

JOHN BLOUNDELLE-BURTON

DENOUNCED

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Denounced

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	9
CHAPTER III	13
CHAPTER IV	18
CHAPTER V	21
CHAPTER VI	27
CHAPTER VII	31
CHAPTER VIII	36
CHAPTER IX	41
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	44

John Bloundelle-Burton Denounced / A Romance

CHAPTER I A HOME COMING

It was a wild and stormy sea through which the bluff-bowed Galliot laboured, as, tossed first from one wave to another, she, with the best part of her gear stowed away and no sail on her but a close-reefed main-topsail and a spanker, endeavoured to make her way towards the Suffolk coast. On the poop, the captain—a young man of not more than thirty—hurled orders and oaths indiscriminately at his crew, every man of which was a good deal older than himself, while the crew themselves worked hard at hauling up the brails, going out on the gaff to pass the gaskets, and stowing the mainsail-yard. But still she laboured and rolled and yawed, her forefoot pointing at one moment almost to the Dutch coast and at another to the English—she had left Calais thirty hours before, intending to fetch Dover, and had been blown thus far out of her course—and it seemed as though she would never get any nearer to the land she wished to reach. And, to make matters worse, lying some distance off on her starboard beam—though too far to be distinguished through the haze in the air and the spume of the waves—was a large vessel about which those on board could not decide as to whether she was one of King George's sloops or—a privateer. The young captain trusted it was the first, since he had no quarrel with either his Majesty or his navy, and had no men who could be pressed, while the passengers in the cabin—but this you shall read.

In that cabin there sat four persons, three men and a woman—the last of whom shall be first described. A woman young—of not more than twenty-four years of age—fair and well-favoured, her wheat-coloured hair brought back in a knot behind her head, above which, as was still the custom of the time for ladies when travelling, she wore a three-cornered hat. Wrapped in a long, collarless coat, square cut and possessing no pockets—also the custom of the time—it was still easy to perceive that, underneath, was a supple, graceful figure, and, when—as was occasionally the case—this long coat was thrown open so that the wearer might get a little relief from the stuffiness of the cabin, the beauty of that figure might plainly be perceived beneath the full scarlet waistcoat embroidered with gold lace, which, by its plenitude of pockets, atoned for the absence of any in the coat. Her face was, as has been said, a well-favoured one, oval, and possessing large blue eyes and delicate, thin lips, and with upon it even here, on this tossing sea, a fair rose and milk complexion, while in those large eyes the observer might have well imagined he saw a look of unhappiness. Also, too, a look of contempt whenever they rested on the man who, as she leant an elbow on one side of the table between them, leant one of his on the other.

They rested on him now with much that look as, pushing over to her a glass of burnt wine which the cabin-boy has just brought in at his orders, as well as some ratafia biscuits, he said:

"I would counsel you, my lady, to partake of a little more refreshment. I have spoken with the master outside who says that by no chance can we make Harwich ere nightfall. Your ladyship, excellent sailor as you are, must have a care to your health."

"My health," she replied, "needs no care, either from myself or you. And when I am athirst I will drink, as when I am hungry I will eat. You had best offer your refreshments to our fellow-passengers."

The man to whom she spake was but two or three years older than herself—and was her husband, Simeon Larpent, Viscount Fordingbridge. He, too, was well dressed in the travelling costume of the day, wearing a black frock with a gold button, a black waistcoat trimmed with gold, black velvet breeches, and a gold-laced three-cornered hat, while on the table lay a silver-hilted hanger that slid

about with every motion of the vessel. In looks he was her equal, being, however, as dark as she was fair, but of well-cut, even features and of a clear complexion. He wore, too, his natural hair, cropped somewhat short as though a wig might in other circumstances be easily assumed, but the absence of this article of dress in no way detracted from his appearance.

As her ladyship spoke he darted one swift glance at her from under his eyelids—a glance that seemed to embody in it a full return of all the coldness and contempt with which she had addressed him; and then, acting on her suggestion, he turned to the two other inhabitants of the cabin and said:

"Come, Father Sholto, and you, Fane, come and take a sup of the liquor. 'Twill do you both good. Come and drink."

"Ah, the drink, the drink," exclaimed the latter, "well, give me a sup. Maybe 'twill appease a qualm. Kitty, me child," turning to Lady Fordingbridge, "why do ye not do as your husband asks? 'Tis a good stomachic—by the powers! how the bark rolls."

"I want nothing," her ladyship replied, lifting her eyes to him with almost as contemptuous a glance as when she had previously raised them to her husband, and then relapsing again into silence.

"I, too," said the other man, who had been addressed as "Father Sholto," "will take a sup, she does roll badly. Yet, my lord," he said, as he poured some out into a mug that stood by the liquor, "let me persuade you to be more guarded in your expressions. To forget, indeed," he went on, while his cold grey eyes were fixed on the other, "that there is such a person as 'Father Sholto' in existence for the present; that such a well-known ecclesiastic is travelling in your Lordship's esteemed company. For," he continued, after swallowing the liquor at a gulp, "I do assure you—Fane, see that the door of the cabin is fast! and that none of the crew are about! — you could not make your entry into your own country, could not return to make your peace with King George, the Elector of Hanover—with a worse companion in your train than the man who is known as 'Father Sholto.' Therefore—"

"Therefore," interrupted Lord Fordingbridge impatiently, "I will not forget again, Mr. Archibald. Enough!"

"Therefore," continued the other, as though no interruption had occurred, still in the cold, low voice and still with the cold grey eyes fixed on his lordship, "it is best you do not forget, at least, at present. Later, if your memory fails you—I have known it treacherous ere now—it will be of little importance. Charles Edward, the Prince of Wales, is at Edinburgh, soon he will be at St. James'; but until he is, remember what we are. You are the Viscount Fordingbridge, but lately succeeded to your father's title, and a convert from his Jacobitism to Hanoverian principles; her ladyship here, who is ever to be depended upon, follows your estimable political principles; her respected father, Mr. Doyle Fane, has, he avers, no politics at all; and I am Mr. Archibald, a Scotch merchant. You will remember?"

"*Peste!* Yes. I will remember. Tutor me no more. Now, Fane, the sea abates somewhat—go and discover if we are near the English coast. And, Mr. Archibald, I have a word to say to my lady here, with your permission. As I am at the expense of this passage, may I ask for a moment's privacy with her? Doubtless the air on the deck will refresh you both."

"Precisely," replied the other. "We will not intrude unless it grows again so rough that we cannot remain on deck. Come, Fane."

When both had left the cabin Lord Fordingbridge turned to his wife who still sat, as she had done from the beginning of Mr. Archibald's remarks, indifferent and motionless as though in no way interested in what had passed, and exclaimed:

"You hear, madam, the circumstances in which I return to my own. 'Tis not too agreeable, I protest. We are Roman Catholics, yet we come as Protestants, Jacobites, yet under the garb and mask of Hanoverians. And in our train a Jesuit priest, arch-plotter, and schemer, who passes as a respectable Scotch merchant. A sorry home coming, indeed!"

"If such duplicity is painful to your lordship's mind," his wife remarked, "'twould almost have been best to have remained in exile. Then you would have been safe, at least, and have done no outrage

to your-conscience. And, later, when those who are fighting for Prince Charles have re-established him upon his grandfather's throne-if they ever do! – you could have declared yourself without fear of consequences."

No word, nor tone of her sneer was lost upon Lord Fordingbridge, and he turned savagely upon her.

"Have a care, my lady," he exclaimed, "have a care. There are ways in my power you little dream of by which if your defiance-

"Defiance!" exclaimed her ladyship. "Defiance! You dare to use that term to me. You!"

"Ay! Defiance. What! Shall the daughter of Doyle Fane, the broken-down Irish adventurer, the master of the fence school in the Rue Trousse Vache, flout and gibe me-the man who took her from a garret and made her a lady-a peeress. I-I-

"Yes!" she replied. "You! You-who have earned for ever her undying hatred by doing so; by making her a lady by lies, by intriguing, by duplicity. A lady! Yet your wife! Had you left me in the Rue Trousse Vache-in the garret over the fence school-whose wife should I have been now? Answer that, Simeon Larpent, answer that."

"The wife of a man," he said, quietly and calm again in a moment, for he had the power to allay the tempestuous gusts that overtook him occasionally almost as quickly as they arose, "who, if the fates are not more propitious than I deem they will be, rides at the present moment to his doom, to a halter that awaits him. A man who rides on a fruitless journey to England as volunteer with his cousin Balmerino in the train of Charles Edward; a man-

"Whom," she interrupted again, "I loved with my whole heart and soul; whom I loved from the first hour my eyes ever gazed on him. A man whom you separated me from with your Jesuitical lies-they did well to educate you at Lisbon and St. Omer-a man who, if God is just, as I do believe, shall yet live to take a desperate vengeance on you. And for the reason that he may do so, I pray night and day that Charles Edward will fight his way to London. Then you must meet-unless you flee back to France again-then, Lord Fordingbridge, you must stand face to face with him at last. Then-

"Then you trust to be a widow. Is it not so, my lady? You will be free then, and Bertie Elphinston may have the bride I stole from him. Is that your devout aspiration?"

