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A Reading Pageant.

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(Continued from page 41, Vol. 14.)

A messenger is seen in the distance riding fast with loosened reins and bloody spur. He bears the royal warrant for the execution of the Abbot and two of his monks. He rides to the Abbey gate and knocks loudly. The people express wonder and crowd towards the gate.

Presently, Dr. London appears with soldiers, and addresses the crowd :—

DR. LONDON. Know ye, ye rebel swine, ye paltry folk,
Who dared just now to level blows at me,
The King's Commissioner. I'd hang ye all !

*(Yells and murmurs from the crowd, who cry "Down
with the villain.")*

Get to your stys, ye pigs ! But ere ye go,
Know that the King hath doomed to instant death
Your mighty lord, High Abbot of this place.

A Reading Pageant.

He is a traitor, and for his pains must swing
 With his two monks, a warning to all rogues
 Who dare defy the power of England's King.

(The crowd murmurs.)

Here is the warrant of Henricus rex.

(The crowd murmurs.)

Come, stop those gruntings, swine of Reading town,
 Or ye shall swing to bear him company.
 Lead forth the prisoners.

The Abbot and two monks are led forth by soldiers.

ABBOT. And is it thus ye treat an aged man,
 Unworthy though I be to earn a crown
 Of glorious martyrdom? Farewell my house,
 Farewell my holy home; thy span of life
 Will soon be closed. Ah me, what shameless days!
 Farewell my brothers, happy have we been
 In serving God, in cloister and in church,
 In daily duties succouring Christ's poor,
 And serving God in worship and in work.
 Farewell my people, clustering round our gates,
 Poor sheep, that now will lack their shepherd lord.
 False tongues will tell you of our shameful deeds,
 And lies and blasphemies will echo long
 Where holy prayers were ever wont to rise,
 And nought was ever done that feared the light:
 No breath of slander ere can Reading shame.

DR. LONDON. Have done, thou traitor, hold thy foolish tongue.

(Crowd murmurs.)

ABBOT. And as for thee, false wretch, thy doom is sealed.
 Thou'lt perish miserably and ne'er find a grave.
 And thou, proud Henry, ruler of this realm;
 I see thine end, thy wretched death-bed scene,
 When bloated with thy evil deeds, thy lust,
 And haunted by the spectres of thy shame,
 Thou'lt foully die, a thing too coarse to name.
 My house, my home, let me but kiss the stones
 That seem to weep their tears of sympathy.

DR. LONDON. Away with him ! Hang him, hang him !

The monks kneel and seek his blessing. The people kneel, and then attempt to rescue the Abbot ; but the soldiers drive them back, and lead away their prisoners to execution at the back of the gate.

(Bitter cries and savage rage of the people.)

Presently, Dr. London tries to steal away on his mule, and is pelted and beaten and pursued by the people.

[Exeunt omnes.]

EPISODE X.

The Visit of James I and his Queen to Reading.

May-day revels are taking place.

Chorus of the town maidens :—

Hail to the bright May morning,

Hail to the festal day ;

Spring and its joys are dawning

To drive sad care away.

The winter winds and dreary cold

Make weary hearts and maidens old ;

But sorrow flies when thrushes sing

Their welcome to the new-born spring.

Hail to the bright May morning,

Hail to our heart's delight ;

With song so gay we greet thee, May,

The Queen of Seasons bright.

(Church Bells ring.)

Hark the merry joy bells ringing,

Hark the birds in woodland singing ;

See the bowers of hawthorn springing

To grace our festival.

Come then maidens decked in flowers,

Rear on high your verdant bowers ;

Life is sweet and joy is ours

When May-time crowns the year.

- GIRLS. See garlands gay we are twining,
 We wreath our ribbons rare,
 To deck our Queen on the market-green,
 And weave in her golden hair.
- MEN. The maypole now we raise,
 The maypole now we raise ;
 With hearty cheer the shaft we rear,
 And chant our songs of praise.
 Hurrah !

King James and his Queen and a cavalcade ride to see the revels from Caversham. They are greeted by the Mayor and Corporation, and are graciously pleased to witness a Masque which is performed for the delectation of their Majesties.

The Masque of Apollo and Daphne.

