rejoicings that accompanied this return to pure religion practically the whole agricultural population had joined. Some Justices had ridden over from East Grinstead to direct this rustic reformation, and had reported favourably to the new Rector on his arrival of the zeal of his flock. The great Rood, they told him, with SS. Mary and John, four great massy angels, the statue of St. Christopher, the Vernacle, a brocade set of mass vestments and a purple cope, had perished in the flames, and there had been no lack of hands to carry faggots; and now the Rector found it difficult to reconcile the zeal of his parishioners (which indeed he privately regretted) with the sudden and unexpected lapses into superstition, such as was Mr. Martin's gratitude to Our Lady, and others of which he had had experience.

As regards the secular politics of the outside world, Great Keynes took but little interest. It was far more a matter of concern whether mass or morning prayer was performed on Sunday, than whether a German bridegroom could be found for Elizabeth, or whether she would marry the Duke of Anjou; and more important than either were the infinitesimal details of domestic life. Whether Mary was guilty or not, whether her supporters were rising, whether the shadow of Spain chilled the hearts of men in London whose affair it was to look after such things; yet the cows must be milked, and the children washed, and the falcons fed; and it was these things that formed the foreground of life, whether the sky were stormy or sunlit.

And so, as the autumn of '69 crept over the woods in

flame and russet, and the sound of the sickle was in folks' ears, the life at Great Keynes was far more tranquil than we should fancy who look back on those stirring days. The village, lying as it did out of the direct route between any larger towns, was not so much affected by the gallop of the couriers, or the slow creeping rumours from the Continent, as villages that lay on lines of frequent communication. So the simple life went on, and Isabel went about her business in Mrs. Carroll's still-room, and Anthony rode out with the harriers, and Sir Nicholas told his beads in his room—all with nearly as much serenity as if Scotland were fairyland and Spain a dream.

CHAPTER II

THE HALL AND THE HOUSE

ANTHONY NORRIS, who was now about fourteen, went up to King's College, Cambridge, in October. He was closeted long with his father the night before he left, and received from him much sound religious advice and exhortation; and in the morning, after an almost broken-hearted good-bye from Isabel, he rode out with his servant following on another horse and leading a packhorse on the saddle of which the falcons swayed and staggered, and up the curving drive that led round into the village green. He was a good-hearted and wholesome-minded boy, and left a real ache behind him in the Dower House.

Isabel indeed ran up to his room, after she had seen his feathered cap disappear at a trot through the gate, leaving her father in the hall; and after shutting and latching the door, threw herself on his bed, and sobbed her heart out. They had never been long separated before. For the last three years he had gone over to the Rectory morning by morning to be instructed by Mr. Dent; but now, although he would never make a great scholar, his father thought it well to send him up to Cambridge for two or three years, that he might learn to find his own level in the world.

Anthony himself was eager to go. If the truth must be

told, he fretted a little against the restraints of even such a moderate Puritan household as that of his father's. It was a considerable weariness to Anthony to kneel in the hall on a fresh morning while his father read, even though with fervour and sincerity, long extracts from "Christian Prayers and Holy Meditations," collected by the Reverend Henry Bull, when the real world, as Anthony knew it, laughed and rippled and twinkled outside in the humming summer air of the lawn and orchard; or to have to listen to godly discourses, however edifying to elder persons, just at the time when the ghost-moth was beginning to glimmer in the dusk, and the heavy trout to suck down his supper in the glooming pool in the meadow below the house.

His very sports, too, which his father definitely encouraged, were obviously displeasing to the grave divines who haunted the house so often from Saturday to Monday, and spoke of high doctrinal matters at meal-times, when, so Anthony thought, lighter subjects should prevail. They were not interested in his horse, and Anthony never felt quite the same again towards one good minister who in a moment of severity called Eliza, the glorious peregrine that sat on the boy's wrist and shook her bells, a "vanity." And so Anthony trotted off happy enough on his way to Cambridge, of which he had heard much from Mr. Dent; and where, although there too were divines and theology, there were boys as well who acted plays, hunted with the hounds, and did not call high-bred hawks "vanities."