"Alas, no!" she replied. "Or, if it is, it can never come to pass. If Bertie Elphinston saw me now he would shrink from me. He would not touch my hand. He would pass across the street to avoid me."

As she uttered the last words there came from over the swirling, troubled sea the boom of a cannon, accompanied a moment afterwards by harsh cries and orders from the deck of the Galliot, and by the rattling of cordage and a sudden cessation of the slight way that was still on the vessel.

"What does that gun mean?" asked Lord Fordingbridge as he started to his feet, while Fane and Mr. Archibald re-entered the cabin hastily.

"It means," said the disguised Jesuit, who spoke as coolly and calmly as ever, "that the vessel which has been following us since dawn is King George's-he forgot on this occasion to term the English king 'the Elector of Hanover'-Bomb-ketch the 'Furnace.' She has fired the gun to bring us to. Doubtless they wish to inspect our papers and to see there are no malignant priests or Jacobites on board. We are now in English waters and within two miles of Harwich, therefore they are quite within their rights."

"Bah!" exclaimed his lordship. "Let them come. What have we to fear?"

"Nothing whatever," replied Mr. Archibald. "The Viscount Fordingbridge is an accession to the usurper's Whig peers; a harmless Irish gentleman, such as Mr. Doyle Fane, and a simple Scotch merchant, such as I, can do no harm. While for her ladyship here-

"Come, come on deck," said his lordship, "and let us see what is doing. Will it please you to remain here, my lady?" he asked, turning to his wife with an evil glance in his eye.

"Yes," she replied, "if they wish to see me I shall be found here."

The sea had abated considerably by now, so that already a boat had been lowered from the ketch, which was not more than five cables length from the Galliot by the time they reached the deck. It was manned by a dozen sailors while an officer sat in the stern sheets, and the brawny arms of the men soon brought it alongside. Then, while the seamen kept the boat off the Galliot with their hands and oars, the officer seized the man-ropes thrown over to him, and easily sprang up the accommodation ladder on to the deck.

"What vessel is this?" he asked fiercely of the captain, "and what passengers do you carry?"

"It is the Bravermann, of Rotterdam, sir," the young captain replied, "chartered at Calais to bring his lordship and wife with two other passengers to Dover. We are blown off our course, however, and-

"Where are these passengers?" asked the officer.

"Here is one," said Lord Fordingbridge, coming forward, "and here two others whom I have accommodated with a passage. Her ladyship is in the cabin."

"Your papers, if you please."

His lordship produced from his pocket two large documents, duly signed by the English ambassador and countersigned by the first secretary of the Legation, while to them was also affixed a stamp of the Mairie; and the lieutenant, for such he was, glanced over them, compared the description of the viscount with that of the person before him, and then said he must see her ladyship.

"Come this way then," the other replied, and led him into the cabin. "My lady," he said to his wife, "this gentleman wishes to compare you with your description on our passports."

Very calmly Lady Fordingbridge turned her eyes on the lieutenant as he, touching his hat to her, glanced at the paper and retired saying he was satisfied. Then, turning to the others, he said, "Now your passports, quick."

Fane and Mr. Archibald also passed his scrutiny, though once he looked under his eyelids at the latter as if to make sure he was the man whose description he held in his hand, and then their passports were also returned to them.

"Let me see over the ship and also her papers," he said to the captain, and when this was done he seemed satisfied that his duty had been performed.

"You may proceed," he said. "Call the boat away," and with such scant ceremony he went to the ship's side and prepared to re-embark in his own cutter.

"Pardon me," exclaimed the viscount, stopping him, "but we have heard strange rumours in Paris of a landing effected in Scotland by the Prince of-the person known as the Young Pretender. Also we have heard he has reached Edinburgh and been joined by many persons of position in Scotland, and that an English army has set forth to oppose his further march. Can you tell me, sir, if this is true?"

"I know nothing whatever on the subject," replied the lieutenant, curtly as usual. "His Majesty's land forces concern us not; our account is on the sea. And our duty is to search all unknown vessels proceeding to England to see that they bear neither Jacobites, pestilential priests, arms, nor money with them. Is the boat there?"

Hearing that she had again come alongside, having kept off the Galliot to prevent her being stowed in, he descended swiftly to her without deigning to award the slightest salute to anyone on board. But as his men pulled off he saw the face of Lady Fordingbridge gazing out from the cabin porthole, and raised his hat to her.

"Yet," said Mr. Archibald to the viscount, as they sat once more in the cabin while the vessel now entered smooth water and drew close in to Harwich, "whatever his duty may be he has not been wondrous happy in carrying it out. For there are Jacobites, a pestilential priest, and money for the cause all in this ship together, arms alone being wanting. Faugh! he was a rough sea-dog, yet none too good a setter. Well, well. Perhaps in this town we may glean some news."

CHAPTER II

A SUBJECT OF KING GEORGE

The month of May, 1746, was drawing to a close, and June was already giving signs of its approach, as my Lord Viscount Fordingbridge sat in the library of his house in Kensington-square and warmed his feet at the fire which, in spite of the genial spring weather, burned pleasantly on the hearth. By his side, on a table, lay the morning papers of the day to which he constantly referred, and which, after each occasion of doing so, he threw down with a very palpable expression of satisfaction.

"In truth," he muttered to himself, "nought could have gone much better. I am safe and-and the necks of all the rest are jeopardised. Jeopardised! Nay! 'tis much worse than that. Those who are caught must surely die, those who are not caught must be so ere long. As for Charles Edward himself he hath escaped. Well, let him go; I have no quarrel with him."

Again he took up one of the journals and read:

"This morning his Majesty's ship of war, Exeter, arrived from Scotland, having on board the Earls of Cromartie and Kilmarnock, and the Lord Balmerino. They have been committed prisoners to the Tower on a charge of high treason." "Ah," he mused, "that's well, so far as it goes, though for myself I care not whether their lordships finish on Tower Hill or are set free. Fools all! Yet they were near winning, the devil seize them! had they but pushed on from Derby they must have won, and the German who now sits secure would never have had my allegiance. Charles Edward would have transformed my title into that of a marquis, I doubt me if George will do as much in reward for my change of politics. But what I would fain know is, where is the wolf Elphinston, Balmerino's cousin? He fought at Culloden, I know well-recklessly, like a man sick of life. Perhaps 'twas for his lost love, Kitty! At least in Hawley's despatch he is mentioned as having killed four men of Barrell's regiment with his own blade. May Fate confound him! if taken his life is forfeit, but where is he?"

A knock came at the library door as he mused, and in reply to his answer Mr. Archibald entered. As usual, certainly since he left France, he was clothed as became the part he had now assumed, of a well-to-do Scotch merchant, there being only one new addition to any portion of his dress. His hat, which he threw carelessly upon the table, on the top of his lordship's journals, bore in it the *black cockade*!

"Ha, ha! my worthy merchant," exclaimed Lord Fordingbridge, as his quick eye perceived this, "my worthy dealer in brocades, broadcloth, and Colchester baize, so already thou trimmest the sails to catch the favouring German breezes. 'Tis well."

"Stop this fooling," said the Jesuit, looking angrily at him; "is this the time for you to be joking and jeering when everything is lost? You have the journals there, you know well what has happened. The principals of the noblest cause, of the most sublime restoration that would have ever taken place, are prisoners with their lives in forfeit, some in London, some in Carlisle gaol, and some at Inverness, and you sit gibing there. *Pardieu!* sometimes I think you are a fool instead of the knave I once deemed you."

"If," said the viscount, scowling at the other as he spoke, "you deem yourself called upon to address me in such a manner, I shall be forced, Mr. Archibald, to also alter my style of address to you, and to speak both to and of you as the Reverend Archibald Sholto, priest of the Society of Jesus, and an avowed Jacobite. And you will remember that here, in England, at such a moment as this, to be so proclaimed could not be otherwise than fraught with unpleasant consequences to you. Moreover, you will have the goodness to remember that now-since the disastrous events, to your side, of Culloden, the Viscount Fordingbridge is a fervent Hanoverian."

