

***ALFRED JOHN
CHURCH***



***WITH THE KING
AT OXFORD: A TALE
OF THE GREAT
REBELLION***

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Alfred John Church

With the King at Oxford: A Tale of the Great Rebellion

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EPILOGUE.

CHAPTER I.

OF MY BIRTH AND BRINGING-UP.

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My father was the son of a gentleman of Oxfordshire that had a small estate near to the town of Eynsham, in that county. The monks of Eynsham Priory had the land aforetime; and 'twas said that here, as elsewhere, there was a curse upon such as held for their own uses that which had been dedicated to God's service. How this may be I know not, though there are notable instances—as, to wit, the Russells—in which no visible curse has fallen on the holders of such goods; but it is certain that my father's forbears wasted their estate grievously. Being but the third son, he had scarce, in any case, tarried at home; but, matters being as they were, the emptiness of the family purse drove him out betimes into the world. Being of good birth and breeding he got, without much ado, a place about the Court, which was not, however, much to his liking. I have heard him say—and this, though, as will be seen hereafter, he was a great lover of monarchy—that, between a weak king and villainous courtiers, Whitehall was no place for an honest gentleman. Robert Carr, that was afterwards Earl of Somerset, he liked little, and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, he liked yet less, being, as he was wont to say, by so much a greater villain than Somerset as a duke is greater than an earl. He was right glad, therefore, to leave the "sunshine of the Royal presence;" for so did men speak of the Court in the hyperbolical language of those times,

even for so dismal and outlandish a part as Ireland. But I know not whether he did not wish himself back, for of Ireland he would never afterwards speak with any measure of patience, declaring that he knew not which were the worse, the greediness and cruelty of the English conquerors, or the savagery and unreason of the native people. Here he tarried for some three or four years, having, indeed, had bestowed upon him an estate, which, for its boundaries, at least, was of considerable magnitude, but from which he received nothing but trouble. Who hath it now I know not; and, indeed, he charged me to have nought to do with it, saying—for I remember his very words—"If they will give thee the whole island in fee, say them nay, for it is fit for nothing but to be drowned under the sea." Yet his next venture was not one whit happier, as will be readily concluded, when I say that he took service with Sir Walter Raleigh, whom he chanced to fall in with at Cork, at which place Sir Walter touched on his way to the Indies in search of gold. Gold got they none, but of hard blows not a few, and of pains and sickness still more. My father was with the boats that sailed up the river Orinoco, and caught in his arms, I have heard him say, Walter Raleigh the younger, when this last was slain by a bullet from a Spanish arquebuse. From this voyage he came back beggared in and purse not a little broken in health; to the end of his days indeed he suffered much at times from the fever that he contracted in those parts. The year following that wherein Raleigh was beheaded, came what seemed at the first sight good news, namely, that the Bohemians had bestowed the crown of their country upon the Elector of Bavaria, husband

to the Princess Elizabeth, the king's daughter. Thereupon there arose such a tumult of joy throughout the country as the oldest man living scarce remembered to have heard before. There was nothing too good to be hoped for as about to come from this promotion. Indeed, I have heard my father say that he was himself present when the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Abbott) preached a sermon wherein he declared that this event was foretold in Scripture, naming even the chapter and verse, which were, if I remember right, in the Book of the Revelation. My father was carried away with the rest, and having, as may well be thought, a special gift for choosing for his own that which should be the losing side, forthwith took service with the Elector, to whom King James, though scarce approving of the cause, sent at this time auxiliaries to the number of four thousand. In this army my father had a captain's commission, with pay to the amount of four shillings by the day—handsome wages, only that he never received of them so much as a doit. Nor did the campaign recompense the defect of gains by any excess of glory. It was, indeed, as barren of laurels as of gold; and my father, who, being favourably known of old time by the Princess, was appointed to command the guard of the Elector, arrived in his Highness's company at the Hague without a penny in his pocket, and scarce a coat to his back.