A man who represents Apollo appears in classic garb chasing a girl (Daphne). She runs from him in dread and is changed into a laurel tree, and Apollo looks everywhere and tries to find her. A shepherd appears bemoaning his hard fate, for he loved her. Apollo threatens him with divers penalties, saying he would change him into a wolf or a cockatrice or blind his eyes. The shepherd tells how Daphne is changed into a laurel, and Apollo weeps at the foot of the tree accompanied by two minstrels. He says :—

“Sing you, play you, but sing and play my troth ;
 This tree my lute, these sighs my note of ruth :
 The laurel leaf for ever shall be green,
 And chastity shall be Apollo's queen.
 If gods may die, here shall my tomb be placed,
 And this engraven, ‘Fond Phœbus, Daphne chaste.’”

A song follows, and then the tree opens and Daphne comes forth. Apollo resigns her to the shepherd, and then she runs and kneels before the King and Queen, and says :—“Pardon, dread Sovereign, poor shepherds' pastimes, and bold shepherds' presumptions. Ye are wise and learned, and we poor peasant folk, who strive to make mirth. Daphne lays her laurels at your feet, and wishes you a reign long and prosperous. For our boldness we offer your Majesty these shepherds' weeds, which if your Majesty vouchsafe at any time to wear it shall bring to our hearts comfort and happiness in our labours.”

The players retire amid the plaudits of the company.

A boy is presented to the King, of great learning at Oxford, the future Archbishop Laud, who was born at Reading, and the King prophesies a great future for him.

The King and company then mount their steeds and ride back to Caversham House, and the people follow them ; maidens dancing as they go and singing their ditties.

EPISODE XI.

Civil War and Siege of Reading.

People are rushing about preparing to fortify the town. Men carry spades and wheel barrows, and women help.

The town guard arm and drill. The Mayor, a fussy little man, has a table brought in, and borrows a lot of silver tankards, etc., in order to make a brave show when Prince Rupert comes.

Prince Rupert arrives with a company of troopers. The Mayor pledges him in one of the cups and gives him to drink. The Prince admires the cups, and orders one of his men to seize them for the King. The Mayor protests and kneels to him, and tries to save the cups he had borrowed. But the Prince laughs and bids his men carry them off for the King's service.

Cannons are heard. The King, Charles I, arrives with his army. Grand Reception. He appoints the Governor, and amid the salute of the guns and the cheers of the people rides away with some of his men.

The cannon of the enemy is heard. Men rush to defend the town. Cannons are brought and placed ready for defence, and the firing begins with muskets and cannon.

After much fighting the Governor resolves to surrender. The Parliamentary soldiers march in chanting a Puritan psalm. Firing is heard in the distance, the attempt at Caversham Bridge to save the town. But it is too late, and the Puritan troopers remain masters of the field.

Puritan preachers stand on tables and tubs and harangue the people.

The Royalists are allowed to depart, and march out with all the honours of war, flags flying and drums beating, escorted by the Parliamentary soldiers and followed by the people.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

EPISODE XII.

Visit of Charles II and his Queen to Reading.

The townspeople rush into the arena wildly cheering. Carpenters enter and set up a stage. Soldiers ride in, and the High Sheriff and Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire come, attended by the Mayor and Corporation in their robes, and Charles II. is proclaimed King of England, Ireland and Scotland, Defender of the Faith. The proclamation is read by the Lord Lieutenant and is received with cheers and wavings of kerchiefs.

The Mace is ordered to be produced and the royal arms to be placed upon it.

Among the crowd are several persons attired in sombre Puritan garb with high hats.

The girls make fun of them and dance round them, and then pull their cloaks. The men join in the game, and the Puritans flee for their lives pursued by the merry townsfolk.

Merry dancing takes place and much health drinking.

A song is heard—

“When the King enjoys his own again.”

A messenger rides in to say the King and Queen are coming. The people shout Hurrah! “Long live the King.” And then a gorgeous coach is seen approaching guarded by gallant cavaliers.

Their Majesties alight and are conducted to the stage. The Mayor makes a congratulatory speech, and the King replies.

Maidens approach and present to the King 50 pieces of gold which cost 22s. 2d. each, and to the Queen's Majesty 30 pieces of the like gold in purses curiously wrought which cost 18s.