"I will remember," said the priest, "that however desirous the Viscount Fordingbridge may be to espouse the cause of the House of Hanover, it is not in his power to do so, so long as there remains

one Stuart to assert a claim to the throne of his ancestors. When that race ceases to exist, when no living Stuart is left to call for aid, then perhaps, you may be permitted to become Hanoverian, not before. Now, my Lord Fordingbridge, listen to me, while I go over the cards I hold in my hand against Simeon Larpent, my whilom scholar at St. Omer, who-

"Nay!" exclaimed the other, "do nothing of the sort. I retract, I had forgotten. Recall nothing. Yet, for my safety, I must appear an adherent of King George. Indeed, to-morrow I attend his levée."

"For the good of the Stuart cause," the other said, "you will continue as you have begun since your return to this country, to appear an adherent of this King George; for the good of the cause that is not yet lost. There will be another rising ere long, be sure of that; if it comes not before, it will do so at the death of the present usurper. Now, listen to the news I bring you."

"What is it?" the other asked, while he paled as he did so. "What?"

"The worst that you can hear. Elphinston is in London."

"Elphinston here! Is he mad? His life is not worth an hour's purchase."

"He knows that," replied the Jesuit coolly, "as well as you or I do. Yet he heeds it not. Why should he? Are not other men's lives doomed who are now in London? Men who," he went on, speaking coldly and with great distinctness, "brought money into England to aid the cause; men," still his voice fell more and more crisp upon the other's ear, "who did endeavour to compass the death of George as he returned from his last visit to Herrenhausen; men who-

"Silence, you Jesuit devil," interrupted the other. "Sometimes I wonder that you do not fear to speak as you do; that you do not dread that your own death may be compassed."

"I have no fear," replied the priest, taking snuff as he spoke, "so long as the walls of St. Omer contain my papers. Rather should I fear for those whose secrets would be divulged if I were to die. To die even suddenly, without being assassinated."

"Well! to your news," exclaimed the other. "What of Elphinston! Where does he hide himself away?"

"At the moment," answered the priest, "he-and my brother Douglas-

"So he is here, too!"

"He is here, too. They dwell together in lodgings at the village of Wandsworth. Perhaps later, if it goes ill with Balmerino, they may remove into the City."

"To make some mad attempt to save him!"

"Possibly. Meanwhile, do you not dread to meet the man yourself! You stole his bride from him, you will remember, and now he suspects how you brought it about. How will you answer to him for the falsehoods by which you persuaded her that he was already the husband of another woman?"

"By my sword," Lord Fordingbridge replied-though at the moment he was thinking of a far different manner in which Bertie Elphinstone should be answered.

"It will be your only plan," Sholto said. "For by treachery you can accomplish nothing. If Elphinston is blown upon he will know well who is his informer and will, in his turn, inform. Inform upon the man who plotted to have George's person seized by French pirates as he returned to England from France, the man who spread broadcast through England the reward offered by Prince Charles of £30,000 to whomsoever should seize and secure George-"[\[Note A\]](#)

"Why," exclaimed Fordingbridge, maddened by the other's taunts, "why do you persecute me like this? What have I ever done to you that you threaten me thus?"

"Recall," replied the Jesuit, "your vows at St. Omer, your sins since, your broken pledges, your cancelled oaths. Then answer to yourself why I do these things. Moreover, remember I love my brother-he has been my charge since his boyhood-and if Elphinston is betrayed Douglas must fall too. Also remember, Elphinston has been ever beloved by me. You have inflicted one deadly wound on him, you have wrecked his life by striking him through his love-think you that I will ever permit you to injure him again? Man!" the Jesuit said, advancing nearer to Fordingbridge as he spoke, and standing before him in so threatening a manner that the other shrank back from him, "if evil comes

to Elphinston through you, such evil shall in turn come to you through me that I will rend your life for ever and always. Remember, I say again, remember."

He took his hat from off the table as he finished, and left the room addressing no further remark to the other. And, quietly as he ever moved, he was about to descend the stairs when Lady Fordingbridge coming from out an open door, stopped him.

"I wish to speak to you," she said, in a soft, low voice, "come within a moment," and, followed by Sholto, she led him back into the room she had just quitted. Here, too, a warm pleasant fire burned in the grate, while an agreeable aroma of violets stole through the apartment; and motioning her visitor to a seat her ladyship said:

"Is the news true? Are they-is Mr. Elphinston in London?"

"It is true, Kitty," he said. "Yet I know not how you heard it."

"From my father who dreads as much to meet him as the craven in his library must do." She paused a moment, then she continued, "Have you seen him?"

"Yes," he said, "I have seen him."

"And," she asked, wistfully, "did he send no word of pardon-to me?"

The Jesuit shook his head, though in a gentle kindly manner, ere he replied. "No, child. He spoke not of you."

She sat gazing into the embers for a few moments more; then she went on.

"Yet he must know, he cannot but know how basely I was deceived. You told me months ago that he had learnt some of the story from your brother's lips, who learnt it from you. Is there no room for pity in his heart? Will he never forgive?"

"If he thinks aught," said the Jesuit, still very gently, to her, "it is that you should never have believed so base a tale. So at least he tells Douglas. To me he has never spoken of the matter."

"Alas!" she said. "How could I doubt? Lord Fordingbridge I might have disbelieved, but my father!" and here she shuddered. "How could I think that he would stoop to practise such lies, such duplicity, on his own child?"

Father Sholto made no answer to this remark, contenting himself with lifting his hands from his knees and warming the palms at the fire. And so they sat, neither speaking for two or three moments. Then she said:

"Father, will you take a letter to him from me?"

This time he lifted his bushy eyebrows instead of his hands, and looked at her from underneath them. Next he shrugged his shoulders, and then he said:

"Kitty, for you I will do anything, for you who have ever been a dutiful daughter of the Church, ay! and a loyal adherent to a now sadly broken cause. Yet, child, what use to write? Nothing can undo what is done; you must make the best of matters. Solace your wounded heart with the rank you have gained, with your husband's now comfortable means, your reception at the Court of the Hanoverian king, for king he is, and, I fear, must be. However great the evil that was done, it must be borne. You and Bertie Elphinston are sundered for ever in this world, unless-"

"Unless?" she repeated, with a swift glance from her eyes.

"You both survive him. Yet, how shall such a thing be! He is no older than Elphinston himself, and, much as he has wronged that other, no reparation, not even his life, would set things right. If Bertie slew him he could not marry his victim's widow."

"Alas! alas!" said Lady Fordingbridge, "the last thing he would wish to do now, even were I free, would be to have me for his wife. Me whom once he loved so tenderly."

Once more the Jesuit twitched up his great eyebrows and muttered something to himself, and then seemed bent in thought. And as Kitty sat watching him she caught disconnected whispers from his lips. "Douglas might do it," she heard him say; "that way the gate would be open. Yet he cannot be spared, not yet," until at last he ceased, after which, looking up from his reverie, he said to her:

"What do you wish to write to him, child? You, the Viscountess Fordingbridge, must have a care as to your epistles to unmarried men."

"Be under no apprehension," she replied. "Yet, if-if-he would pardon me, would send me one little line to say-God! – that he does not hate me-oh! that he who once loved me so should come to hate me-then, then I might again be happy, a little happy. Father, I must write to him."

"So be it," he answered. "Write if you must. I will convey the letter."

CHAPTER III

A WOMAN'S LETTER

The next night Father Sholto, who was lodged in Lord Fordingbridge's house, took a hackney coach through the fields to Chelsea Church, and so was ferried across to Battersea. Then, because the evening was soft and mild and there was a young moon, he decided to walk on by the road to the next village, namely Wandsworth, which lay half an hour further on.

"Poor Kitty," he thought to himself, as he felt the packet she had confided to him press against his breast, "poor Kitty! Why could she not have believed in Bertie's truth? Surely anything might have been set against the word of such a creature as Simeon Larpent, pupil of mine though he be. *Peste!* why was not I in Paris when all was happening? By now they would have been happy. They could have lived in France or Italy. We, the Society," and he crossed himself as he went on, "would have found the wherewithal; or even in America they might have, perhaps, been safe. Yet now! Now! Elphinston is a heartbroken man; Kitty, a heartbroken woman. Alas! alas!"

With meditations such as these, for political Scotch Jesuit as Archibald Sholto was, and fierce partisan of his countrymen, Charles Stuart and his father James, there beat a kindly heart within him, he reached the long, straggling village street of Wandsworth. Then, turning off somewhat sharply to the right, he emerged after another five minutes upon a road above the strand of the river, on which, set back in shady gardens, in which grew firs, cedars, and chestnut trees, were some antique and picturesque houses built a hundred years before.

At one of these, the first he came to, he knocked three times on the garden gate and rang a bell, the handle of which was set high in the door frame; and then in a moment a strong, heavy tread was heard coming from the house to the gate.

"Who is it?" a man's voice asked from within.

"*Nunquam triumphans*,"¹ was the priest's answer, softly given, and as he spoke the postern door was opened, and a tall man stood before Sholto. In a moment their hands were clasped in each other's and their greetings exchanged.

