

# A ROYALIST AND A REPUBLICAN

## MORE STORIES OF THE CIVIL WAR

By "BEORCHAM"

As a sequel to my recent article on local incidents of the Civil War, let me tell the stories of two notable Berkhamstedians who figured prominently in the dramatic events of that period. Both spent their childhood at Berkhamsted Place; otherwise they had absolutely nothing in common. One, an ardent Royalist, played a notable part in helping the Duke of York (afterwards James II) flee the country a year before the execution of his father, Charles I. The other, a fanatical Cromwellian, agitated so vehemently for the execution of the King that he eventually lost his own head at Tyburn when the monarchy was restored.

The Royalist was Mary Murray, sister of John and James Murray, the two "youths of the most winning disposition" whose angelic-looking figures may be seen in the beautiful alabaster monument in St. Peter's Church. Their father, Thomas Murray, was granted the Manor of Berkhamsted by James I, and it was at Berkhamsted Place where he provided Anne and her sisters with "masters for teaching us to write and speak French, play on the lute and virginals, and dance; and a gentlewoman to teach us needlework."

### The Duke of York's Escape

Anne was nothing if not romantic, and at an early age she plunged into a series of love affairs. One lover, none too tactful in his advances, had to fight a duel with her brother-in-law. Another suitor incurred her mother's disapproval, and unhappy Anne was forbidden to see him. With amusing ingenuity, she met her lover in the cellar and blindfolded herself, thus salving her conscience so far as her mother's injunction not to "see" the man was concerned! This was a last farewell and a sad blow for Anne; it is said to have brought on an illness which almost cost her her life.

But Anne recovered in time to figure prominently in the escape of the youthful Duke of York from this country a year before the execution of his father, Charles I. Part of the conspiracy was to dress the Duke in girl's clothes, and it fell upon Anne to take the measurements to the dress-maker. One evening the Duke was playing hide-and-seek in the grounds of St. James's Palace when, according to a carefully arranged plan, he escaped into the adjoining park and was driven to the river. Then he was rowed to London Bridge, where Anne Murray awaited the fugitive in a nearby house. As the late Mr. R. A. Norris tells us in an excellent booklet dealing with the Murray family, "Anne took the Duke in her arms, and gave God thanks for his safety so far." He promptly changed into

the girl's clothes specially made for him, and, after supper, was again rowed down the river, this time to Gravesend. Then he embarked on a ship which bore him to Holland—and safety.

### Anne Murray's Pension

The Duke's escape was soon discovered, and apparently it was found expedient for Anne Murray, too, to flee the country, for in Cobb's "History of Berkhamsted" we read that "Anne pleaded that she lost the lease of Berkhamsted, not daring to stay in England after the Duke of York's escape."

But Anne survived that scandal, as the Cromwellians regarded it, and was soon falling in and out of love again. In 1656, at the age of 44, she married and became Lady Halkett, and in her old age she was granted a pension of £100 by James II—a belated and not very generous recognition of the part she played in securing his escape from Whitehall. Incidentally, she wrote several religious works, and left behind a diary in which she writes of her loves, her exploits, and, above all, her efforts to serve the Royal Family.

### Daniel Axtell's Rise to Fame

It must have been galling for Anne Murray to know that the son of one of her father's servants, born at Berkhamsted Place in the same year as herself, was one of the most violent opponents of the Royal Family. His name was Daniel Axtell, and at an early age he left Berkhamsted to start his apprenticeship with a London grocer. But soon he decided to put politics before business. "Fully convinced in [his] own conscience of the justice of the war," he threw up his trade to shoulder a pike for the Parliamentarians. He was to the fore in many a spell of hard fighting, notably in the siege of Deal Castle, and gained promotion so quickly that he was lieutenant-colonel of an infantry regiment at the age of 26. But it is not upon his military exploits that Colonel Axtell's chief claim to fame rests. He was prominent among those who opposed any attempt at reconciliation with Charles I, and during the trial of that ill-fated monarch was responsible for an incident which resulted in his own execution eleven years later. At Westminster Hall the scarlet-uniformed colonel was in command of the guard, and it is said that he made "that cruel and bloody guard" call out "Execution! Execution!" to counteract cries of sympathy for the King.

### Hanged as a Regicide

After serving in Ireland during early years of the Republic (incidentally gaining a bad reputation for the atrocities he is alleged to have com-

mitted), Axtell returned to England to live "upon the estates he had acquired in the service of his country." But he was not left to enjoy a life of leisure for more than a few years. Throughout the dull years of the Protectorate, Royalists had patiently awaited their chance of avenging the death of Charles I, and Axtell, though not strictly a regicide, was a marked man. Thus, when the monarchy was restored, he was arrested and charged with "imagining and compassing the King's death." The report of the trial makes interesting and, indeed, moving reading. Axtell put up an ingenious defence and remained cheerful despite the knowledge that he was a doomed man. "If I had a thousand lives I would lay them down for the good old cause," he told friends on the eve of his execution at Tyburn.

Certainly the public had a good deal of sympathy for Axtell. The usual sensation-seeking crowd gathered to witness his execution, but was moved to silence and tears by his dramatic speech from the gallows. Axtell's execution was actually delayed because the carman refused to draw his cart away, declaring that he would lose his cart and horse rather than have a hand in the hanging of such a man. And so this Berkhamsted soldier—call him famous or infamous, as you wish—did not meet his end until the common hangman himself was forced to come down and perform the task the carman had refused.

THE BEST VALUE  
FOR COUPONS

Your Coupons will go  
further if you

**BUY**  
**GOOD SHOES**

OUR REPAIRS ARE  
NOTED FOR  
SMARTNESS AND  
DURABILITY

**WHITE & SON**

THE FOOTWEAR SPECIALISTS

High St., Berkhamsted

Phone 68

Also at Hemel Hempstead  
& Chorley Wood