Ten maidens of high family dance before their Majesties a stately *coranto*, and then their Majesties descend from the stage, take up their carriages, and are driven away amidst the shouts of the people who follow the carriage and escort the royal party out of the arena.

[*Exeunt Omnes.*

EPISODE XIII.

The Reading Skirmish.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ —MESSENGER.

MAYOR.

ALDERMAN.

The Church bells are ringing, and the people are seen coming away from Divine Service. A bugle is heard in the distance. The townsfolk rush together to hear the news. A rider is seen in the distance and calls loudly for the *Mayor, the Mayor.*

The people echo the cry, and his worship with the aldermen walk hurriedly to meet the new arrival.

MESSENGER. May it please your worship, and all good people of Reading, William Prince of Orange has landed in England and now lies at the good town of Hungerford in Berkshire, ready to march through Reading to London.

MAYOR. I am not sure that it pleases me at all, my good man. James Stuart is the lawful King of England, and we like not too many Kings.

1st ALDERMAN. I like not oranges, but the juice—

MAYOR. Silence Mr. Alderman, I allow no bad language in our court.

1st ALDERMAN. Bad language, Mr. Mayor? I was but going to say that the juice of an orange when well sucked with a little sugar is mighty delicious.

MAYOR. Fool ! know you not that if Orange conquers England, we'll all be sucked dry as lemons.

1ST ALDERMAN. That be my meaning, Mr. Mayor, we be all sucked dry and yon Master William will get the juice.

MAYOR. Peace, Mr. Alderman ; as for you, sir, (turning to messenger) I bid you tarry here. The Mayor—that's me.—They ought to call me Lord Mayor. London's mayor they call Lord Mayor, and why should not Reading's mayor be called Lord Mayor too ?

1ST ALDERMAN. Never mind, your worship, never mind. The old mare be often the best horse, sir ; and they do say that the mare of Reading's mayor is a fine lady who keeps Reading's mayor in rare good order.

MAYOR. Cease your prattle. (To messenger) Go, my good man to yonder inn, the Old Bear, and there get some refreshment. I will send for thee anon, when the Mayor, Aldermen and burgesses of this ancient town have met in solemn conclave.

Messenger bows and departs towards the inn. A sudden noise is heard—bugles sound and drums beat, and a company of drunken Irish soldiers is seen approaching. They have been pillaging a farm house. Some carry ducks and fowls, and one or two have young pigs, which escape and they run after them. They sing a riotous chorus.

As they approach the crowd of townspeople, they pretend to form rank, and to attack an enemy. They present their arms and fire into the air and then pretend to charge. Each man seizes a man or woman of the townsfolk, and begins to dance and caper, and the Mayor is very indignant when a rough soldier presumes to make him dance.

He escapes from his tormentor, rushes to the messenger and bids him ride back to the usurper's army and bring the Prince of Orange to Reading.

The Irish soldiers demand food and drink, and threaten to kill the townsfolk if they are not immediately supplied.

Soldiers seize the Mayor and bind his hands, load their guns and threaten to shoot him. They drink and sing songs.

In the distance bugles are heard, and the soldiers of the Prince of Orange are seen approaching. The townspeople express joy; the Irish troopers are too drunk to notice their approach.

At length the bugles sound near at hand. The Irish spring to their feet, and a brief fight ensues; the Irish are defeated and run away.

The army of Dutch William advances with the Prince at their head. The townspeople welcome him with joy. The Prince cuts the Mayor's bonds, and the people sing the ballad to the tune *Lillibullero* :—

Five hundred Papishes came here,
To make a final end
Of all the town in time of Prayer;
But God did then defend.

The church bells ring joyfully and the townspeople cheer lustily, and follow the Prince as he marches on to London to take possession of the English throne.



FINAL TABLEAU.

All the Characters who have taken part in the Pageant form a procession, and march round the arena, and at the end of the procession comes a chariot bearing a female figure attired as that in the Arms of Reading, and by her side is another female figure bearing on a banner the Stars and Stripes, emblematical of Reading's daughter town across the seas, the Reading of the United States of America.

The company masses in the centre of the arena and sing one verse of the Hymn "O God our help in Ages Past". The procession is again formed and marches away singing

"GOD SAVE THE KING.