But now behold a turn of Fortune's wheel. While he lingered in Holland, not from choice, indeed, but from compulsion, seeing that he did not possess the wherewithal to pay his passage to England, came news of an inheritance that had fallen to him, being nothing less—or, may be, I should rather say, considering its poverty, nothing more—

than the family estate. This fell to my father by the death of his two elder brothers, who both expired of a fever on the same day. And this day, so strangely do things fall together in this world, was the very same as that on which all his worldly hopes seemed to have been overset, that is, the 8th of November, in the year 1620, when the Elector Palatine was utterly defeated by the Duke of Bohemia. My father then, coming, as I have said, to Holland, this same winter with the Elector, there heard of his inheritance, not, indeed, without some natural regret for the cause that had brought it to him, yet, because his brothers were older by far, and akin by half-blood only, and stranger's by long interruption of acquaintance, not sorrowful overmuch.

The said inheritance was, as may be gathered from what has been written above, a mighty poor thing, being, after all debts and encumbrances were paid, but of sixty pounds value by the year at the most. Nevertheless, for a poor, battered soldier that had no way to earn his bread, 'twas by no means to be despised. Veterans that have passed through the wars—if my father, that was but just thirty years of age, may be so called—do commonly love the quietude of a country retreat (and it was thus that Augustus Cæsar and others did reward their legions); and my father affected this manner of life as readily as did ever old soldier in the world, and, being a man of useful parts, he turned his sword into a ploughshare with good result, and this not only of profit of money, but of health also. Being thus set up, both in body and estate, he took courage to ask in marriage a maiden of those parts, Cicely Harland by name. She was the daughter of a gentleman that had a like estate with my

father, only it was without encumbrance, so that Mistress Cicely was not ill-provided with a portion. My father, whose name—for this I have not yet mentioned—was Philip Dashwood, married Mistress Cicely Harland in the month of September, 1623. Of this marriage were born two children; first, my sister Dorothy, in August, 1624, and secondly myself, a Philip also, who came into this troublesome world on Christmas Day, 1625, having as my birthright, as the gossips say, the gift of seeing spirits, though this I have never yet, to my knowledge, enjoyed. My first teaching, save the very rudiments which my dear mother did impart to me, was from Master William Hearnden, parson of the parish, to which, indeed, he had been presented by my father in the vacancy before described. They had been close friends in that luckless campaigning in Bohemia, where Master Hearnden was chaplain to the English regiment—ay, and on occasion also, I have heard say, captain also; for he was, as the country folk say, "a man of his hands." Not the less was he a virtuous and godly clerk, and a sound scholar also, and with a rare gift which scholars, be they ever so sound, have not always—of teaching that which he knew.

On January the 6th, 1633, being then twelve days past my eighth birthday, I was entered of the Merchant Taylors' School, at Laurence Pountney, in the City of London, by the presentation of William Harford, kinsman to my mother, that was one of the Court of the said Company. Mr. Edwards was then master of the school, and remained so during the time of my continuance there.

At the first I lodged in the house of Master William Rushworth, that was a merchant of timber, and dwelt in the

Strand, of whom and of whose house more hereafter.

Within a few weeks of my coming I saw what my elders told me was the finest spectacle that had been seen in London within the memory of man, that is, a mighty grand masquerade, with which the gentlemen of the four Inns of Court entertained their Majesties King Charles, and Henrietta of France, his Queen. I was yet too much of a child to have any clear understanding of what I saw, though the number of men and horses, the splendour of scarlet and purple, of gold and silver, and all the magnificence of the show made a notable mark on my mind. But I heard much talk about it in after times; and, indeed, till the late troubles came upon the country, there was nothing of which there was more frequent mention than of this same masquerade. Thus it came to pass that, filling up what I observed at the time with that which I heard afterwards, I came to have such a notion of the matter as might have been conceived by one much older than I then was. If, therefore, I may join together what was afterwards told to me with what I remember of myself, this masquerade was shown on Candlemas Day, which is the second day of February, the procession starting from Chancery Lane when it was now dusk. First came twenty footmen in scarlet liveries, with silver lace, each carrying a torch. These were the Marshal's men that cleared the way, and with them came the Marshal himself, an extraordinary proper handsome gentleman, riding one of the King's horses, with two lackeys, each carrying a torch, and a page that bare his cloak. After these came a hundred gentlemen, five and twenty from each Inn of Court, riding on horses, the finest that could be found in London, and

