

CHAPTER IV

JANE DEE

“Content I live, this is my stay,
I seek no more than may suffice;
I press to bear no haughty sway,
Look, what I lack my mind supplies:
Lo! thus I triumph like a king,
Content with that my mind doth bring.”

— Sir Edward Dyer.

That October the Queen and the whole Court were thrown into a perturbed state of mind by a strange appearance in the heavens. This was the comet which the Swedish astronomer, Kepler, declared to predict the appearance in the north of Europe of a prince who should lay waste all Germany, and should vanish in 1632. It was lucky for his prognostications that Gustavus Adolphus was really born in Finland, did embroil Central Europe in the Thirty Years' War, and did die in 1632.

What the “blazing star,” as they called it, foreboded, no one at Court could tell; Dee was summoned forthwith to expound the phenomenon. “Her Majestie took great pleasure to hear my opinion, for the judgment of some had unduly bred great fear and doubt in many of the Court, being men of no small account. For three diverse dayes she did use me.” Dee did not forget to urge his suit to the Queen, not so much this time for preferment but for protection.

“Her Majestie promised unto me great security against any of her kingdom that would by reason of any my rare studies and philosophical exercises unduly seek my overthrow. Whereupon I again to her Majestie made a very faithful and inviolable promise of great importance. The first part whereof, God is my witness I have truly and sincerely performed; tho' it be not yet evident, how truly, or of what incredible value. The second part, by God his great mercies and helps, may in due time be performed, if my plat for the meanes be not misused or defaced.”

Nearly two years passed before Dee married his second wife, Jane Fromond, of East Cheam, Surrey. She was a lady-in-waiting at the Court to Lady Howard of Effingham, wife of the Lord Admiral (Charles Howard) who was afterwards in command of the fleet victorious against the “invincible” Spanish Armada. Lady Howard proved a true friend both to Jane and her elderly but learned husband throughout the rest of her life.

He paid a long visit to the Court at Windsor a couple of months before the marriage, staying there from November 22 to December 1, 1577, and records interviews with the Queen on various days, and with “Mr. Secretary Walsingham.” It may be presumed that the marriage was then arranged, for without the Queen's consent it could never have taken place. Just before leaving, he had a conversation with Sir Christopher Hatton, the newly-made knight of that day (December 1).

The marriage took place on February 5, 1578, at one o'clock, as the bridegroom tells in his diary, but at what church he omits to say. Perhaps it took place in a Royal

Chapel at Court. The young bride was twenty-two. She was a clever, well-born woman, hasty and quick-tempered, but of a steadfast and thorough faithfulness. It was no easy task to be the wife of a brilliant and erudite mathematician nearly thirty years her senior, but to the end of her days Jane proved herself a true and fitting helpmate, a most careful and devoted mother to her eight children. Little could she have foreseen at this bridal hour into what strange paths the coming years would lead her. Dee's devotion to his Jane, his growing respect for her force of character, is faithfully reflected in his diary, where every detail of her doings and her health is studiously entered.

Before the end of the year, he had to leave home and undertake a sudden journey abroad at the command of the Queen's ministers. Elizabeth, in spite of an iron constitution, was ill and distracted with toothache and rheumatic pains. She had come to Richmond from Greenwich on September 25, and the next day the fine weather broke up. "The first rayn that came for many a day," says Dee, "all pasture about us was withered. Rayn in afternone like Aprile showres." A week or two after this he was summoned to Hampton Court, and had a conference of two hours with the Queen, from nine to eleven in the morning. Dr. Bayly, the Queen's physician, came to Mortlake on October 16 to consult with him, for his profound hermetic studies gave him all the prestige of a super-doctor. On the 22nd Jane (Dee still writes of her as "Jane Fromonds," probably to distinguish her from his mother, Jane Dee) went to Hampton Court. She found the Queen no better, in fact a worse fit of paint than ever occurred on the 25th, lasting from nine in the evening till after midnight. On the 28th, Leicester and Walsingham decided to send Dee abroad to consult with some foreign physician about the malady. He was given his instructions at nine o'clock on November 4th; on the 7th he reached Gravesend, and sailed from Lee on the 9th. By three o'clock on the 14th, he was in Hamburg; in Berlin on December 6; and on the 11th at Frankfurt-upon-Oder. The entry on the 15th, "newes of Turnifer's comming, 8 o'clock, by a speciall messenger," looks as if the object of his journey was attained. There are no more details of the business.

The diary is resumed in March, 1579, with some trivial entries about his showing Mr. John Lewis and his son, the physician, how to draw aromatical oils, and a note of his cat getting a young fledgling sparrow that had never had but one — the right — wing, naturally."

