

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

BRANDY IN A TEACUP



Michael Baxter



Published by Jigsaw Publications
Vancouver, BC, Canada

First Published October 2020

Editors Bob Furnell, Richard Peevers

Brandy in a Teacup
© 2020 by Michael Baxter

Doctor Who © 1963, 2020 by BBC Worldwide
The Doctor Who Project © 1999, 2020 by Jigsaw Publications

A TDWP/Jigsaw Publications E-Book

Cover designed by Robert Carpenter
Interior Design by Bob Furnell

Brief Encounters logo © 2009 Brian Taylor
Cover © 2020 Robert Carpenter

Typeset in Corbel, Times New Roman

The moral right of the author has been asserted. All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to any persons living or dead is purely coincidental. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any forms by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording or any other information retrieval system, without prior permission, in writing, from the publisher. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published.

This document was discovered in the archives at Windsor Castle and conveniently disappeared soon afterwards, but a number of illicit copies had already been made...

Michael Baxter

I have never been one for writing anything but gossipy letters, really, unless I absolutely had to, but the urge has come upon me to record the circumstances surrounding my decision not to bequeath my crown to my exiled half-brother, James, but to Sophia, the Electress of Hanover, and afterwards to her odious son, George, a man whom I have never been able to abide.

I also wish to acknowledge the part played during my deliberations upon the matter by a certain old man with long white hair who was not, you will be surprised to learn, one of my official advisers, but a passing cleric calling himself the Bishop of Tardis, whom I had never met before in my life.

Calling himself? Well, it's like this, you see. I am, on reflection, extremely dubious on the question of him really being a bishop at all, though I cannot conceive the old wisecracker as quite a charlatan either, even though he played quite a devilish hand at the card table.

You have realised who is penning this, have you not? Well, no matter, since I ought to make it clear anyway, I suppose. I am Anne, Queen Regnant of England, or, to be more accurate, of Great Britain since the momentous union of the crowns of England and Scotland seven years ago. Ah, the farthing's dropped now, has it? Yes, that's me. The one who was bossed about for years on end by Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, the overbearing virago of Blenheim Palace.

I was born on the sixth of February 1665, the year of the Great Plague of London, and was the younger of two girls, my sister Mary and I being the daughters of James, Duke of York, brother of King Charles II. My father was a dour, humourless, inflexible sort of man and it was always a source of great wonder to me that he could ever have been reckless enough, yet alone romantic enough, to so far forget his royal position as to make a clandestine marriage. My mother, Anne Hyde, former lady-in-waiting to my father's sister the Princess of Orange at The Hague, was the daughter of a government official, Edward Hyde, and would not have been considered a suitable match for the king's brother, had the royal family been consulted upon the matter. When the news became current coin, as it were, the cries of outrage were led by my domineering grandmother, Henrietta Maria, the Queen Dowager, widow of my executed

grandfather, Charles I. She was echoed by her daughter the Princess of Orange and even by my other grandfather, who was cravenly fearful for his own position, promptly disowned his offending daughter and was even heard to remark that she ought to be sent to the Tower, the horrible man! Only my uncle, King Charles, who was always such fun and worth all the rest of them put together, brushed the objections aside, recognised the marriage, and subsequently received his new sister-in-law as a member of the family.

“An admirably magnanimous gesture on His Majesty’s part,” the Bishop of Tardis observed, during one of our intimate chinwags, “and a sensible one into the bargain, if I may venture to say so.”

“He was a wise man,” I responded, with a smile of fond remembrance, “where most things were concerned - if not quite all.”

Uncle Charles was, it seems, a Catholic by inclination, though with his usual discretion he was officially a Protestant, since a Catholic monarch, or any suggestion of popery regarding the monarchy, had been deemed unacceptable since Bloody Mary caused human bonfires to be lit in furtherance of her fanatical crusade against ‘heretics’. My father, as stubborn and unbending as ever, did not emulate his brother’s good sense and his devotion to the Roman church became so well known that the king once quipped that he himself felt the safer for it, since no-one would ever plot his death to put my father on the throne! My mother was also devoted to the Catholic rites, though my sister Mary and I were raised as Protestants on the pragmatic king’s absolute insistence, since we were both in the line of succession to the throne and it would, he declared airily, make matters so much simpler in future, or at least after the death of my father, who would immediately follow him as king. The merry monarch himself, despite his marriage to the kindly Catherine of Braganza, had no legitimate children, just the dashing handsome Duke of Monmouth and various others similarly birthed on the wrong side of the blanket.