apparelled as bravely as men could be. After these again came what was styled the antimasque, cripples and beggars on horseback, mounted on the poorest, leanest jades that could be gotten out of the dirt-carts and elsewhere. These had their proper music of keys and tongs, making the queerest noise that can be imagined, but yet with a sort of concert. Then followed another antimasque, this time of birds. The first portion was men on horseback, playing on pipes and whistles, and other instruments by which the notes of birds may be imitated; the second was the birds themselves, among which I specially noted an owl in an ivy bush. What these creatures were I knew not at the time, but learnt afterwards that they were little boys put into covers of the shapes of the birds. After these came that which pleased the people mightily, and at which I laughed heartily myself, though not knowing why: this was a satire on the projectors and monopolisers from whom the realm had long suffered. First there was a man riding on a very mean steed that had a great bit in his mouth; and on the man's head was a bit, with reins and headstall fastened to it, and a petition written for a patent that no one in the kingdom should ride their horses save with such bits as they might buy of him. Second to him was another with a bunch of carrots on his head and a capon in his fist, and he had a petition also for a patent, that none should fatten capons save with carrots and by his licence. Behind these came other horsemen, and last of all four chariots, one for each Inn of Court, these being the most splendid of all. The King and Queen were so mightily pleased with this pageant that they desired to see it again. Thereupon the Lord Mayor

invited their Majesties to a banquet in the Merchant Taylors' Hall, and the same masque was there again performed, the procession having gone eastward this time. And we scholars of the school were privileged to see it from a gallery that was set apart for us.

CHAPTER II.

OF MY SOJOURN IN LONDON.

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My sojourn with Master Rushworth was but for a time. Accordingly some three days, or thereabouts, after that I had been a spectator of the lawyers' great masque, I changed my abode to the house of one Mr. Timothy Drake, a woollen draper, that dwelt upon London Bridge, on the north side. Master Drake was bound to my kinsman Master Harford, of whom I have before spoken, by many obligations of benefits received; and when the said uncle, being single and well advanced in years, was unwilling to be troubled with the charge of a child, Master Drake gladly received me; not, I suppose, without good consideration given. It was judged to be more convenient for me to lodge upon the bridge, which is but little more than a stone's throw from the Merchant Taylors' School, than in the Strand; nor was I unwilling to go, but my sojourn there was but for a very short time, as I shall presently show.

'Twas a marvellous place this same London Bridge, more like, indeed, to a village than a bridge, having on either side houses, some of them being shops, as was that in which I dwelt, and some taverns, and some private dwellings. And about the middle of the bridge stood a great building, which they called Nonesuch House, very splendidly painted with colours, and having wooden galleries hanging over the river, richly ornamented with carving and gilding. This Nonesuch House covered the whole breadth of the bridge from the one

side to the other; and in the middle of it was an arch with the road passing under it.



HANHART LITH.

London Bridge.

The bridge had, or, I should rather say, has (for it still stands and will, I doubt not, stand for many ages to come) twenty arches, of which one is blocked. They are but small, the purpose of the builder, Peter of Colechurch, having been, it is said, thus to restrain the ebbing of the tide, and so to make the river above the bridge more easily navigable. I should rather think, if I may say so much

without wrong to the pious man, that in that rude age (now near upon five centuries since) he knew not how to build bigger. And being thus small they are still further diminished by the sterlings that are built about the piers, to keep them from damage by ice or floods. Thus it came to pass that of nine hundred feet (for such is the length of the bridge from end to end) scarce two hundred remain for the waterway. The consequence thereof is that when the water is lower than the sterlings it rushes through the arches with a singular great violence. How great it is may be judged from this, that in some of the arches there is a waterfall, so to speak, of as much as two feet, when the tide is at its strongest; and this strongest is when it is about half-spent, running upwards; but why the flow should be stronger than the ebb I know not, seeing that this latter is increased by the natural current of the river. I do remember, if I may delay those that shall read this chronicle with such childish recollections, how I marvelled at the first at this same ebb and flow, of which I had never before heard. On the first day of my coming to Master Drake's house, being, as I remember, the seventh day of February, I looked out from my chamber window about half-past five of the clock, and saw the Thames full to his banks and flowing eastward, as by rights he should, it being then but just past the flood. But the next time that I chanced to cast my eyes on him, the tide having but newly begun to flow, lo! he was dwindled to half his span, and ran westward. Of a truth I thought that there was witchcraft, and, being a simple child, ran down into my host's parlour, crying, "What ails the river that it is

half-spent and runs the wrong way?" and was much laughed at for my pains.