Dee's mother surrendered to him on June 15, 1579, the house and lands at Mortlake, with reversion to his wife Jane, and to his heirs and assigns after him, for ever. The document was delivered to him by a surveyor from Wimbledon (in which parish Mortlake was included) under the tree by the church. The fine for the surrender — twenty shillings — was paid to the Queen, as Lady of the Manor, on October 31.

A month later, on his fifty-second birthday, July 13, 1579, Dee's eldest son, Arthur, was born. The event was coincident with another, for that same night, at ten o'clock, Jane's father, Mr. Fromond (Dee always adds an "s" to the name), was seized with a fit and rendered speechless; he died on Tuesday, the 14th, at four in the morning. Arthur was christened at three o'clock on the 16th; Edward Dyer and "Mr. Doctor Lewis, judge of the Admiralty," were his godfathers; his godmother was one of Dee's Welsh relations, "my cosen, Mistress Blanche Parry, of the Queen's Privy Chamber." She was represented by another cousin, Mistress Aubrey, from Kew. "August 9. Jane Dee churched," is almost the next thing recorded.

Dyer was already a person in considerable favour with the Queen. He was Sidney's great friend, and after the poet's death on the field of Zutphen, was legatee of half his books. Dyer was no mean poet himself, even among his greater compeers. He is the author of those immortal verses on "Contentment," beginning "My mind to me a kingdom is," which were set to music in 1588 by William Byrd. We shall meet him again in these pages.

Dee of course knew all about Elizabeth's long flirtation with the King of France's brother, Duc d'Alencon, and her diplomatic holding off from the match. He notes Mr. Stafford's arrival as an emissary from "Monsieur." The Queen kept a very tender spot in her heart for this ugly little deformed suitor, and Dee has a remarkable note of a call from her at Mortlake as she returned from Walsingham's on February 11, 1583: "Her Majesty axed me obscurely of Monsieur's state. I said he was

" (dead-alive).

Pupils now began to resort to Dee. "John Elmeston, student of Oxford, cam to me for dialling." "Mr. Lock brought Benjamin his sonne to me: his eldest sonne also, called Zacharie, cam then with him." This was Michael Lock, the traveller. Zachary was the eldest of Lock's fifteen children; Benjamin afterwards wrote on alchemy — A Picklock for Ripley's Castle.

It was a stormy October, of continuous rains and floods for three or four days and nights, and a "raging wynde at west and southerly." Six persons were drowned in the Kew ferry boat, "by reason of the vehement and high waters overwhelming the boat aupon the roap, but the negligens of the ferryman set there to help." Mrs. Dee had a strange dream that "one cam to her and touched her, saying, 'Mistress Dee, you are conceived of child, whose name must be Zacharias; be of good chere, he sal do well, as this doth.'" This, meaning Arthur, had a sharp illness soon after, however, and when the next child arrived, in two years' time, it chanced to be a girl, who was named Katherine. So the dream went by contraries after all. Arthur was weaned in August, and his nurse discharged, with her wages, ten shillings, for the quarter ending at Michaelmas, paid in full. Dee is an exact accountant as well as diarist, and enters every payment with precise care.

The Queen came riding down from Richmond in her coach, to see what her astrologer was doing, on September 17, 1580, and put the household in a flutter. She took

"The higher way of Mortlake field, and when she came right against the church, she turned down toward my house. And when she was against my garden in the field, her Majestie stayed there a good while, and then came into the field at the great gate of the field, where her Majestie espied me at the door, making reverent and dutiful obeysance unto her; and with her hand, her Majestie beckoned for me to come to her, and I came to her coach side; her Majesty then very speedily pulled off her glove and gave me her hand to kiss; and to be short, her Majestie willed me to resort oftener to her Court, and by some of her Privy Chamber to give her to weete when I am there."

One can picture the gorgeously dressed and pearl-bedecked Queen, her auburn hair glistening in the sun, beckoning majestically to her astrologer, bidding him attend and swell the troops of courtiers and admirers, demanding imperiously

to be let know when he came, and to be kept informed of all he did. Dee was a handsome man, tall and slender; he wore a beard, pointed and rather long. Among the crowd of personable courtiers in their rich and most becoming suits, he would be no inconspicuous figure.