What’s that you’re thinking? You’d always heard that I wasn’t very bright, and you’re surprised I’m even literate enough to write like this? Yes, I thought as much! Well, I’ll overlook your impertinence just this once and tell you something. I may never have been particularly studious, but when you have spent as many years as I did in the company of a woman like the Duchess of Marlborough, whose tongue was in constant employment from morning until night and whose vocabulary was not only diverse but never less than incisive, it is rather inevitable that one will pick up a few tips and adopt a turn of phrase or two! Apart from that, I wasn’t a total fool anyway, you know. I may have allowed myself to be led by the nose and been content to call it friendship, but I did possess some abilities and have even impressed people on occasion. Why, after I made my first opening of Parliament speech it became common knowledge that my melodious voice had thrilled all those present!

My mother passed on in 1671, when I was six. She was only thirty-three, though she had become extremely stout (as I have, and far more so, I’m afraid) because she was addicted to hot chocolate. Yes, it’s true! She sat around all day long sipping away at cups of it. That’s one of only a few things that I remember about her. I told the Bishop of Tardis’s grandchildren, John, and Gillian, about this and they said she was a chocoholic. Such an amusing word, I thought. From the twentieth century, it is. Ah, that’s got me your full attention, eh? Yes, I know about quite a few things that come about long after I’m laid away in Westminster Abbey in a coffin that will be almost square, because of my bulk, you know. The Bishop let that slip over a brandy or two when I asked him how my funeral service went. Unintentionally, I’m quite sure, as he coughed and spluttered afterwards in some embarrassment. I reassured him that I wasn’t in the

least offended, and nor was I. After all, who else ever got to hear what went off, or what will go off, as you might say, at his or her own interment, or about family events following that? No, I wanted to hear all that the Bishop would tell me. As a result, I've enjoyed some months of total peace of mind.

Dear me, how I'm anticipating! Where was I before I digressed? Oh yes, my mother and her chocolate. Well, it was a modest vice, as vices go. Mine is brandy, as perhaps I've hinted already. I drink it from a teacup, in a very dainty and refined manner, naturally, for appearances sake. It affords me a delightful feeling of wickedness, I confess, to indulge privily in this manner, as circumstances really do dictate, as I'm so often under someone's eye.

My father remarried after two years as a widower, though by no means of inactivity in the bedchamber, despite the high moral tone he always affected, since he had dallied with a number of mistresses, a few of them far from comely, I have to say, for he sometimes displayed an exceedingly odd streak and could be driven to distraction by the supposed charms of one of the ugliest examples of womanhood you could ever have clapped eyes upon. Oh yes, honestly. That creature with one eye higher than the other and the noticeably big nostrils was just about the limit.

His new wife, Mary Beatrice of Modena, was a petite little Italian, quite near my sister and I in age. Quite frankly, she was wasted on my father, though he liked to be seen with such a pretty little vision on his arm and no doubt felt that she did him credit and offset his unpopularity somewhat. She, for her part, seemed utterly devoted to him, though in a rather doglike sort of way, wagging her metaphorical tail when he deigned to notice her. My sister Mary, who could be quite bitchy, despite her generally butter wouldn't melt exterior, whispered that our stepmother smiled like a loon when receiving attention from Father and that he needed to keep a bowl of hard biscuits by him to offer his youthful spouse as rewards. Wasn't that unkind?

A group portrait painted at around this time depicts dear Uncle Charles with a sweet little spaniel on his lap. On one side of His Majesty Father's new wife stands with my sister, while on the other I look very demure and well-behaved, though I was longing, I recall, to play on the floor with the dog. At the back, Cousin Monmouth, the King's natural son, darkly good-looking, is standing somewhat apart from my father, the significance of which I'll explain in due course. Sarah Churchill and her husband also appear in the picture.

"A charming representation of family unity," the Bishop declared firmly when I showed him the painting.

He was, of course, exercising a high degree of tact there, the silver-tongued old rogue.

"How - considerate of you to put it that way, my lord," I told him, quite enjoying this mildly witty little parley.