I thought to have much pleasure from sojourn in the house upon the bridge, and doubtless should have had but for the sad mishap of which I shall shortly speak. For indeed there was much to be seen daily upon the river. On the eastern side, looking, that is to say, towards the sea, there were goodly ships from all parts of the world, lading and unlading their cargoes, for through the bridge none could go; nay, the very wherries, for the violence of the water, would not venture the passage save at the highest or lowest of the tide; but passengers were discharged on the one side and took boat again on the other. And on the western side there were the barges of my Lord Mayor and of the richer of the Companies; and barges of trade, carrying all manner of goods and especially timber, both for building and burning; and small boats almost without number, both of private persons and of watermen that plied for hire. And on occasions there were races among the watermen and also among the 'prentices of the City. And there were other sports, notably that of tilting upon the water, in which the vanquisher would dismount the vanquished, not indeed from his horse but from his boat, and sometimes drive him into the water, with no small laughter from the spectators. The bridge also afforded another pastime, for when the tide was so far ebbd that it was possible to stand upon the sterlings (which were at other times covered with water) there were many fishes to be caught, for these commonly resort where there is abundance of food to be found, as must needs be in so great a city as London. And if any

cannot conceive of the anglers' craft as practised in the midst of such din and tumult, they may take as a proof that the makers of anglers' tackle congregate in Crooked Lane, which is hard by the bridge, more than in any other place in London.

Being also a lad, for all my tender years, of an active fancy and apt to muse by myself, and to build castles in the air, or, as some say, in Spain, for my delight, I did not forget the story of Edward Osborne, that was 'prentice to Sir William Hewet, clothworker, some time Lord Mayor of London, how he leapt from the window of one of the bridge houses, and saved his master's daughter that had been dropped into the river by a careless maid. All the dwellers on the bridge have the story ready, so to speak, on the tip of their tongues, as if it were a credit to themselves; nor would I discourage the thought, for haply it might give a lad boldness to venture his life in the like gallant way. Hence, before I had been in the house an hour they showed me the window from which the said Edward leapt. All the world knows, I suppose, how he afterwards married this same daughter, and received with her a great estate, and how he rose to great prosperity, being Lord Mayor in the year 1583, and how his posterity are to this day persons of great worship and renown, who will yet, if I mistake not, rise higher in the state. 'Tis true I was no 'prentice, nor had Master Drake a daughter, save one that must have been forty years of age at the very least; but what are these hindrances to the fancy when it is minded to disport in its own realms?

But now for the mishap which scattered these fancies and the hopes of other delights, of which I have before spoken. I came, as I have said, to sojourn with Master Drake on the seventh day of February, being, as I remember, a Thursday; and on the Monday following my sojourn was ended. Near to Master Drake's house dwelt Mr. John Briggs, a needle-maker by trade, who was wont to keep up a brisk fire for the carrying on of his craft. This being maintained at a greater height and for a longer time together than was customary, trade being beyond ordinary brisk, heated the woodwork adjoining, than which there is, as I conceive, no more common cause of such mischief. This at least, was conjectured at the time, for nothing could be known of a certainty. What is established is, that about ten of the clock at night on Monday aforesaid, the fire began in Mr. Briggs' house, and that so suddenly and with such violence that he and his wife and child, a maid of about four years (who, as being of a more convenient age and size than Mistress Tabitha Drake, I had resolved should fall into the river and be saved by me) escaped with their lives very hardly, having nothing on but their shirts, and it may be said, the smoke, so near did they come to being burned. Nor were we in much better case, save that Master Drake and his wife and daughter, having entertained the parson of the parish to supper ('twas in the parish of St. Magnus the Martyr) had not yet gone to bed. Thus they were able not only to save themselves and me, who was in bed and sound asleep, more easily, but also to carry off some of their chief possessions. As for putting out of the fire, little or nothing could be done. A man might have thought that, the houses