"'Tis good of you, Archie, to come again to-night," his younger brother said to him; "have you brought more news? How fares it with those in the Tower?"

"Ill," replied the other. "As ill as may be. The trials are fixed, 'tis said, for July at latest. One will, however, escape. Tullibardine-"

"The Marquis of Tullibardine escape! Why, then, there is hope for the others!"

"Ay!" replied the elder brother, "there is, by the same way. Tullibardine is dying in the Tower. His life draws to a close."

"Pish! What use such an escape? But come in, Archie. Bertie looks ever for you." Then he stopped on the gravel path and, gazing into the other's face as it shone in the moonlight, he said, "What of Kitty? Have you told her he is in London?"

"Ay," replied the Jesuit, "and have on me now a letter to him from her, suing, I believe, for forgiveness. Douglas!" he exclaimed, seizing the other by the arm, "Bertie must pardon her. You must make him. Otherwise-"

"What?"

"I fear I know not what. Her love for him is what it ever was, stronger, fiercer, may be, because of the treachery that tore them asunder; she thinks of him alone. And if she grows desperate Heaven

¹ "*Tandem triumphans*" was the motto emblazoned on Charles Edward's banner during the march into England. "*Nunquam triumphans*" was afterwards a password between Jacobites.

knows what may be the outcome of it. Murder of Simeon! betrayal of him! Self-slaughter! She is capable of all or any, if goaded too far. He must forgive her."

"Forgive her!" exclaimed his younger brother. "Forgive her! Why, who shall doubt it; what possesses your mind? There is no fear of that. No, that is not what there is to fear."

"What then?" asked Archibald, bewildered.

"That if they should once again meet no power on earth could ever part them more. Even now he broods all day, and night too, on finding her, on carrying her off by force. There are scores of our countrymen in London in disguise who would do it for him at his bidding or help him to do it as well as to slay Fordingbridge. I tell you, Archie, he would stand at nothing. Nothing! Why, man, as we fought side by side at Prestonpans he muttered a score of times, 'Kate, Kate, Kate.' And once, as he cut down an officer of Fowke's dragoons, he exclaimed, 'Each Hanoverian dog who falls brings us so much the nearer to London and me to Kate.' Faith! though the battle lasted but four minutes, he muttered her name ten times as often."

"Come," said the other, "let us go in to him. I would I knew what is best to do. Ah, well! most affairs settle themselves. Pray Heaven this one may."

Over a fire, burning in an ancient grate constructed for the consumption of wood alone, they found Bertie Elphinston brooding, as his friend had described. And as all the Scotch had done who had sought a hiding-place in London after the defeat of the Stuart army in Scotland, any marks that might proclaim their nationality had been carefully exchanged-where the purse allowed-for more English traits and characteristics. Therefore Elphinston was now clad as any other gentleman of the time might be, plainly but well-a branched velvet coat with a satin lining, a black silk embroidered waistcoat, and breeches of velvet in keeping with the coat constituting his dress, while he wore his own hair, of a dark-brown colour and slightly curly. Against the side of the large open-mouthed grate and near to his hand there reclined an ordinary plate-handled sword, with the belt hanging to it as when unbuckled from the body; deeper in a recess might be seen two claymores, with which weapons the Scotch had recently inflicted such deadly slaughter on the Duke of Cumberland's troops.

"Ha, Archie!" exclaimed the young man, springing up from his chair and grasping the Jesuit's hand, "welcome, old friend. So you have found your way here once more. *A la bonne chance!* Yet," he went on, while his handsome face clouded again with the gloomy look that it had borne before lighting up at the entrance of their friend, "why say so! You can bring us no good news now-you can," he said in a lower voice, "bring me none. Yet speak, Archie, how is it with our poor friends?"

"As before. There is no news, except that their trials are fixed. Yet all bear up well, the head of your house especially so. He jests ever-p'raps 'tis to cheer his wife more than for aught else. She is admitted to see him, and brings and takes our news, and he sends always, through her, his love to you. Also he bids you begone from out of England, you and Douglas both, since there can be no safety for you in it. The king is implacable, he will spare none."

"And the Prince, our Prince," asked Elphinston, "what of him; is he safe?"

"He is not taken," replied the other. "We know nought else. But in truth, it is partly to endorse Lord Balmerino's injunction that I am here to-night. Both of you must begone. London is no place for Jacobites of any degree; for those who have recently fought the peril is deadly. Already the whole town is searched from end to end. The Tower is full of prisoners. From noble lords down to the meanest, it is crammed with them. Gallows are already being put up on Kennington Common; soon the slaughter will begin. My boys, you must back to France."

"Douglas may go if he will," replied Elphinston, looking at his comrade. "I remain here. I have something to do." Then he said quietly, "Where is Lord Fordingbridge?"

"At present in London, but he leaves for his seat in Cheshire to-morrow. Bertie," the Jesuit exclaimed, "if what you have to do is with him it must be postponed. To seek out Fordingbridge now would be your undoing."

"And his wife-does-she go too?"

"No," the other replied, "she stays in London. Bertie, I have brought you a letter from her."

"A letter from Kate-Lady Fordingbridge-to me! To me! What does it mean? What can have caused her to write to me?"

"Best read the letter," replied the other. "And as you read it think-try to think-kindly of her. Remember, too, that whatever she was to you once, she is now another man's wife. However great a villain he may be, remember that."

"Give me the letter," Elphinston said briefly.

Sholto took from his pocket the little packet; then, as he gave it to the other, he said, "Douglas and I will leave you to its perusal. The night is fine, he can walk with me to Battersea. Farewell."

"Farewell," returned Elphinston. "And-and-tell her ladyship if there is aught to answer such answer will be sent."

"Be careful of your messengers. Remember. Danger surrounds you."

"I shall remember."

When they were gone, his friend saying he would be back in an hour's time, the young man turned the letter over more than once ere he broke the seal-it bore no address upon it, perhaps for safety's sake-and then, at last, he opened it and commenced its perusal. And as he did so and saw the once familiar handwriting, he sighed profoundly more than once. Yet soon he was engrossed in the contents. They ran as follows:

"I hear you are in London and that at last is it possible for me to do what I have long desired-though hitherto no opportunity has arisen-namely, to explain that which in your eyes may seem to be my treachery to you.

"Mr. Elphinston, when you and I last parted, I was your affianced wife; I write to you now as the wife of another man to ask you for your pardon. If I set down all as it came to pass it may be that, at least, you will cease to hate my memory-the memory of my name. Nightly I pray that such may some day be the case. Thereby at last I may know ease, though never again happiness in this world.

"When you quitted Paris a year ago you went, as you said you were going, to Rome on a message to the Pope connected with the Cause. Alas! you and Father Sholto had not been sped a week ere very different tidings reached me. My father-God forgive him! – first poisoned my ears with rumours-which he said were spread not only over all Paris but also at St. Germain, Vincennes, and Marly-that it was on no political matter that you had departed. It was known-even I knew so much, I had jested with you about it, had even been sore on the subject-that Madeleine Baufremont, of the Queen's Chamber, admired you. Now, so said my unhappy father, with well-acted misery, it was whispered that she and you had gone away together. Moreover, he said there was no doubt that you and she were married. He even named the church at which the marriage had taken place at Moret, beyond Fontainebleau."

"So, so," muttered Bertie Elphinston, as he read. "I see. I begin to see. 'Tis as I thought, though I did not know this. Well, a better lie than one might have hoped."

"Next," the letter continued, "there came to me the man who is now my husband-then, as you know, the Honourable Simeon Larpent, his father being still alive. Needless to tell you, Mr. Elphinston, of how this man had ever sought my love; first, because of our poverty, in a manner alike disgraceful to both, and next, when that design failed, in a more honourable fashion. Yet, of no avail when you- But enough. You also know well how every plea of his was rejected by me.

"He, too, told the same tale. He protested to me that on the morning you left St. Germain Madeleine Baufremont set out on the same southern road, that your carriages met and joined at Étampes, and that thence you travelled together to Moret."

"The devil can indeed speak the truth," muttered Bertie, as he read thus far.

"Still, I would not-I could not-believe. Our last parting was fresh in my mind, ay! in my heart; our last vows and last farewells, our projects for the future, our hopes of days of happiness to come-forgive me if I remind you of them-they are wrecked now! I say I could not believe. Yet,

wherever I looked, wherever I made inquiries, there was but one answer. The English, Scotch, and Irish gentlemen who frequented my father's house all gave the same answer, though none spake the words I feared. Some, I observed, regarded me with glances that were full of pity—for which I hated them—others preserved a silence that was worse tenfold than speech, some smiled in their sleeves. And Larpent was ever there—always, always, always. And one day he came to where I was sitting and said to me, 'Kitty, if you will indeed know the truth, there is a witness below who can give it to you. The *curé* of Moret has come to Paris with a petition to the king against the exactions of the Seigneur. Kitty, he it was who made Bertie Elphinston and Madeleine Baufremont man and wife.'