It was perhaps the publication of the first volume of the "General and Rare Memorials pertayning to the art of perfect Navigation" that brought Dee into intimate relations with the navigators of the time. Or it may have been his intimacy with them that suggested the work. the Hexameron appeared in September, 1577, and in November the diarist first records a visit from one of them: "Sir Umfrey Gilbert cam to me at Mortlake." Gilbert was then living at Limehouse, engaged in writing discourses on naval strategy and discovery. A few months later, Dee mentions a suggestion he gave to Richard Hakluyt, the author of the fascinating histories of the voyages: "I told Mr. Daniel Rogers, Mr. Hakluyt of the Middle Temple being by, that Kyng Arthur and King Mary, both of them, did conquer Gelindia, lately called Friseland, which he so noted presently in his written copy of Monumenthensis, for he had no printed book thereof." On August 5, one of Gilbert's company, "Mr. Reynolds of Bridewell, tok his leave of me as he passed toward Dartmouth to go with Sir Umfrey Gilbert toward Hochelaga." The expedition sailed from Dartmouth on September 23, Sir Humphrey having obtained his long-coveted charter to plant a colony in the New World in June. All his money was sunk in this unfortunate expedition, which only met diasaster at the hands of a Spanish fleet. Undaunted, however, Sir Humphrey set to work to collect more funds and information to pursue his end. With the first Dee could not help him much; with the last he believed he could, and in return he exacted a stake in the results: "1580, Aug. 28th. my dealing with Sir Humfrey Gilbert graunted me my request to him made by letter, for the royalties of discovery all to the north above the parallell of the 50 degree of latitude, in the presence of Stoner, Sir John Gilbert his servant or reteiner; and thereupon took me by the hand with faithful promises, in his lodging of Cooke's house in Wichcross Streete, where we dyned, onely us three together, being Satterday."

It was more than two years before Gilbert succeeded in getting enough other persons to embark their capital in his project, and then he set out on his final voyage, the second to Newfoundland (the first having been assisted by Raleigh, his half-brother, in 1578). We all know the end, how, after he had planted "his raw colony of lazy landmen, prison birds and sailors," he set out in his little vessel, The Squirrel, to explore the coast and sandbanks between Cape Breton Island and Newfoundland, and then headed for England. In a storm off the Azores, the little ship foundered and ws lost, its captain's last words being, "We are as near Heaven by sea as by land."

With another brother, Adrian Gilbert, Dee had much closer relations, as we shall shortly see. This younger half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh was reputed "a great chemist in those days," which of course meant something of an alchemist. He is associated in one's mind with "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother," that accomplished and beautiful inspirer of the most exquisite epitaph ever penned, for he was one of the "ingenious and learned men" who filled her house at Wilton "so that it ws like a college." The Countess of Pembroke spent a great deal yearly in the study of alchemy, and kept Adrian as a laborant for a time. He is described as a

buffoon who cared not what he said to man or woman of any quality. Bringing John Davis, another of the breezy Devon sea captains, Adrian came to Mortlake to effect a reconciliation after some uncomfortable passages caused, as they found, by dishonest dealings on the part of William Emery, whom they now exposed. "John Davis say'd that he might curse the tyme that ever he knew Emery, and so much followed his wicked counsayle and advyse. So just is God!" Here again we suspect Dee's reputation for "magic" had been the trouble.

With the discovery of so many new coasts and islands across in the Western seas, the Queen was anxious to know what right she had to call them hers, and what earlier navigators had sailed to them before. After Frobisher's three voyages in search of the North-West Passage, she sent for the author of the Hexameron and bade him set forth her title to Greenland, Estoteland (Newfoundland) and Friseland. This document he calls "Her Majestie's commandment — Anno 1578." Either he prepared another, or did not present this to the Queen for two years.

1580. — "On Monday Oct. 3, at 11 of the clock before none, I delivered my two Rolls of the Queene's Majestie's title unto herself in the garden at Richmond, who appointed after dynner to heare fuder of the matter. Therfore betweene one and two afternone, I was sent for into her highness Pryvy Chamber, where the Lord Treasurer allso was, who having the matter slightly then in consultation, did seme to doubt much that I had or could make the argument probable for her highnes' title so as I pretended. Wheruppon I was to declare to his honor more playnely, and at his leyser, what I had sayd and could say therein, which I did on Tuesday and Wensday following, at his chamber, where he used me very honorably on his behalf."

The next day Dee fancied that Burleigh slighted him. He called to see him, and was not admitted; he stood in the ante-chamber when the great man came out, but the Lord Treasurer swept by and "did not or would not speak to me." Probably he was pondering deeply on important matters of state. Dee's hopes of preferment fell to the ground, and he was persuaded that "some new grief was conceyved." Dee was ambitious; he was not yet surfeited with fame; of wealth he had none, hardly even a competency; he was vain, and he knew that he had gifts which few of his countrymen could rival or even understand; and he was no longer young. Such advantages as he could attain must be secured quickly, if they were to be enjoyed at all.