Isabel was very different. While Anthony was cheerful and active like his mother who had died in giving him life, she, on the other hand, was quiet and deep like her father. She was growing up, if not into actual beauty, at least into grace and dignity: but there were some who thought her beautiful. She was pale with dark hair, and the great grey eyes of her father; and she loved and lived in Anthony from the very difference between them. She frankly could not understand the attraction of sport, and the things that pleased her brother; she was afraid of the hawks, and liked to stroke a horse and kiss his soft nose better than to ride him. But, after all, Anthony liked to watch the towering

bird, and to hear and indeed increase the thunder of the hoofs across the meadows behind the stooping hawk ; and so she did her best to like them too ; and she was often torn two ways by her sympathy for the partridge on the one hand, as it sped low and swift across the standing corn with that dread shadow following, and her desire, on the other hand, that Anthony should not be disappointed.

But in the deeper things of the spirit, too, there was a wide difference between them. As Anthony fidgeted and sighed through his chair-back morning and evening, Isabel's soul soared up to God on the wings of those sounding phrases. She had inherited all her father's tender piety, and lived, like him, on the most intimate terms with the spiritual world. And though, of course, by training she was Puritan, by character she was Puritan too. As a girl of fourteen she had gone with Anthony to see the cleansing of the village temple. They had stood together at the west end of the church a little timid at the sight of that noisy crowd in the quiet house of prayer ; but she had felt no disapproval at that fierce vindication of truth. Her father had taught her of course that the purest worship was that which was only spiritual ; and while since childhood she had seen Sunday by Sunday the Great Rood overhead, she had never paid it any but artistic attention. The men had the ropes round it now, and it was swaying violently to and fro ; and then, even as the children watched, a tie had given, and the great cross with its pathetic wide-armed figure had toppled forward towards the nave, and then crashed down on the pavement. A fanatic ran out and furiously kicked the thorn-crowned head twice, splintering the hair and the features, and cried out on it as an idol ; and yet Isabel, with all her tenderness, felt nothing more than a vague regret that a piece of carving so ancient and so delicate should be broken.

But when the work was over, and the crowd and Anthony with them had stamped out, directed by the Justices, dragging the figures and the old vestments with them to the green, she had seen something which touched

her heart much more. She passed up alone under the screen, which they had spared, to see what had been done in the chancel ; and as she went she heard a sobbing from the corner near the priest's door ; and there, crouched forward on his face, crying and moaning quietly, was the old priest who had been rector of the church for nearly twenty years. He had somehow held on in Edward's time in spite of difficulties ; had thanked God and the Court of Heaven with a full heart for the accession of Mary ; had prayed and deprecated the divine wrath at the return of the Protestant religion with Elizabeth ; but yet had somehow managed to keep the old faith alight for eight years more, sometimes evading, sometimes resisting, and sometimes conforming to the march of events, in hopes of better days. But now the blow had fallen, and the old man, too ill-instructed to hear the accents of new truth in the shouting of that noisy crowd and the crash of his images, was on his knees before the altar where he had daily offered the holy sacrifice through all those troublous years, faithful to what he believed to be God's truth, now bewailing and moaning the horrors of that day, and, it is to be feared, unchristianly calling down the vengeance of God upon his faithless flock. This shocked and touched Isabel far more than the destruction of the images ; and she went forward timidly and said something ; but the old man turned on her a face of such misery and anger that she had run straight out of the church, and joined Anthony as he danced on the green.

On the following Sunday the old priest was not there, and a fervent young minister from London had taken his place, and preached a stirring sermon on the life and times of Josiah ; and Isabel had thanked God on her knees after the sermon for that He had once more vindicated His awful Name and cleansed His House for a pure worship.

But the very centre of Isabel's religion was the love of the Saviour. The Puritans of those early days were very far from holding a negative or colourless faith. Not only was their belief delicately dogmatic to excess ; but it all centred round the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Isabel had drunk in this faith from her father's lips, and