"'So be it,' I replied. 'Yet, remember their marriage makes ours no nearer.' 'It will come,' he replied. 'I can not believe that my reward will never come.' Whereon he left the room and came back with the *curé*. Alas! he told so plain a tale, describing you with such precision and Madeleine Baufremont also, that there was, indeed, no room left for doubt. Yet still I could scarce believe; for even though you had not loved me, even though your burning words, your whispers of love had all been false, why, why, I asked again and again, should you have stooped to such duplicity? If you had tired of me, if that other had turned your heart from me to her, one word would have been enough; I must have let you go when you no longer desired to stay by my side. Mr. Elphinston, I wrote to you at Rome, to the address you had given me and to the English College there; I wrote to Father Sholto—alas! I so much forgot my pride, that I wrote to Douglas, who had then joined the squadron commanded by Monsieur de Roquefeuille for the invasion of England. I could not part from you yet" — these words were scored out by the writer, and, in their place, the sentence began—"I could not yet believe in your deceit, in your cold, cruel betrayal of a woman who had trusted in you as in a god; it seemed all too base and heartless. Yet neither from you nor the Sholtos came one line in answer to my prayer."

Elphinston groaned bitterly as he read the words. He knew now how easily the trap had been laid.

"Then, at last, I did believe. Then, at last, I renounced you and your love. I denied to my own heart that I had ever known a man named Bertie Elphinston, that I had ever been that man's promised wife. I tore you from my heart for ever. It was hard, yet I did it. Time passed, no intelligence came of you or Madeleine Baufremont. I even heard that the Duc de Baufremont had petitioned the king that, if you again entered French territory, you should be punished for abducting his daughter. Yet, as the days went on, I allowed Simeon Larpent to approach me no nearer on the subject. So he and my father concocted a fresh scheme by which I was at last led to consent to become his wife. We were, as you know, poor, horribly poor; the *Cours d'Escrime* hardly provided for our needs. Often, indeed, I had wondered how we managed to subsist so well on what seemed to me to be nothing. My father talked vaguely of an allowance to him, in common with other refugees from England, from the French king or from the Chevalier St. George, or the Scotch Fund. Now—for at this period the old Lord Fordingbridge died—he said we had been subsisting for some time on money lent, or we could, if we chose, consider it given to us, by the present lord. He would never, my father said, demand repayment; indeed, such was his lordship's respect for him and his admiration for me, that he would cheerfully continue his allowance, or, since he was now very well-to-do, increase it. So I learnt that I had been dependent for the bread I ate, the dress I wore, to this man. Need I say more! You know that I became the wife of Lord Fordingbridge.

"A month had not passed ere I knew the truth as to how I had been duped and deceived—as to how I had been false to you. De Roquefeuille's squadron was driven back by Sir John Norris, and Douglas Sholto returned to Paris. He told me all; that it was your kinsman and namesake of Glenbervie who had left Paris with you to espouse Madeleine Baufremont, and that you—tied under a solemn promise to in no way let his approaching marriage with her be known—had kept the secret even from me. Alas! had you given me one hint, spoken one word, how different all would have been! Yet, I do not reproach you for fidelity to your friend; I only ask that when you think of me—if you ever think at all—as not trusting you, you will recollect that your own silence made it possible for me to doubt.

"One word more, and I shall not trouble you further. It is to beseech you to quit London at once, to put yourself in safety, with the seas between you and the English Government. For, even though you might lie hid from the vengeance that will fall on all followers of the prince who may be caught, I fear that private malice, aided by personal fear of you, may lead to your betrayal. Be warned, I beseech you. Farewell and forgive.

"Catherine Fordingbridge."

CHAPTER IV

THE SUBJECTS OF KING JAMES

The letter written by Lady Fordingbridge, read in conjunction with some other remarks made by other persons who have been introduced to the reader's notice, may serve to inform him of the state of affairs that led to the position in which things were at the period when this narrative commences, namely, the month of May, 1746. A few other words of additional explanation alone are necessary.

At the time when Cardinal Tencin (who looked forward to becoming the successor of Fleury as Prime Minister of France, and who owed his elevation to the purple as well as to the Primacy of France to the influence of the old Pretender) persuaded Louis XV. to support the claims of the Stuarts as his great-grandfather and predecessor had done, Paris was, as is well known to all readers of history, full of English, Scotch, and Irish Jacobites. These refugees from their own countries were to be found in all capacities in that city, some serving as the agents of the exiled Chevalier de St. George, who was now resident at Rome, and others as correspondents between the followers of the Stuarts in London, Rome, and Paris; also, some resided there either from the fact that their presence would not be tolerated in England or its dependencies, and some because, in their staunch loyalty to the fallen House, they were not disposed to dwell in a country which they considered was ruled over by usurpers. To this class belonged the late Viscount Fordingbridge, a staunch Cheshire nobleman, who had been out in the '15, had afterwards escaped from the Isle of Skye, and had also had the good fortune to escape forfeiture of his estates, owing to the fact that, though he had been out himself, he had neither furnished men, arms, nor money, so far as was known.

But also in Paris were still others who, loyal Jacobites as they were, and followers of a ruined party, were yet obliged to earn their bread in the best way they were able. Thus Doyle Fane, Kitty's father, an Irish gentleman of good family who had himself seen service under France and Austria, eked out a slender allowance—paid irregularly by James Stuart—by lessons in swordsmanship, of which art he was an expert master. Some, again, obtained commissions in French regiments, many, indeed, being glad to serve as simple privates; while several who were more fortunate—and among whom were Douglas Sholto and Bertie Elphinston—obtained positions in the Garde du Roi or the Mousquetaires, or other corps, and so waited in the hopes of a descent on England in which they would be allowed to take part by resigning temporarily their French commissions.

Of priests affecting Stuart principles there were also several, some, as was the case with Archibald Sholto, being temporarily attached to St. Omer, at which there was a large English seminary for the education of young Catholics, but all of whom were frequently in London and Paris, plotting always restlessly for the overthrow of the present reigning House in England, and for the restoration of the discarded one.

Fane's residence at this period, which was shortly before the expedition of Charles Edward to recover, if possible, the throne of England for his father, was a popular resort of many of the exiled English, Scotch, and Irish, principally because, in the better classes of men who were still young, the practice of the sword was unceasing, and also, perhaps, because in the next house to his was a well-known tavern, "Le Phœbus Anglais," kept by a Jacobite, and a great place of assembly for all the fraternity. But for the younger men there was an even greater attraction than either the advantages of continued practice in swordsmanship or a cheap but good tavern—the attraction of Kitty Fane's beauty.

Kitty kept her father's house for him, kept also his accounts, made his fees go as long a way as possible, and his bottle last out as well as could be the case when submitted so often to the constant demands on it, and was admired and respected by all who came to the little house in the Rue Trousse Vache. Besides her beauty, she was known to be a girl who respected herself, and was consequently respected; and as Doyle Fane was also known to be a gentleman by birth, and Kitty's mother to have

been a daughter of one of the oldest families in Ireland, none ever dreamed of treating her in a manner other than became a lady.

Of declared lovers she had two, one whom she disliked for reasons she knew not why-at first; the other whom she adored. Simeon Larpent, heir to the then dying Lord Fordingbridge, was one; Bertie Elphinston, of the Regiment of Picardy, the other. With Larpent, however, the reasons why she disliked him soon made themselves apparent. He was crafty by nature, with a craft that had been much fostered at St. Omer and Lisbon, where he was educated, and he was, she thought, lacking in bravery. When other men were planning and devising as to how they could find a place in that army which-under Count Saxe, to be convoyed to England by De Roquefeuille-was then forming, he made no attempt to become one of its number, giving as his reasons his father's ill-health and his opinion that he could better serve the Cause by remaining in France. Yet Bertie Elphinston had at the same time a delicate mother residing at Passy, and Douglas Sholto was in poor health at the moment; and still they were both going.

Moreover, Simeon Larpent's admiration was distasteful to her. He had then but recently come back to Paris from Lisbon, from which he brought no particular good character, while he appeared by his conversation and mode of life to have contracted many extremely bad habits. In the Paris of those days the practice and admiration of morality stood at a terribly low point, yet Simeon Larpent seemed more depraved than most young men were in that city even. In a morose and sullen fashion he revelled in all the iniquities that prevailed during the middle of Louis XV's reign, and his name became noted in English circles as that of a man unscrupulous and abandoned, as well as shifty and cunning. Moreover, even his Jacobitism was looked upon with doubtful eyes, and not a few were heard to say that the hour which witnessed his father's death would also see him an avowed Hanoverian. That such would have been the case was certain, had not, however, the old lord's death taken place at the very moment when Charles Edward made the last Stuart bid for restoration in England. But at such a time it was impossible that the new peer could approach the English king. Had he done so it would have been more than his life was worth. At the best, he would have been forced into a duel with some infuriated Jacobite; at the worst, his body would have been found in the Seine, stabbed to the heart.