"On the 10th, at four o'clock in the morning my mother Jane Dee dyed at Mortlake; she made a godlye ende: God be prayسد therefore! She was 77 yere old."

News of this event quickly travelled to the Court at Richmond, and the Queen determined to signalise her favour to Dee and her gratification at Burleigh's report of his geographical labours, which reached her on the same day as the news of his loss, by a personal visit of condolence.

"Oct. 10th. The Quene's Majestie, to my great cumfort (hora quinta), cam with her trayn from the court, and at my dore graciously calling me to her, on horsbak, exhorted me briefly to take my mother's death patiently, and withall told

me that the Lord Treasurer had greatly commended my doings for her title, which he had to examyn, which title in two rolls he had brought home two hours before; and delivered to Mr. Hudson for me to receive at my coming from my mother's burial at church. Her Majestie remembered allso how at my wive's death, it was her fortune likewise to call uppon me."

So the fancied slight was nothing. The Queen's second remarkably-timed visit was followed up by an haunch of venison from my Lord Treasurer, and an atmosphere of satisfaction reigned. One of the rolls of which Dee writes is still in existence. It has on one side of the parchment a large map of "Atlantis," or America, drawn with the skill of a practised cartographer. At the top is his name, "Joannes Dee," and the date, "Anno 1580." Among his papers is a smaller map, upon which large tracts in the Polar regions are marked "Infinite yse." Thge other side of the roll is devoted to proving the Queen's title to lands she would never see or hear of, under the four following heads: "1. The Clayme in Particular. 2. The Reason of the Clayme. 3. The Credit of the Reason. 4. The value of that Credit by Force of Law."

Dee was also busied this summer attending at the Muscovy House and writing instructions and drawing a chart for the two captains, Charles Jackson and Arthur Pett, for their North-East voyage to "Cathay," or China.

He had perhaps joined the Company of the Merchant Venturers, for in March, 1579, he had signed a letter with Sir Thomas Gresham, Martin Frobisher (as every one knows, he was knighted in the thick of the Armada fight), and others, to the Council of State, desiring that those Adventurers who have not paid shall be admonished to send in contributions without delay. Another very interesting remark tells how "Young Mr. Hawkins, who had byn with Sir Francis Drake, came to me to Mortlake, in June, 1581; also Hugh Smith, who had just returned from the Straits of Magellan." In November, Dee is observing "the blasing star," or comet, of which, with its long tail, he makes a drawing on the margin of his diary. By the 22nd it had disappeared: "Although it were a cler night, I could see it no more."

On June 7, 1581, at half-past seven in the morning, Dee's second child and eldest daughter, Katherine, was born. She was christened on the 10th, her sponsors being Lady Katherine Crofts, wife of Sir James Crofts, Controller of the Queen's Household; Mistress Mary Scudamore, of the Privy Chamber, the Queen's cousin; and Mr. Packington, also a court gentleman. The infant was put out to nurse, first at Barnes with Nurse Maspely, then transferred to Goodwife Bennett. On August 11

"Katherine Dee was shifted to nurse Garrett at Petersham, on Fryday, the next day after St. Lawrence day, being the 11th day of the month. My wife went on foot with her, and Ellen Cole, my mayd, George and Benjamin, in very great showers of rain."

Nevertheless the little Katherine seemed to flourish, and there are entries of monthly payments of six shillings to her nurse, with allowance for candles and soap, up to August 8 of the following year, when "Kate is sickly," and on the 20th is reported as "still diseased." Four or five days after, she ws taken from nurse Garret, of Petersham, and weaned at home. The mother had several times been over to see the child, sometimes on foot, attended by George or Benjamin, the servants, and once by water with "Mistress Lee in Robyn Jackes bote." The children seemed in

trouble at this time, for about seven weeks before Arthur “fell from the top of the Watergate Stayres, down to the fote from the top, and cut his forhed on the right eyebrow.” This was at the old landing-place at Mortlake. Their childish ailments are always most carefully recorded in the diary, even when the cause is a box on the ears — probably well earned — from their quick-tempered mother. Jane’s friends Mr. and Mrs. Scudamore, and their daughter, and the Queen’s dwarf, Mrs. Tomasin, all came for a night to Mortlake. Jane went back with Mistress Scudamore to the Court at Oatlands. A number of other visitors are named, including “Mr. Fosker of the wardrobe.”