"Not at all, Your Majesty. I am, after all, merely reflecting an ambience already achieved. The inspired artist who captures both subjects and mood, his brushes an almost magical extension of his talent, should not be denied even a modicum of the credit due to him. No, indeed."

Was there ever another cleric with so honeyed a tongue?

Back to my story now, before I get too carried away...

My sister was married a few years after our father, to cousin William, the Prince of Orange, and she was far from being enamoured of the stunted little fellow at the time, I can tell you. She wandered from room to room looking tragic for days on end before the wedding, weeping all over the furniture. The fact that she had long been smitten by our illegitimate cousin Monmouth didn't help, of course. She wrote to me from the Netherlands (we kept up a regular

and friendly correspondence while she was there - it was only when we were together again later on that we found ourselves at odds with each other) saying that she was quite reconciled to her fate and was even becoming fond of William in a way, though he was difficult to get close to. The very thought of intimacy with Dutch William gave me a fit of the shudders and I had to take a glass of something to settle my stomach. Thank goodness that my dear George, whom I married two years before my uncle King Charles breathed his last, was so different. He was Prince George of Denmark, you may remember, who was thought to be such a dull fellow by most people, though he suited me admirably and made a congenial and comfortable companion through all the years we had together, as well as providing a really rather delightful time in the bedchamber, though this did result in no less than eighteen pregnancies for me. Who would have thought that we would nonetheless end up quite childless? Yes, I lost the lot. William, my little Duke of Gloucester, did live to be eleven, but then expired when his water on the brain suddenly took a serious turn. Another of my offspring, incidentally, shares a vault at Windsor with my beheaded grandfather King Charles I, King Henry VIII, and the latter's third wife, Jane Seymour.

All in all, it was fortunate that George and I found consolation in each other.

I mentioned the death of Uncle Charles, didn't I? Yes, I see that I did. He died in the year 1685, amidst much lamentation - I like a generous measure of that when it's properly due, don't you? I'm by no means certain what carried him off - it was never specified. Sarah Churchill, with that acid tongue of hers, implied that he had picked up something nasty from one of his fancy women. Most of them were socially prominent, though, as well as physically so, and surely quite above such an unsavoury affliction. Personally, I'm inclined to lay the blame at the door of that pushy orange seller, whose name I won't dignify by mentioning. Of course, she was an actress too, and as everyone knows actresses are no better than trollops - not so good, in fact, as my naughty uncle once insisted. So, what did he see in that uncouth little fruit purveyor? She was a scheming pie, I've always thought. Or do I mean a tart?

Queen Catherine was utterly distraught, which surprised me somewhat, for the King's infidelities had been numberless. Did you know, by the way, that it was she who made the drinking of tea popular in England? Oh, yes. Such a delightful beverage - I've always been fond of a cup. Young John, the Bishop of Tardis's grandson, mentioned a type called PG Tips. An amusing name, isn't it? He said there was a free picture card with every purchase. One collects a full set and sticks them into a book. I was so delighted by the notion that I gave the boy a new farthing - the first of my reign weren't minted until this year, 1714. That was when he showed me a penny from 1962, bearing the head of Queen Elizabeth II, and thus gave away the fact that he, his sister Gillian, and the Bishop were from the future. His Grace was very put out by this carelessness, for he would have preferred their time travelling to be kept from me, the wily old fox. It was to make up for this naughty little deception that he confided in me about events to come. Another example of this fascinating advance gossip concerned the son of my unfortunate half-brother James, Bonnie Prince Charlie (what a sweet name), and his escape from the English after the fateful Battle of Culloden with the assistance of a spirited highland lass named Flora MacDonald. A stirring little tale, that was.

Oh dear, I've digressed again, haven't I? To return to Queen Catherine, I'll just add that she remained in England for a few years, during which she unsuccessfully interceded for my cousin Monmouth when he landed himself in deep trouble, then returned to her native Portugal. She died in 1705 at the Bemposta Palace in Lisbon, having survived my uncle for twenty years.