being on a bridge, there would be sufficient water at hand to prevent a fire, how great soever. But it was not so. By ill-luck it happened that the river was at its very lowest, so that the engines, of which there were three, newly made, and much admired for their excellence, could get no water from it, and, indeed, were broken in the endeavour. And when the conduits were opened, and the pipes that carried water through the streets cut, these also yielded but little water, so that the fire raged almost without let or hindrance. Yet such water as there was, was used to the uttermost, men carrying the buckets up ladders, which were set against the burning houses, and pouring them upon the flames. From this, indeed, came other damages, for the ladders were burnt through, to the hurt of many, by the breaking of their arms and legs, and even to the loss of their lives. All that night and the next day until noon the fire continued to burn fiercely; nor did it stop till it came to the first empty space upon the bridge; there it was stayed for want of matter, the brewers' men that were on the other side of the river also helping by bringing abundance of water on their drays and wetting the houses that were yet unconsumed. There were forty-three houses burned in all, being about the third part of those that stood upon the bridge. The road was so blocked by the ruins that, though as many as had space to stand laboured to carry away the timber and bricks, and tiles and rubbish, none could pass over the bridge before Wednesday, and there were remains of the fire yet smouldering on the Tuesday following, as I learned to my cost, having on that day burnt my finger with a live coal of fire which I took up in my hand.

By God's mercy, the night was warm, or else the inhabitants that were ousted so suddenly from their homes had suffered much. It was still, also, a matter for which we are yet more bound to be thankful; for had the wind, which was, indeed, from the south, and so blew towards the City, been strong, London itself would have been much endangered, the more so as the traders in Thames Street have much pitch, tar, rosin, oil, and other inflammable goods in their houses. Indeed, were I minded to prophesy, I should say that some day, there will arise in this very part of London, for nowhere is the peril greater, such a conflagration as has never been seen in the world; save only, it may be, when Rome was set on fire by that mad Cæsar, Nero.

As for myself, I found shelter, for the time, with my kinsman, Master Harford, in his fine mansion, hard by the Church of Saint Peter on Cornhill. Whether he would have kept me now that his scheme of lodging me with Master Drake had fallen through, I cannot say; but, if he ever entertained any such purpose, it was shortly dismissed by reason of my behaviour. 'Twas, as I have said, a fine mansion, Master Harford being one of the wealthiest merchants in London, and the table kept proportionate thereto. There was no mistress of the house, Master Harford being, as I have said, a bachelor, but a housekeeper, Joan Fuller by name, a kind woman, and knowing in all the knowledge of the store-room and kitchen, but otherwise of scant sense. She, having none on whom to bestow her affections, save a cat and a dog, took a mighty favour to me, which favour she showed in the fashion that she herself

would have most approved, if I may say so much without unkindness to the memory of one that is now deceased; for she plied me, both in season and out of season, with all manner of dainty meats, so that in the space of eight days or thereabouts I fell sick. 'Twas no great matter, only a sickness as would come to any child that had been so dealt with, and was easily set right by the apothecary's medicines, which, to my mind, so nauseous were they, did more than outweigh all the pleasure of my dainty feeding; but it settled Master Harford in his intention to lodge me elsewhere than in his own house. Master Drake could not entertain me any more, having to be content with scant lodging for himself and his wife and daughter. Nor was there any talk of building up the houses again; and this, indeed, was not done for more than thirteen years after the burning; but the sides of the bridge where they had been were covered in with boarding. So it came about that I was sent back to my first lodging with Master Rushworth, in the Strand.

He was, as I have said, a merchant of timber, and had his house in the Strand, on the north side, with a yard on the other side of the street, in which he stored his goods and did his buying and selling. In this I was free to play as much as suited my liking, and here also I found great delights, of which the chief, I think, was the discovery that the captain of one of the barges which brought him timber was a certain William Beasley, of Oxford, who had served my father as bailiff and fisherman, and in other employments, as many as a single pair of his hands could discharge. With him I had much talk, and always counted this talk very precious, it

being chiefly of home matters, so that only the actual going thither could by any means be more to be desired.