

CHAPTER IX

A FOREIGN JOURNEY

“Friends are everywhere to him that behave himself well, and a prophet is not esteemed in his country.”

— Robert Burton

There is a hiatus in the *Liber Mysteriorum* after this tempestuous scene with Kelley. We can, however, slightly fill it up from Dee's other diary. It seems as if the skryer went away, leaving behind at Mortlake the poor slighted wife, who must have joined him there, for Dee notes on July 7 payment of wages to a servant he dismissed, “in the presens of Goodman Hilton and Mistress Kelley in my study.”

On the 30th, as we have seen, the Queen came in grand procession, heralded with music and song, down the river to Sion. The next day, Leicester's secretary brought letters and gifts. On August 1, John Halton, a London minister, called; also a Worcestershire man, “a wicked spy came to my howse, whom I used as an honest man, and found nothing wrong, as I thought. He was sent to E.K.”

This entry is characteristic of the philosopher who, in spite of all his learning, was, as regards men, of so confiding and innocent a nature that he ended by being infinitely more deceived by another Worcestershire man — Kelley, for whom he entertained to the last a most faithful friendship.

Then we come on a very entertaining remark in the diary: “Aug. 18. A great tempest of wynde at midnight. Maxima era E. K. cum uxore ejus.” Kelley had returned, and his wife was treated to another of his outbreaks, by comparison with which the gale outside was slight.

This is the last entry in the diary before Dee's departure for Poland with Laski.

The Prince proposed to take the whole party from Mortlake back with him to the Continent. He was reputed to be deeply in debt, and seems to have entertained wild hopes that they, aided by the spirits, would provide him with gold, and secure to him the crown of Poland. Kelley foresaw an easy and luxurious life, plenty of change and variety suited to his restless, impetuous nature. He hadn't as yet been out of England. There were very obvious reasons that he should quit the country now if he would escape a prison. Dee had been a great traveller, as we know, and these were not the attractions to a man of his years. He went in obedience to a supposed call, in the hope of furthering his own knowledge and the Prince's good. The notion of providing for himself and his family lay doubtless at the back of his mind also, but he had all a genius's disregard for thrift and economy, and though very precise and practical about small details, as his diary proves, his mind refused to contemplate these larger considerations of ways and means.

He disposed of the house at Mortlake to his brother-in-law, Nicholas Fromond, but in such a loose and casual way that before his return he found himself compelled to make a new agreement with him. He took no steps about appointing a receiver of the rents of his two livings, and when he came back the whole six years were owing, nor did he ever obtain the money. He says he intended at the most to be absent one year and eight months. It was more than six years before he again set foot in England.

So, unprepared, he left Mortlake about three in the afternoon of Saturday, September 21, 1583. He met the Prince by appointment on the river, and travelled up after dark to London. A certain secrecy was observed about the journey. Laski, as we have seen, was under some suspicion of Walsingham and Burleigh, whose business it had become to learn news from every Court in Europe. He was suspected of plots against the King of Poland.

In the dead of night, Dee and Laski went by wherries to Greenwich, "to my friend Goodman Fern, the Potter, his house, where we refreshed ourselves." Probably a man whom Dee had employed to make retorts and other vessels for his chemical work. Perhaps they met there the rest of the party, but on the whole it seems more probable that all started together from Mortlake. The exit of such a company from the riverside house must have been quite an event. At Gravesend, a "great Tylte-boat" rowed up to Fern's house, on the quay, and took them out to the two vessels arranged to convey them abroad. These ships, which Dee had hired, were lying seven or eight miles down stream — a Danish double fly-boat, in which Laski, Dee, Kelley, Mrs. Dee and Mrs. Kelley and the three children, Arthur, Katherine and Rowland Dee, embarked at sunrise on Sunday morning; and a boyer, "a pretty ship," which conveyed the Prince's men, some servants of Dee, and a couple of horses. They sailed at once, but the wind coming from N.W., they anchored on the Spits. The fly-boat dragged her anchor, and the wind suddenly changing to N.E., they were in danger of grounding. However, next morning they made Queenborough Haven, and landed in small fishing boats. On the landing, the boat in which the party were seated was nearly upset. Water came in up to their knees, an oar was lost, and they were in considerable peril, but Kelley seems to have risen to the occasion by baling water out of the bottom with a great gauntlet. Dee thinks he saved their lives. Dee, poor man, was dropped from the captain's back on landing into ooze and mud, so that he was "foule arrayed" on reaching "Queenborough town, up the crooked creek." "God be praised for ever that all that danger was ended with so small grief or hurt," is his cheerful comment.

After three nights ashore, they again embarked, and at daybreak on the 27th sailed out into the Channel. On the 29th they landed at Brill. Here Laski's guardian angel, Jubanladec, seems to have granted them an interview. They only paused for two or three days, and hurried on, travelling forward each day by the sluggish Dutch canals, having exchanged their vessel for a hoy of Amsterdam at Rotterdam. They passed through Tergowd and Haarlem to Amsterdam; here they stayed three days, and Dee despatched Edmond Hilton with his heavy goods by sea to Dantzic. By Enkhuisen they sailed up the Zuyder Zee to Harlingen, then took the canals again in little "scuts," or small boats, to Leewarden, thence to Dokkum, in West Friesland, in some still smaller craft. On the Sunday spent at Dokkum, Gabriel appeared in the crystal, and delivered to them the most searching and exalted code of ideals for the conduct of their lives. Everything was laid bare before his relentless and unerring eyes. They were bidden to live in brotherly charity, the imperfections of each to be by the other "perfectly shadowed in charity."