It was quite soon after my father became King James II that the big problem with Monmouth arose. My cousin felt that he should have succeeded his father, King Charles, on the

throne, despite the obvious bar of his illegitimacy. I had always been fond of him - his charm and good looks made it easy to be. A fine soldier, he was popular with the people too. Unfortunately, he could occasionally be terribly hot-headed and fail to think things through properly. He had become involved in conspiracy and his father had reluctantly sent him into exile abroad. In June 1685 he returned with the intention of displacing my father, landing at Lyme Regis with three ships of supporters and declaring himself King. In July, his makeshift force was trounced with little difficulty by the regular army at the Battle of Sedgemoor. Monmouth was captured and arrested two days later. My sister Mary sent me a letter, somewhat hysterical in tone and a most unsuitable missive for a married woman to have penned, saying that I must help him by begging our father to grant a pardon. I hastily burnt this indiscreet communication before it could fall into the wrong hands by some means. I wanted to assist poor Monmouth if I could, though, so I did as Mary had urged - and quickly realised that nothing could save him. My father had always disliked his nephew, and now the young man had impulsively played right into his hands. I received a stern parental reprimand for attempting to interfere in the matter. What a cold fish Father was in some ways. Monmouth was beheaded on Tower Hill by an executioner who had a reputation for unnecessarily mauling his victims. In my cousin's case five blows were inflicted with the axe. I wept when I heard. Mary declared in another letter from the Netherlands that she would never forgive our father for the death of such a gallant soldier, and nor did she. I'll write more about that soon.

The Bishop of Tardis, in a very polite manner of course, proved to be most inquisitive (if curiosity was not his middle name, it absolutely should have been) as to the truth of a rumour he had heard about Monmouth's fate:

"It seems, Your Majesty, that a prisoner held at the Fortress of Pignerol in Italy was forced to wear an iron mask at all times. His guards had orders to kill him if he attempted to remove it. The cell he occupied contained a sleeping mat and truly little else - certainly no luxuries. These restrictions were said to be in accordance with the wishes of a certain person, who had little regard for the incarcerated man."

The Bishop looked at me in a hopeful manner. John and Gillian watched us with the unconcealed interest of children. I reached for a sweetmeat.

"My father, perhaps?" I suggested.

The old man's eyebrows arched. "Can Your Majesty be implying that this was actually the case, h'mm?" he replied, in a slightly playful tone.

"You are asking me if the Duke of Monmouth was the man in the mask," I stated.

"More than fifty years from now, a writer named Saint-Foix will claim that another prisoner was executed in Monmouth's place and that your cousin was indeed the masked man," revealed the Bishop, his eyes, which never left my face, suggesting an almost fierce intelligence.

"Upon what did this writer base such a ridiculous notion?" I enquired mildly, taking a sip of the finest brandy that could be procured on my behalf.

"Saint-Foix was convinced by a number of allegations asserting that Monmouth's execution was a carefully-staged deception."

"Anything else?" I asked, indicating to John and Gillian that they might partake of further sweetmeats if they wished.

"He thought it unlikely that your father King James would want to execute his own nephew, and therefore made the other arrangement."

I managed to suppress a mirthless smile at this.

"What fate eventually befell the fellow in the mask?" I queried, with interest.

“He died of consumption eleven years ago, in 1703, and was buried with the mask still in place, so even in death there was no release for him,” the Bishop told me, sadly.

“Poor Monmouth!” exclaimed Gillian, her eyes like saucers.

“Do not distress yourself, child,” I comforted her. “My cousin has been resting peacefully in his grave these thirty years at the royal chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, next to the Tower of London.”

Her mouth fell open, as did her brother’s.

“You’ll catch flies,” the Bishop warned them, but with a smile, then turned his head back towards me, a question in his deceptively mild gaze.

“My dear Bishop,” I responded, “my father would never have troubled to formulate such an elaborate scheme to keep my cousin alive when he found the prospect of Monmouth’s death so very much more appealing. Will you take another glass?”