Meanwhile those events which Lady Fordingbridge had spoken of in her letter to Bertie Elphinston had taken place; nothing was heard by her either of her lover or the Sholtos, and she became the wife of Fordingbridge. For a month he revelled in the possession of the beautiful woman he had coveted since first he set eyes on her; then she found out the truth and his lordship had no longer a wife except in name. She had one interview with him-alone-and after that had taken place she never willingly spoke to him again. Her pride forbade her to separate from him, but with the exception that the same roof sheltered and the same walls enclosed them, they might as well have dwelt in different streets. Against all his protestations, his vows, his declarations that love, and love alone, had forced him to play the part he had, she turned a deaf ear; she would not even open her lips if possible, to show that she had heard his words. She had come to hate and despise him-as she told him in that one interview-and her every action afterwards testified that she had spoken the truth.

And now, when the married life of Lord and Lady Fordingbridge had arrived at this pass, the time was also come when scores of Jacobites, militant, priestly, or passive as they might be, poured into England. For Charles Edward had landed at Moidart, Tullibardine had displayed at Glenfinnan the white, blue, and red silk standard of the prince, the march southward had begun. Following on this news-all of which reached Paris with extraordinary rapidity-came the intelligence of the Battle of Preston, the capture of Edinburgh, Charles's installation at Holyrood, the rout of Cope's army, the march into England, and the determination of George II. to take the field in person against the invader. And among those who received their orders to at once proceed to England was Lord Fordingbridge, such orders coming from out the mouth of the restless Father Sholto.

"But," exclaimed his lordship, "I have no desire to proceed to England. My unhappy married life-for such it has become-will be no better there than here. And in France, at least, matrimonial disputes are not regarded."

"Your desire," said the priest, "is of no concern. I tell you what is required of you-there is nothing left for you but to conform. We wish a goodly number of adherents to the Stuart cause-indeed, all whom it is possible to obtain-to be in London when the prince and his army arrive, as it is now an almost foregone conclusion they will do. You must, therefore, be there. Only, since you are of a calculating-not to say timorous-nature, and as no Jacobite nobleman will be permitted to enter England until the prince is in London, you will travel with papers describing you as a nobleman who has given in his adherence to the House of Hanover. I shall go with you-it is necessary that I keep you under my eyes as much as possible; also it is fitting that I should be in London. In either case my services will be required, whether we are successful or not."

In this way, therefore, his lordship returned to England in company with his wife and his wife's father as well as the Jesuit. Only, he made several reservations in his own mind as to how he would manage his own political affairs, as to how, indeed, he would trim his sails.

"For," said he to himself, "whether I become Hanoverian or remain Jacobite will depend vastly on which side wins. Once in England I shake off this accursed hold which Sholto and all the other priests of St. Omer have on me; nay, if Hanover comes up uppermost, Sholto himself shall be laid by the heels. There will be a pretty sweep made of the Jesuits if Charles gets beaten. If he drives out George, why, then-ah! well, time enough to ponder."

The events of three months soon showed to which side victory was ultimately to belong. Cumberland destroyed the Scotch army, Charles Edward was in hiding in the land he had entered attended by such bright hopes and prospects; all who had fought on his side were either dead, in prison, or fled. And Simeon Larpent, Viscount Fordingbridge, was-quite with the consent for the time being of Archibald Sholto-an avowed Hanoverian and received into favour by the Hanoverian king, though with a strong watch kept on all his actions by that king's Ministers.

CHAPTER V

MY LORD GOES OUT OF TOWN

On the day after Bertie Elphinston received the letter from his lost love, Lady Fordingbridge, his lordship himself set out from London to journey into Cheshire, there to visit his estate in that county. He had previously intimated to his wife—who had told Father Sholto of the fact—that he intended being absent from London for some weeks; indeed, had asked her whether it was her desire to accompany him. To this question or invitation her ladyship had, however, returned the usual monosyllabic answer which she generally accorded him, and had briefly replied "No." Then being pressed by him to give some reason for her refusal to so accompany him, she had turned round with that bright blaze in her blue eyes which he had learnt to dread, and had exclaimed:

"Why pester me—especially when we are alone—with these useless questions and formalities? We have arranged, decided the mode in which our existences are to be passed, if passed together—it is enough. We remain together ostensibly on the condition that I share this house with you—I will have no other part in your false life. And if you cannot conform to this arrangement, then even this appearance of union can—had best be—severed."

The viscount bit his lips after her cold contemptuous tones, yet, with that strange power which he possessed, he overmastered the burning rage that rose up in his heart against her. Only he asked himself now, as often before he had asked himself, would he always be able to exercise such controllable to refrain from bursting forth against her, and by so doing put an end to the artificial existence they were living?

But now the morning had come for him to depart for the country; outside in the square he could hear the horses shaking their harness while his carriage waited for him; it was time for him to go. Therefore he went to his wife's morning-room and found her ladyship taking her chocolate.

"I come, madam," he said, with that usual assumption of courtliness which he always treated her to since they had become estranged, "to bid you farewell for some few weeks. I will notify you by the post of my proposed return. Meanwhile your ladyship need not be dull. You have the entry now to the Court circles, you have also your respected father with you in this house. And there are many friends of your younger days in London" — he shot an evil, oblique glance at her out of the corner of his eye as he said this, which was not lost on her—"to wit, Mr. Archibald and—others. Doubtless ere I return you may have renewed some of your earlier acquaintanceships. They should be agreeable."

For answer she gave him never a word, but, stirring her cup of chocolate leisurely, looked him straight in the face; then she let her eyes fall on the journal she had been perusing and again commenced to do so as though he were not in the room.

"Curse her," muttered her husband to himself as her indifference stung him to the quick, "curse her, ere long the bolt shall be sped." After which he exclaimed:

"My lady, as is ever the case, I perceive my presence is unwelcome. Once more I bid you adieu," and took himself out of the room and also out of the house. And so he set forth upon his journey.

For a young man on the road to his old family seat, Lord Fordingbridge was that morning strangely preoccupied and indifferent to the events around him, and sat in his carriage huddled up in one corner of it more like an elderly sick man than aught else. The cheerful bustle of the village of Islington, the pretty country villas at Highgate, the larks singing over Finchley Common and Hadley Green, had no power to rouse him from his stupor—if stupor it was—nor either had the bright sun and the warm balmy spring air that came in at the open windows. A strange way for an English nobleman to set out upon his journey to the place where his forefathers had dwelt for ages! A strange way, indeed, considering that he might be regarded as an extremely fortunate man. The head of a family with strong Stuart tendencies, and suspected of himself participating in those tendencies, he had yet

been at once received into favour by the King on returning to London. This alone should have made his heart light within him, for he had but now to conform to that King's demands to pass the rest of his existence in peace and full enjoyment of his comfortable means-to feel that his father's and his family's Jacobitism was forgotten, that all was well with him. George was now welcoming to his fold every exiled Jacobite who had not openly fought or plotted and schemed against him in the recent invasion, and many peers and gentlemen who had long lived abroad in exile were hastening to tender their adherence to the German king, feeling perfectly sure that, after the events of the past three months, the day of the Stuarts was past and gone for ever.

Why, therefore, could not Simeon Larpent look forward as hopefully to the future as all his brother exiles who had returned were doing? Why! Was it because of the enmity of his wife to him, an enmity which he knew could never slacken; or was it because of his fear of that other man whom he had so deeply wronged; or because of what his scheming mind was now fashioning? This we shall see.

The roads were heavy with the recent spring showers so that the four horses of his coach could drag it but tediously along them, and it was nightfall ere South Mimms was reached, and night itself ere they arrived at St. Albans, and Lord Fordingbridge descended at the Angel. To the bowing landlord he gave his name, and stated that he wished a bedroom and a parlour for himself, and a room for his men; and then, as he was about to follow his obsequious host up the broad staircase, he said, pulling out his watch:

"It is now after seven. At nine I expect to be visited by a gentleman whom I have appointed to meet me here. His name is Captain Morris. You will please entertain him at my cost to-night, and do so at your best. On his arrival, if he hath not supped, ask him to do so; if he hath, show him in at once to me. Now I will prepare for my own meal."

