

## *Elizabeth*

THIS great queen, says Marville, passionately admired handsome persons, and he was already far advanced in her favour who approached her with beauty and grace. She had so unconquerable an aversion for men who had been treated unfortunately by nature, that she could not endure their presence.

When she issued from her palace, her guards were careful to disperse from before her eyes hideous and deformed people, the lame, the hunchbacked, &c.; in a word, all those whose appearance might shock her fastidious sensations.

“There is this singular and admirable in the conduct of Elizabeth, that she made her pleasures subservient to her politics, and she maintained her affairs by what in general occasions the ruin of princes. So secret were her amours, that even to the present day their mysteries cannot be penetrated; but the utility she drew from them is public, and always operated for the good of her people. Her lovers were her ministers, and her ministers were her lovers. Love commanded, love was obeyed; and the reign of this princess was happy, because it was a reign of *Love*, in which its chains and its slavery are liked!”

The origin of Raleigh’s advancement in the queen’s graces was by an act of gallantry. Raleigh spoiled a new plush cloak, while the queen stepping cautiously on it, shot forth a smile, in which he read promotion. Captain Raleigh soon became Sir Walter, and rapidly advanced in the queen’s favour.

Hume has furnished us with ample proofs of the *passion* which her courtiers feigned for her, and which, with others I shall give, confirm the opinion of Vigneu Marville, who did not know probably the *reason* why her amours were never discovered; which, indeed, never went further at the highest than boisterous or extreme gallantry. Home has preserved in his notes a letter written by Raleigh. It is a perfect amorous composition. After having exerted his poetic talents to exalt *her charms* and *his affection*, he concludes, by comparing her majesty, who was then *sixty*, to Venus and Diana. Sir Walter was not her only courtier who wrote in this style. Even in her old age she affected a strange fondness for music and dancing, and a kind of childish drollery, by which, however, her court seemed a court of lore, and she the sovereign. A curious anecdote in a letter of the times has reached us. Secretary Cecil, the youngest son of Lord Burleigh, seems to have perfectly entered into

her character. Lady Derby wore about her neck and in her bosom a portrait; the queen espying it, inquired about it, but her ladyship was anxious to conceal it. The queen insisted on having it, and discovering it to be the portrait of young Cecil, she snatched it away, and tying it upon her shoe, walked long with it; afterwards she pinned it on her elbow, and wore it some time there. Secretary Cecil hearing of this, composed some verses, and got them set to music; this music the queen insisted on hearing. In his verses Cecil sang that he repined not, though her majesty was pleased to grace others; he contented himself with the favour she had given him, by wearing his portrait on her feet and her elbow! The writer of the letter adds, "All these things are very secret." In this manner she contrived to lay the fastest hold on her able servants, and her servants on her.

Those who are intimately acquainted with the private anecdotes of those times know what encouragement this royal coquette gave to most who were near her person. Dodd, in his Church History, says, that the Earls of Arran and Arundel, and Sir William Pickering, "were not out of hopes of gaining Queen Elizabeth's affections in a matrimonial way."

She encouraged every person of eminence; she even went so far, on the anniversary of her coronation, as

publicly to take a ring from her finger, and put it on the Duke of Alençon's hand. She also ranked amongst her suitors Henry the Third of France, and Henry the Great.

She never forgave Buzenval for ridiculing her bad pronounciation of the French language; and when Henry IV. sent him over on an embassy, she would not receive him. So nice was the irritable pride of this great queen, that she made her private injuries matters of state.

"This queen," writes Du Maurier, in his *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Hollande*, "who displayed so many heroic accomplishments, had this foible, of wishing to be thought beautiful by all the world. I heard from my father, that having been sent to her, at every audience he had with her majesty, she pulled off her gloves more than a hundred times to display her hands, which indeed were very beautiful and very white."

Another anecdote, not less curious, relates to the affair of the Duke of Anjou and our Elizabeth, and one more proof of her partiality for handsome men. The writer was Lewis Guyon, a contemporary of the times he notices.

"Francis Duke of Anjou being desirous of marrying a crowned head, caused proposals of marriage to be made to Elizabeth, queen

of England. Letters passed betwixt them, and their portraits were exchanged. At length her majesty informed him, that she would never contract a marriage with any one who sought her, if she did not first *see his person*. If he would not come, nothing more should be said on the subject. This prince, over-pressed by his young friends (who were as little able of judging as himself), paid no attention to the counsels of men of maturer judgment. He passed over to England without a splendid train. The said lady contemplated his *person*: she found him *ugly*, disfigured by deep scars of the *small-pox*, and that he also had an ill-shaped nose, with swellings in the neck! All these were so many reasons with her, that he could never be admitted into her good graces.”

Puttenham, in his very rare book of the “Art of Poesie,” p. 248, notices the grace and majesty of Elizabeth’s demeanour, “her stately manner of walk, with a certaine granditie rather than gravitie, marching with leysure, which our sovereign ladye and mistresse is accustomed to doe generally, unless it be when she walketh apace for her pleasure, or to catch her a heate in the cold mornings.”

By the following extract from a letter from one of her gentlemen, we discover that her usual habits, though

studious, were not of the gentlest kind, and that the service she exacted from her attendants was not borne without concealed murmurs. The writer groans in secrecy to his friend. Sir John Stanhope writes to Sir Robert Cecil in 1598. “I was all the afternowne with her majestie, *at my booke*, and then thinking to rest me, went in agayne with your letter. She was pleased with the Filosofer’s stone, and hath ben *all this daye reasonably quyett*. Mr. Grevell is absent, and I am tyed so as I cannot styrr, but shall be at *the wourse for yt*, these two dayes!”

Puttenham, p. 249, has also recorded an honourable anecdote of Elizabeth, and characteristic of that high majesty which was in her thoughts, as well as in her actions. When she came to the crown, a knight of the realm, who had insolently behaved to her when Lady Elizabeth, fell upon his knees to her, and besought her pardon, suspecting to be sent to the Tower: she replied mildly, “Do you not know that we are descended of the *lion*, whose nature is not to harme or prey upon the mouse, or any other such small vermin?”

Queen Elizabeth was taught to write by the celebrated *Roger Ascham*. Her writing is extremely beautiful and correct, as may be seen by examining a little manuscript book of prayers, preserved in the British Mu-

seum. I have seen her first writing-book preserved at Oxford in the Bodleian Library: the gradual improvement of her majesty's handwriting is very honourable to her diligence; but the most curious thing is the paper on which she tried her pens; this she usually did by writing the name of her beloved brother Edward; a proof of the early and ardent attachment she formed to that amiable prince.

The education of Elizabeth had been severely classical; she thought and she wrote in all the spirit of the great characters of antiquity; and her speeches and her letters are studded with apophthegms, and a terseness of ideas and language, that give an exalted idea of her mind. In her evasive answers to the commons, in reply to their petition to her majesty to marry, she has employed an energetic word. "Were I to tell you that I do not mean to marry, I might say less than I intend; and were I to tell you that I do mean to marry, I might say more than it is proper for you to know; therefore I give you an *answer*, ANSWERLESS!"