My father’s unpopularity had increased. The execution of Monmouth, whom the people had seen as a swashbuckling hero, was one of the reasons for this - it was even being said that the King had instructed the headsman to prolong his task in order to cause my cousin more distress as an extra punishment for his crime. Another reason was Father’s unwise but unsurprising policy of giving Catholics preferential treatment at every opportunity. It was quite typical of him, obstinate and irredeemably stiff-necked as he was, to raise the old spectre of popery gaining a firm foothold in England again. The perceived threat of this happening was transformed into a distinct possibility when the Queen (she had been Mary of Modena, you may recall) was declared to be pregnant. If she bore my father a son, the Stuart monarchs would be Catholics for the foreseeable future. On the tenth of June 1688, it was announced that the future King of England, Prince James, had made his appearance. There were, however, many whispers and allegations relating to the birth, which Sarah Churchill took much delight in informing me of. The Queen, it was alleged, hadn’t really been with child - the baby had been smuggled into her room in a warming pan, a copper receptacle with a long, polished wooden handle. This article usually contained hot coals and was used to warm a bed. The child, according to one tale, was a son of the saltpetre man who emptied the palace privies. He was said to be called Dungman, though this was surely not his real name. This unsavoury person and his wife had eleven children already and didn’t want another, it was claimed, so they had traded the newcomer for five newly minted shillings and a sack of parsnips. The ‘Warming Pan Scandal’, as the affair was soon being called, put a question mark over the legitimacy of the royal heir.

“King James soon had more to worry him than Monmouth’s doomed effort, did he not, h’mm?” resumed the Bishop, eyeing his replenished goblet appreciatively.

“The proposal that he should be replaced was attracting much support, if that is what you refer to,” I responded, carefully and somewhat coolly.

“I beg Your Majesty’s pardon if the subject is distasteful,” he said hastily.

It was, but I was enjoying our discussion for the most part and didn’t really want it to end yet awhile, so I produced a tiny smile and airily waved away the awkwardness with one hand.

“My sister and brother-in-law approved of the idea and arrived in England to rule jointly,” I stated firmly, determined to enclose the distressing events of that time within a sentence or two. “My father and his wife retired to France with the child,” I added, completing my little masterpiece of understatement.

Sarah Churchill, with whom I had been very friendly since my childhood (we wrote to each other regularly and with an informality I found pleasing, using the name Mrs Morley for me and Mrs Freeman for her), was in favour of William and Mary, as was her handsome, fair-haired

soldier husband John, Duke of Marlborough, who I was very fond of, and I had been prevailed upon to give my sister and her lord my support too. The religious question influenced me to a large extent as well, though, my father being a Catholic while Mary, William and I were Protestants. Be that as it may, I have never ceased to feel guilty about abandoning Father. In his bitterness, he dropped the Great Seal of England into the Thames during his escape. On the day Mary and her husband were crowned she received a letter from our exiled parent, cursing her for stealing his throne. It rather dampened the day for her, as well it might, but she managed to shrug it aside, no doubt reminding herself of his cruelty to cousin Monmouth, who, you will remember, had held a special place in her heart. She had certainly taken her revenge for that, you must agree, though there were those who insisted that my father's curse also had its consequences when, just a few years after her coronation, my sister died of smallpox. By the time that occurred she and I were not on speaking terms because of my refusal to dismiss Sarah - for William and Mary had turned against the Churchills. She was laid to rest beside Uncle Charles in Westminster Abbey in the year 1694. Seven years later, at the beginning of the new century, came the news of my dispossessed father's death in France and I wept remorsefully. What ungrateful daughters Mary and I had proved to be, I told myself, though of course he had been, to a considerable extent, his own worst enemy, which did ease my conscience a little.

In 1702 my brother-in-law William, who had ruled alone since losing Mary, went out riding one day and his horse stumbled on a molehill. The King was thrown and later died of his injuries, which pleased the Jacobites a good deal.

"Who were they, Your Majesty?" Gillian asked me when I told her about the accident and this response to it. We were alone at the time, for her grandfather had taken John to one of the many coffee houses that had sprung up all over London during recent years.

"Why, the supporters of my late father, child, who had now sworn allegiance to my disinherited brother. They often drank, I heard, to 'the little gentleman in brown velvet'."

"Who?" queried Gillian, looking confused.

"The mole, child, the mole," I clarified.

The girl's face cleared. "Oh, I see," she said, with a little laugh.

Naturally, whereas William and Mary had been considered by the Jacobites to have stolen my father's crown, I was now accused by these rebels of stealing it from my young brother. I didn't care to dwell on this vexing question at that time - the argument on my side tended to let in water, as one might say. I was Queen of England, I told myself very firmly, and couldn't help feeling elated by the fact. You would have felt just the same, I feel certain.