Again Boniface bowed low-lower even than before, after he had become acquainted with his visitor's rank and position-and escorted him to a large, comfortable bedroom on the first floor, in which a cheerful fire burnt in the grate. And throwing open two heavy folding-doors, he showed next a bright sitting-room, also with a fire, and well lit.

"This will do very well," said his lordship. "Now send my servant to me with my valise. And let him wait on me at table."

All through the repast he partook of the viscount meditated gloomily and gravely, eating but little of the substantial meal provided by the landlord, drinking sparingly, and addressing no remark to his servant. Then when he had finished, he had his chair drawn up before the fire, a bottle of wine and another of brandy placed on the table, and, bidding the servant withdraw and bring Captain Morris to him when he should arrive, he again fell to meditating and musing, speaking sometimes aloud to himself.

"It is the only way," he muttered, in disconnected sentences, "the only way. And it must be done at one swoop; otherwise it is useless. So long as one of them is free I am fettered. The only way! And-then-when that is accomplished-to deal with you, my lady. Let me see." He began counting on his fingers and tapping the tips as still he pondered, touching first his forefinger, then the second and third, and once or twice nodding his head as though well satisfied with himself.

"As for Fane," he muttered next, "he scarce counts. Yet he, too, must be taken care of. But of that later. Doubtless when I begin with my lady-Vengeance confound her! – he will become revengeful, but before he can do so-well, he will be harmless. So, so. It should work."

The clock struck nine as he spoke, and he compared it with his great tortoiseshell watch, and then sat listening. The inn was very quiet, he doubted if any other travellers were staying in it, especially as the coach from London passed through early in the day, but outside in the street there were signs of life. The rustics bade each other good-night as they passed; a woman's laugh broke the air now and again; sometimes a dog barked. And at last, above these sounds, he heard a horse's hoofs clattering along the street as though ridden fast.

"That," said his lordship, "may be he. 'Tis very possible. For one of his Majesty's servants, he is none too punctual."

As he spoke the horse drew up with still more clatter at the porch below his window, and he heard a clear, firm voice ask if Lord Fordingbridge had that day arrived from London. And two or three moments later his servant knocked at the door, and, entering, said that Captain Morris was come.

"Has he supped?"

"He says he requires nothing, my lord, but desires to see you at once. He rides to Hertford to-night, he bid the landlord say, and has but little time at his disposal."

"So be it. Show him in," and a moment later Captain Morris entered the room.

A man of something more than middle age, this gentleman's features, aquiline and clear cut, presented the appearance of belonging to one in whom great ability as well as shrewdness and common sense were combined. Tall and extremely thin, his undress riding-habit of dark blue embroidered with gold lace set off his figure to extreme advantage, while the light sword he carried by his side, his gold-trimmed three-cornered hat with its black cockade, and his long riding boots all served to give him the appearance of an extremely gentlemanly and elegant man.

"Welcome, sir," said Lord Fordingbridge, advancing to meet him with extended hand, while at the same time he noticed-and took account of-the clear grey eyes, the thin lips, and aquiline nose of his visitor. "Welcome, sir. I am glad you have been able to reach here to-night. To-morrow I must resume my journey. Be seated, I beg."

"The orders which I received from London," replied Captain Morris, in a clear, refined voice that corresponded perfectly with his appearance, "made it imperative that I should call on you to-night. As your lordship may be aware, in this locality I have certain duties to perform which can be entrusted to no one else."

"I am aware of it," Fordingbridge replied. Then he said, "Before we commence our conversation, let me offer you a glass of wine or brandy. The night is raw, and you have doubtless ridden long."

Captain Morris bowed, said he would drink a glass of wine, and, when he had poured it out of the decanter, let it stand by his side untouched for the moment. After which he remarked:

"I understand, my lord, that I am to receive from your lips to-night some information of considerable importance to his Majesty, touching those who have been engaged in plotting against his security. May I ask you to proceed at once with what you have to tell me? I have still some distance to ride to-night, and also other work to do."

"Yes," answered Fordingbridge, "you have been exactly informed. Yet-how to tell-how to begin, I scarcely know. My object is to put in the King's hands-without, of course, letting it be known that the information comes from me-some facts relating to several notorious Jacobites now sheltering in London. Men who are," he continued, speaking rapidly, "inimical to his Majesty's peace and security, hostile to his rule, and, if I mistake not, bent at the present moment in endeavouring in some way to effect a rescue of the Scotch lords now in confinement at the Tower."

A slight smile rose upon his visitor's face as he uttered these last words; then Captain Morris said quietly:

"That is hardly likely to come to pass, I should imagine. The Tower does not disgorge its victims freely, certainly not by force. As for the Scotch lords, I am afraid they will only quit the place for their trials and afterwards for Tower Hill."

"Yet," remarked Lord Fordingbridge, "the attempt may be made. Of the men I speak of, two are desperate, and both fought at Culloden and the battles that took place during the Pretender's march into England. They will stop at nothing if," with a quick glance at the other, "they are not themselves first stopped."

"Give me their names, if you please," said Morris, with military precision, as he produced from his pocket a notebook, "and where they are to be found."

"Their names are Bertie Elphinston and Douglas Sholto-the former a kinsman of the Lord Balmarino. Both have lived in exile in France, serving in the French King's army, one in the *Garde du Roi* at first, and then in the Regiment of Picardy. The other, Sholto, has served in the Mousquetaires."

"Their names," said Captain Morris, "are not in the list," and he turned over the leaves of his notebook carefully as he spoke. "But for you, my lord, these men might have escaped justice. 'Tis strange nothing was known of them."

"They crossed from France with Charles Edward. Many names of those who accompanied him are probably not known. You may rely on my information. I myself returned but from France some weeks ago. I know them well."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Captain Morris. "Indeed! Your lordship doubtless came to support his Majesty shortly after so many of his enemies crossed over."

"Precisely. But I will be frank. I should tell you I am myself a converted-perverted, some would say-Jacobite. My father, the late lord, died one, I do not espouse his political faith."

Captain Morris bowed gravely; then he said:

"And you know, therefore, these gentlemen-these Scotch rebels."

"I know them very well. Shall I furnish you with a description of their persons?"

"If you please;" and as the captain replied to the question, he-perhaps unwittingly-pushed the untasted glass of wine farther away from him into the middle of the large table, where it remained undrunk.

After the appearance of Elphinston and Sholto had been fully given and noted in the captain's book, he asked:

"And where are these men to be found, Lord Fordingbridge?"

"They shelter themselves in the village of Wandsworth, near London, in an old house on the Waterside, as the strand there is called. It is the first reached from the village."

Again this was written down, after which Captain Morris rose to take his departure, but my lord's tale was not yet told. Pointing to the chair the other had risen from, he said:

"I beg you to be seated a moment longer. There is still another-the worst rebel of all-of whom I wish to apprise you. A priest."

"A priest! You speak truly; they are, indeed, his Majesty's worst enemies. A Jesuit, of course?"

"Of course. With him it will be necessary to use the most astute means in the Government's power to first entrap him, and then to deal with him afterwards. He should, indeed, be confined in total solitude, forbidden, above all things else, to hold any communication with other rebels."

"You may depend, Lord Fordingbridge, on all being done that is necessary, short of execution."

"Short of execution!" interrupted the other. "Short of execution! Why do not the scheming Jesuits-the mainspring of all, the cause of the very rebellion but now crushed out-merit execution as well as those who routed Cope's forces and hewed down Cumberland's men? *Grand Dieu!* I should have thought they would have been the first to taste the halter."

"Possibly," replied the captain in passionless tones, and with an almost imperceptible shrug of his shoulders, "but at present no Jesuit priests have been executed. I doubt if any will be. The Government have other punishments for them-exile to the American colonies, and so forth. Now, my lord, this priest's name and abode."

"He is brother to Douglas Sholto, an elder brother by another mother, yet they have ever gone hand in hand together. Named Archibald, of from thirty-eight to forty years of age. Crafty, dissimulating, and-"

"That is of course," said Captain Morris. "Now, tell me, if you please, where this man is to be found. Is he also in hiding at Wandsworth?"

"Nay," replied the other-and for the first time the informer seemed to hesitate in his answer. Yet for a moment only, since again he proceeded with his story. "He is disguised, of course; passes as a Scotch merchant having business between London and Paris, and is known as Mr. Archibald." He paused again, and Captain Morris's clear eyes rested on him as, interrogatively, he said:

"Yes? And his abode?"

"Is my own house. In Kensington-square."

This time the officer started perceptibly, and fixed an even more penetrating glance upon the other than before. Indeed, so apparent were both the start and look of surprise on his face that the traitor before him deemed it necessary to offer some excuse for his strange revelation.

"Yes," he said, "in my own house. It has been necessary for me to let him hide there awhile the better to-to entrap-to deliver him to justice."

"Your lordship is indeed an ardent partisan," coldly replied Captain Morris; "the King is much to be congratulated on so good a convert."