"Bear your own infirmities, and so the infirmities of others, with quiet and hidden minde...The Cross of Christ is the comparison in mildness over thy brethren...He that forsaketh the world for the love of God in Christ shall have his reward, but he that forsaketh himself shall be crowned with a diadem of glory.

Bridle the flesh. Riotousness is the sleep of death and the slumber to destruction. Feed the soul, but bridle the flesh, for it is insolent. Look to your servants. Make them clean. Let your friendship be for the service of God. All friendship else is vain and of no account. Persevere to the end. Many men begin, but few end. He that leaveth off is a damned soul."

From Dokkum the travellers put out to sea again, beyond the islands, and sailed up the Western Ems to Embden. They arrived after dusk, and found the city gates shut, so they lay all night on shipboard. Next morning, the 18th October, Laski took up his quarters at "The White Swan," on the quay, for he was to remain there to see the Landgrave, and obtain money. The others "lay at 'The Three Golden Keys,' by the English House," and left early next morning by a small boat to sail up the river Ems to Leer, and thence by a little tributary to Stickhuysen and Apen — "a very simple village," and so on to Oldenburg. A night there, and then on by Delmenhorst to Bremen, where they lodged at "an old widow, her house, at the signe of the Crown."

Here Il, the jaunty spirit who was like a Vice in a morality play, again appeared to them, clad in a white satin jerkin, ragged below the girdle. The curtain lifted, and his first words were theatrically light.

"Room for a player! Jesus! who would have thought I should have met you here?"

D. (solemnly). — "By the mercies of God we are here. And by your will and propriety and the power of God, you are here."

Il. "Tush, doubt not of me, for I am Il."

Kelley (with rebuke). — "My thinketh that the gravity of this action requireth a more grave gesture, and more grave speeches."

Il. — "If I must bear with thee for speaking foolishly, which art but flesh and speakest of thy own wisdom, how much more oughtest thou to be contented with my gesture, which is appointed of Him which regardeth not the outward form, but the fulfilling of His will and the keeping of His commandments, etc., etc."

Kelley. — "I do not understand your words. I do only repeat your sayings."

Il. — "It is the part of a servant to do his duty, of him that watcheth to look that he seeth...Do that which is appointed, for he that doeth more is not a true servant."

Il turns from Kelley to Dee. "Sir, here is money, but I have it very hardly. Bear with me, for I can help thee with no more. Come on, Andras; where are you, Andras?" he calls.

Andras, in a bare and shabby gown, "like a London 'prentice," appears, but empty-handed.

Il. — "This is one of those that forgetteth his businesse so soon as it is told him."

Andras. — "Sir, I went half-way."

Il. — "And how then? Speak on. Speak on."

Andras. — "Then, being somewhat weary, I stayed, the rather because I met my friends. The third day, I came thither, but I found them not at home. His family told me he had gone forth."

Il. — "And you returned a coxcomb. Well, thus it is. I placed thee above my servants, and did what I could to promote thee. But I am rewarded with loytring and have brought up an idle person. Go thy way, the officer shall deliver thee to prison, and there thou shalt be rewarded. For such as do that they are commanded deserve freedom; but unto those that loytre and are idle, vengeance and hunger belongeth."

Then Dee questions Il about Laski, and whether he is having any success in his efforts to obtain money, about Laski's brother-in-law, Vincent Seve, whose errand in England is not yet completed, and whether they shall all arrive safe at Cracow, or the place appointed.

Kelley has a sight of Master Vincent in a black satin doublet, "cut with cross cuts," a ruff and a long cloak, edged with black or blue. Then Il goes off into a mystical rhapsody, at the end of which he suddenly falls "all in pieces as small as ashes."

Next day, Kelley sees Master Vincent again, walking down by Charing Cross, accompanied by "a tall man with a cutberd, a sword and skie-coloured cloak." He passes on towards Westminster and overtakes a gentleman on horseback with five followers in short cape-cloaks and long moustaches. The rider is a lean-visaged man in a short cloak and with a gold rapier. His horse wears a velvet foot cloth. (It sounds like a vision of Raleigh.)

They are merry. Vincent laughs heartily and shows two broad front teeth. He has a little stick in his crooked fingers. The scar on his left hand is plainly seen. He has very high straight close boots. They arrive at Westminster Church (the Abbey). Many people are coming out. A number of boats lie in the river, and in the gardens at Whitehall a man is grafting fruit trees. The lean-visaged man on horseback alights, and goes down towards, and up, the steps of Westminster Hall, Vincent with him. His companion walks outside and accosts a waterman. The waterman asks if that is the Polish bishop? The servant wants to know what business it is of his. A messenger comes down the steps of the Hall and says to Vincent's man that his master shall be despatched to-morrow. The servant saith he is glad of it. "Then all that shew is vanished away."

There are one or two allusions here to an emissary from Denmark who has brought a bag of amber. Il also says he has much business in Denmark. Frederick, the King of Denmark, was in frequent correspondence with Queen Elizabeth at this time.

At Bremen, where they stayed a week, Dee says that Kelley, when skrying by himself, was given a kind of rambling prophetic verse of thirty-two lines, which he prints, foretelling the downfall of England, Spain, France and Poland. In fact, a general debacle of nations. It is very bad prophecy and still worse poetry, but evidently inspired by the highly diplomatic foreign relations of Elizabeth and her two ministers.

On leaving Bremen, the party travelled by Osterholz to Harburg, on the left bank of the Elbe. They crossed the river and went on by coach to Hamburg. Laski had then rejoined them, but stayed behind in Hamburg, at "the English house," probably the consul's. Dee and the rest reached Lubeck on November 7.