Gillian's expression was regretful as she resumed: "I wish I could have seen Your Majesty's coronation."

"You might still do so yet," I reminded her, in a teasing sort of way.

"But Grandfather is trying to get us home, so it isn't very likely."

"Don't you want to get home?"

"Oh yes, I do. But sometimes I think of all the things I might see if we stayed with Grandfather and then I'm not so sure. I think John hopes all the time that we'll never get back."

"Well you haven't returned so far, have you, or you wouldn't be here talking to me."

Gillian giggled. "Grandfather was quite cross when we arrived in the wrong time. He likes to seem very clever, you see, and his mistake took some of the shine off that."

We laughed together.

"The coronation must have been a splendid occasion, Your Majesty."

“I suppose it was. A special medallion was designed to commemorate it, with my head on the obverse, of course, and on the reverse an image representing the two greatest threats to my reign: my young half-brother James and the War of the Spanish Succession, which had begun a year earlier. The Battle of Vigo Bay, which took place during the year I came to the throne, was an engagement in that long conflict, which continues to this day, all because the King of Spain died childless... which I am also destined to do, sadly.”

The girl tentatively placed her hand on mine. How tactful the child was. I would have liked her as a daughter. Oh, well...

Of course, Lady Marlborough behaved in a most vulgar manner at the coronation. She had the nerve to tell me to be silent at one stage. Can you credit it? I was still fond of her, for the sake of former days, but her overbearing ways would gradually become intolerable and lead to my demand that she return the two golden keys that were symbols of the important posts I had conferred upon her and never darken my door again, so to speak.

There was a grand coronation banquet in Westminster Hall and I'm afraid I overindulged to the point where I felt exceedingly sluggish and had to retire to bed, supported by my dear George, who was nearly as gluttoned as I was.

“Do you know,” I said to Gillian, “I woke up on the morning after I was crowned to the news that a gang of thieves had stolen all the silver plate used at the celebration, together with a great many pewter articles and a large quantity of valuable table linen. *Most* unfeeling of them, don't you agree?”

“Oh, yes,” the girl concurred, “but nothing is too heavy for some people, my Aunt Sarah always says.”

The door opened and Mash came in to inform me that the Bishop and his grandson had returned. I haven't mentioned my dear Mash before, have I? She had been born Abigail Hill, was a distant relation of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough and had wed Samuel Masham, a servant of George's. Sarah had flown into one of her rages when Mash had assumed her own former role at court. Mash, however, though something of a slyboots on the quiet, had never presumed on our friendship as the Duchess had. She treated me with the utmost respect and ensured that I was left in peace and quiet when I wanted to be. I wonder sometimes how I endured Sarah's browbeating for all those years, I really do.

“Tell me about the coffee house that you and your grandfather have been to, young man,” I urged John, when he and the Bishop had come in and bowed.

“It was called ‘The Brimming Jug’, Your Majesty,” he replied. “It wasn't far from St. Paul's Cathedral. The coffee cost a penny a cup. It was pretty foul stuff - real sheep dip compared to the twentieth century sort.”

What on earth, I wondered, could sheep dip be?

“Most of the men who sat drinking and smoking there seemed to know each other,” John went on, “and even when a complete stranger arrived he went straight up to one of the groups and said: ‘Your servant, good sirs. What news from Tripoli?’”

The boy's imitation of the man's voice was incredibly good and made me titter.

That night, as I lay in bed, sleep eluded me and I found myself looking back over my twelve-year reign, which had been somewhat overshadowed by the endless War of the Spanish Succession. There had been great victories, it was true, for the virtually unbeatable Duke of Marlborough had triumphed at the battles of Blenheim, Malplaquet, Oudenarde and Ramillies, amongst others. The thought of how much English blood had been spilt during such campaigns

did, however, continue to distress me greatly. Another cloud on my spirits was the way my half-brother James, the so-called warming pan baby, now aged twenty-six, whose throne the Jacobites continually accused me of stealing, had been treated. I had clung for a long time to the story that branded him an impostor, but that tale had become difficult to believe when, in 1712, two years before the Bishop of Tardis's visit, a disturbing piece of evidence had come into my hands...

