

MY LADY
Suffolk

A PORTRAIT OF
Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk

BY

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HOME PROBLEMS

ability, her stubbornness and waywardness. He recognized also the strong vein of orthodoxy in Protestant Elizabeth Tudor, and the fact that too great pressure on her to lean to the left could quite easily cause her to lean strongly to the right. Elizabeth never in her life quite trusted the zealots or the radical Protestants; nor did she like or approve of their forms of worship. For one thing, they were far too casual for her. She could not approve of a clergyman marrying, or living as other men lived; and as for the lack of vestments, or the democratic way in which the churches were governed — she neither could nor wished to understand such procedures. However, Elizabeth never did swing dangerously far to the right, and this was in no small part due to the wise and temperate counsel and to the restraint of her minister and principal secretary, William Cecil.

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Catherine and Richard Bertie and their children came home to England in the summer of 1559. On August 2nd of that year, letters of denization were passed for their young son, Peregrine,⁴ and at about the same time, the queen issued a warrant to the Lord Treasurer and the Barons of the Exchequer to release Catherine Duchess of Suffolk and Richard Bertie, her husband, from all payments on account of lands, etc., seized by Queen Mary, and to restore to them all their lands, goods and other possessions⁵ Catherine and her husband were not homeless, therefore, nor were they saddled with debts to the Crown upon their return to their homeland. And so, after more than four years of exile, Catherine came home to Grimsthorpe, the place she loved better than any other in the world.

The reference for this
postnote is Public Records
Office, S.P. 12-6-2.

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sat for the county of Lincoln. Bertie sat in the Commons for four years (the second session of the Parliament of 1563 met in 1566), and was a member of the committee on the Succession. Except for the bare fact of his membership on this committee, there is no evidence of any great activity on Bertie's part. The second session of the Parliament was active in many matters; in the question of apparel, of uniformity in ecclesiastical vestments, which the queen favoured and the Puritans opposed, because of the suggestion of 'popishness'; the question of the subsidy; and, of course, the perennial question of the succession. Richard Bertie was a good Puritan, and he would certainly have been staunchly among those who opposed uniformity of vestments; moreover, his presence on the succession committee suggests that he was an active member of the group who were pressing upon the queen the need for her to marry, or at least to designate her successor — pressure which always roused Elizabeth Tudor's wrath.

A certain coolness between the queen on the one hand and Catherine of Suffolk and her husband on the other persisted as long as Catherine and Richard Bertie lived. It seems not improbable that their outspoken Puritanism and their zealous work for the Puritan cause, as well as Richard Bertie's almost certain stand in the queen's Parliament, were factors in developing this coolness. Elizabeth, although Protestant, was definitely conservative. The Puritans' position on practically everything was abhorrent to her. To Catherine of Suffolk and her husband, however, the established Church was no better than a shadow of the Roman Church, and they were never less than outspoken in their fervent support of the Puritan position and their work to promote the Puritan cause. Temperamentally, too, the two women, the queen

SUSAN AND PEREGRINE, AND RICHARD BERTIE and the duchess, were poles apart. Elizabeth Tudor had learned in the hard school of her girlhood to be cautious and wary; attitudes which appeared to be devious and opportunist were often positions taken in order not to offend those whose good will was important to her and to England. She could be outspoken in her anger, in scolding counsellors or courtiers who displeased her, but for the most part, forthrightness was a luxury she had learned to do without. If she had not been cautious, if she had not, often, paid lip-service to what she did not herself endorse, she could hardly have lived through her sister's reign to become England's queen. The same characteristics which had been her means of self-preservation then, she was now using for the welfare and preservation of England. Charming she could be, and fascinating she certainly was and clever too, but she was the antithesis of the equally charming and witty but completely candid and forthright Duchess of Suffolk, the woman who had never temporized about what she believed and who had never counted the cost of her outspokenness. So Elizabeth Tudor and Catherine of Suffolk could never really be friends, not even in the later part of her life when the years had somewhat tempered the vehemence of Catherine's zealotry. As the queen always mistrusted the zealots, the duchess was disappointed and disillusioned by the subterfuges of the queen's Court and by that which she regarded as weakness in her sovereign — the fact that she did not come out strongly and unequivocally as a champion of Protestantism and an enemy of anything faintly suggesting Catholicism.

In August of 1564, Richard Bertie was one of those who accompanied the queen on her state visit to Cambridge. The visit lasted for five days, with entertainment of the most lavish sort, orations and masques, comedies and tragedies,

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provided by the university for the sovereign's pleasure. The queen made a long oration in St Mary's church to the entire university, and the degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon a number of the gentlemen of the Court. Richard Bertie was among the distinguished group receiving the degree, a group which included such men as the Duke of Norfolk, the Earls of Sussex, Warwick and Oxford, Sir William Cecil and others.

In 1564-5, the dispute between the duchess and her uncle, Sir Christopher Willoughby (now Lord Willoughby of Parham), which had started at the time of Catherine's father's death, cropped up for the last time. It concerned the titles to various manors, which had apparently continued unsettled throughout the thirty-seven years since William Lord Willoughby's death. The dispute was settled amiably enough, for the final depositions read: 'Lord Willoughby resigns all claim in Willoughby, Eresby, Spillsby, Toynton, Steeping and Pinchbeck; and he covenants to make an assurance of these manors to Richard Bertie and Catherine within two years.' And: 'Richard Bertie and Catherine resign all claim in Parham, Orford and Hogsthorpe; and they covenant to make an assurance of these manors to Lord Willoughby within two years.'² The matter did not arise again.

Some time during 1568, Richard Bertie composed an answer to John Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. In his answer, Bertie sets forth the arguments of Knox (whom Bertie calls simply 'author') one by one, and under each one he writes his 'objection'. It is a long document, covering both sides of nine closely written folios,³ refuting Knox's position, sometimes insisting that Knox was inconsistent and even that he contradicted himself. It was never published, and there is no indication

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that it ever came to the attention of the queen. It makes very clear, however, that even though Richard Bertie may have been close to John Knox in his thinking on matters religious, he disagreed categorically with him in his arguments against women rulers. If the queen ever saw it, she must have been approving and gratified, although she might have found its length and rather prolix style somewhat tedious.

Susan Bertie became engaged to Reginald Grey in the year 1570. She was then a girl of about seventeen. It has been suggested that the comparatively humble background of her father stood in the way of an earlier and more brilliant marriage for Catherine and Richard Bertie's daughter. This may have been so, or it may not have been. Although it was older than the marriageable age for many sixteenth-century maidens, seventeen was a good age for Susan and her suitor — to use the duchess's own words of many years earlier — 'to begin their loves without our forcing'. Reginald Grey was the son of Sir Henry Grey, the half-brother of Richard Grey, Earl of Kent. Richard Grey gambled away what money he had, and Reginald's father, because of the smallness of the estate, never assumed the title. But when Reginald Grey became the suitor for her daughter, and married Susan, the duchess promptly set to work to get the title revived and bestowed upon her son-in-law. Though Catherine of Suffolk was opposed to marriages made for position rather than for love, she had a healthy regard for a title, and she intended that her daughter's husband should have his. She started in without delay, approaching the queen directly on the subject and working through her old friend Sir William Cecil, the queen's principal secretary. She began writing to Cecil about the matter on July 29th, 1570, with a letter⁴ in which she asked him to deliver a letter from her to the queen, and to