Back in 1692, four years after my father had lost his throne and two years before the demise of my sister Mary, my stepmother had given birth to a second child, Louisa Maria, who had grown into a pretty, fair-haired, good-natured young woman, or so I had heard, for I had never seen her. Strangely, her death at the age of nineteen caused me an excess of grief, more acute than any I had experienced since the passing of my dear George. King Louis of France had written to inform me of this tragic news and it was this letter, I believe, that inspired me to write, after years of silence between us, to my stepmother Mary, expressing my deepest and heartfelt condolences. I only half-expected, given the ill-feeling in the past, an acknowledgement, but a response did arrive, conveying her appreciation of my sentiments and describing to me the sister I could now meet only in the life beyond. Her generosity of spirit made me weep. The missive was accompanied by a well-wrapped package containing two miniature portraits, one of them depicting poor Louisa and the other a handsome, dark-haired young man in a red coat - James, her brother and mine as well, for as I gazed at his likeness I recognised that he was undeniably a Stuart and that the rumours circulated when he was born had undoubtedly been nothing more than malicious fabrications.

For the next two years I was torn between wanting to do what was right and reluctance to jeopardise my own position as never before. The religious aspect of the situation provided further complications that could never, I well knew, be satisfactorily resolved. I had my duty to the Protestant faith, and James, like my father, was wedded to Catholicism, which he preferred even to the throne of a great kingdom. Why, I asked myself in exasperation, did the example of my foolish father carry no weight whatsoever with this son of his, who styled himself the chevalier de St. George?

I toyed with the idea of suggesting that James should come to England incognito and be introduced to me secretly; then I considered the possibility of inviting him openly and acknowledging him publicly as my brother. Both these notions, I came to believe, would come to nothing, for they would surely founder at the outset on the rocks of the mistrust that existed between us.

Eventually I wrote a letter to my council, to be opened after my death, in which I stated categorically that James was truly my brother and that in the cause of justice I was bequeathing my crown to him, but only on the understanding that he would agree to emulate the good sense of our late uncle King Charles and follow his religion privily while outwardly serving the country as the Protestant monarch it insisted upon. This compromise, I stressed, was the only means by which his birthright could be restored to him.

The letter, which I still retained myself, months after I had written it, had become another burden for me to bear. Should I hand it to the council, or should I not? Was I betraying my country and my religion by naming a successor who might prove to be my father all over again?

The peace of mind I sought seemed as elusive as ever.

On the evening before the Bishop's departure with his grandchildren, for the old rogue had decided that it was time to resume their travels, I revealed my dilemma to his grace and even showed him the letter.

“Your half-brother will never become king, Your Majesty,” he told me, gently yet firmly. “The history I have given you glimpses of cannot be changed. George of Hanover will inherit your throne.”

“But if I leave the letter behind, surely my wishes will be respected.”

“Its contents will be suppressed, I’m afraid. It will be as if you never wrote it.”

I thought about that for a moment or two, then realised the truth of his words. How simple-minded I had been. Perhaps those who said I wasn’t very bright were correct, after all.

“Yes, I see,” I replied, despondently.

“My dear Madam, I suggest that you think no more about what you cannot change,” urged the Bishop, or whoever he really was. “Enjoy any contentment you can achieve during the remainder of your days. Will you promise to do that, h’mm?”

I hesitated, then nodded in resignation.

The following afternoon, after a sad farewell to the time travellers, I kissed the miniature of my cheated brother and assured him that I was terribly sorry.

Then I cast my letter into the wood fire.

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS



Anne, Queen of England, is in a quandary. Who is to be her successor?
Her Catholic half-brother James, who has always been her enemy?
Or George of Hanover, whom she has always greatly disliked?

The Queen records her ponderings on the subject, and also relates the story of her life. She writes of her colourful family, including the flamboyant King Charles II, the stubborn James II, the lovestruck Princess Mary, and the ambitious but illegitimate Duke of Monmouth. But how has she gained knowledge of events that will occur beyond her own lifetime?
Could her unofficial adviser, the Bishop of Tardis, be the source?

For the first time, the content of this extraordinary document, discovered in the archives at Windsor Castle, can be perused by the public. Start reading now, for a move to suppress it has, reputedly, already been commenced.

This story features the First Doctor as played by William Hartnell

This is another in a series of original fan authored
Doctor Who fiction published by The Doctor Who Project

ISBN 0-918894-28-X