"The King will, I trust, reward my devotion. The Stuarts have never shown any gratitude for all that has been done for them-by my family as much as any. Now, Captain Morris," he went on, "I have told you all that I have to tell. I have simply to ask that in no way shall it be divulged-as, indeed, I have the promise of his Majesty's Ministers that nothing shall be divulged-as to the source whence this information is derived. It is absolutely necessary that I appear not at all in the matter."

"That is understood. The Secretary of State for Scotch affairs, from whom I receive my instructions, knows your lordship's desire, without a doubt."

"Precisely. It is with him I have been in communication. Yet, still, I would make one other request. It is that Father Sholto may not be arrested in my house. That would be painful to-to-Lady Fordingbridge, a young and delicate woman. He can easily be taken outside, since he quits the house fearlessly each day."

"That too," replied Morris, "I will make a note of for the Secretary's consideration. I wish you now, my lord, good evening," saying which he bowed and went toward the door.

"If I could possibly prevail on you to refresh yourself," said Fordingbridge, as he followed him to it, "I should be happy," and he held out his hand as he spoke.

But the captain, who seemed busy with his sash, or sword belt, did not perhaps see the extended hand, and muttering that he required no refreshment, withdrew from the room.

Nevertheless, when he reached the bar in the passage below he asked the smiling landlady if she could give him a glass of cordial to keep out the rawness of the night air, and to fortify him for his ride. Also he asked, in so polite a manner as to gratify the good woman's heart, if he might scrawl a line at her table whereat she sat sewing and surrounded by her bottles and glasses. Buxom landladies rarely refuse politenesses to persons of Captain Morris's position, especially when so captivatingly arrayed as he was in his undress bravery, and as he wrote his message and sealed it she thought how gallant a gentleman he was.

Then he looked up and enquired if there was any ostler or idle postboy about the place who could ride for him with a letter to-morrow morning to Dunstable, and receiving a reply in the affirmative, paid for his cordial, the hire of the next morning messenger and his horse's feed, and so bade her a cheerful good-night.

In the yard, while his animal was being brought out, he looked with some little interest at his lordship's travelling carriage, inspected the crest upon its panels and the motto, and, tossing the fellow who brought the nag a shilling, and seeing carefully to his holsters, rode away into the night.

Upstairs, my lord, standing before the fire, noticed the unemptied glass of wine, and, remembering that the captain had not chosen to see his outstretched hand, cursed him for an ill-conditioned Hanoverian cur. Downstairs, the hostess, being a daughter of Eve, turned over the captain's letter addressed to "Josias Brandon, Esq., Justice of the Peace," and would have given her

ears, or at least a set of earrings, to know what its contents were. Had she been able to see them they probably would have given her food for gossip for a twelvemonth, brief as they were. They ran:

"The Viscount Fordingbridge passes through Dunstable to-morrow in his coach on his road to Cheshire. From the time he does so until he returns through your town to London, he is to be followed and watched and never lost sight of. Let me be kept acquainted with all his movements-by special courier, if needful. – Noel Morris, Captain."

CHAPTER VI

KATE MAKES AN APPOINTMENT

Between Lady Fordingbridge and her father a better state of things existed than that which prevailed between her and her husband. Indeed, Kitty, who could not forgive the treachery of the man who was now her husband, could not, at the same time, bring herself to regard her father's share in that treachery in as equally black a light. She knew that it was the actual truth that he had been much in debt to Simeon Larpent (as he was then), and she had persuaded herself also to believe that which he constantly assured her was the truth-and, perhaps, might have been-that Larpent would have proceeded against him for his debt, in spite of the story Fane had been instructed to tell to the effect that the other was very willing to continue their creditor. Moreover, old and feeble as her father was now-broken down and unable any longer to earn bread to put in their mouths, she did not forget that, until the events of the last few unhappy months, he had been an excellent parent to her. For, hardly and roughly, by long days of weary work, the bread had been earned somehow, the roof kept over their heads, the clothes found for their backs. Hour after hour, as she remembered, the worn-out old Irish gentleman-once the brilliant young military adventurer had stood in the room set apart for the fencing school, giving his lessons to men young enough to be his sons; and also she recalled how every night, it seemed to her, he was more fatigued than before, his back a little more bowed, his weariness greater. And as-even after the marriage had taken place into which she had been hoodwinked-she thought of all this, and of how he had grown older and more feeble in his fight to keep the wolf from the door, she almost brought herself to forgive him entirely for the great wrong he had done her.

She sat thinking over all this on the morning after her lord's departure for the country, while opposite to her, toasting his feet in front of the fire, her father sat. The old man was well dressed now; he was comfortable and without care-an astute Irish attorney settled in Paris had tied the viscount up as tightly as possible in the matter of jointure, settlements and dowry for Kitty, not without remonstrance from Fordingbridge, which was, however, unavailing; and out of her own money she had provided for her father. And as her eyes rested on him she felt that, badly as he had behaved to her, she was still glad to know that his laborious days were past. At this time Kitty was very near to forgiving him altogether; her strong, loving heart remembering so much of all he had done for her in the past, and forgetting almost all of his wrongdoing.

"What do your letters say to ye, Kitty, this morning?" asked Doyle Fane, who, after more than forty years' absence from his native land, still retained some of its rich raciness of tone and accent. "Ye've a big post there before ye, me child."

"Very little of any importance," she replied. "The night coach through St. Albans brings me a letter from his lordship trusting I shall be happy during his enforced absence. Faugh! Also there is one by the French packet from Kathleen Muskerry. Her uncle, the priest at Marly, is removed to St. Roch. Lady Belrose, whose acquaintance I made a month ago at Leicester House, writes desiring me to accompany her to the masquerade at Vauxhall."

"Good, me child, good. And what for not? 'Twill do ye good to see some life, to-"

"To see some life!" she repeated, "see some life! In the midst of death all around us!"

"Death!" the old man repeated. "Death! Faith, I did not know it. What death is there around us?"

"Father!" she exclaimed, looking at him, "is there not death all around-threatening those whom we love-whom we loved once? Do you not know that London is at the present moment full of followers of the unhappy prince, who, if they are caught, must be doomed? Do you not know that the Tower, Newgate, the New Gaol over the water in Southwark, is crowded with such men, all of whom have soon to stand their trial for high treason-men of whom we have known many, some of whom were your pupils? Father, this is no time for masquerades."

For a moment the old man gazed at her with solemn eyes, as though endeavouring to penetrate her mind, to discover if behind her words there lay any hidden meaning; then he asked:

"Are there any-any whom-we know particularly well among these threatened men? You may tell me, Kitty. You may trust me-now."

"Is not Father Sholto in jeopardy?" she asked, while her eyes also rested on him much as his had dwelt on her. Perhaps she, too, was wondering if he guessed to whom, more than all others, her remarks applied. "If he were discovered would he not share the gaol, if not the scaffold? He told us yesterday that there was a newly-made law against any Jesuit priests from France who should be found in England." [Note B]

"Are there any-any others?" he almost whispered. But still her clear blue eyes regarded him, and she spoke no word.

"Well, well," he said a moment after. "Perhaps it may be, even after so many years, that I do not deserve your confidence. Yet, Kitty, I was nigh as much deceived in some things as you were. Child," he said, leaning across the table as he spoke, "I swear to you I thought that man who came to us was, in truth, the priest, the *curé* of Moret. How could I know he was a paid creature of Larpent's, a vile cheat, instead of the man who, as I supposed, had tied the hands of Bertie El-?"

"Stop," said his daughter, "stop! Don't mention that again. Let it be done with, forgotten; dead and buried. It is past! Over! I-I-am Lord Fordingbridge's wife."

"Yet I must ask. I must know. Nay, I do know. Fordingbridge hinted as much to me ere he set out. Kitty," and now his voice sank to a whisper that none but she could have heard, even though in the room, "is he in London?"

"Yes," she whispered also, softly as a woman's whisper ever is. "Yes. He is here. Oh, father! for the love of God, betray us-him-no more. For if you do, it will not end this time with broken hearts, but with death."

"Betray you," he said, "betray you again! Why will you not believe me once more? See, Kitty, see here," and as he spoke he rose from his chair and stood before her. "I swear to you that I am true in spite-in spite of what I once did, partly in ignorance-unwittingly. I myself loved Elphinston and always despised Larpent. And I did-honestly, I did-believe that he had married Mademoiselle Baufremont."

"Well," she said, "well, he had not. Enough of that. And, since you ask me to trust you once again as I trusted you before, I answer you-remember his life, as well as Douglas Sholto's, are in your hands-he is in London. Both are here."

"'Tis madness," he murmured, "madness. For, Kitty, as sure as he is here he will be betrayed. Fordingbridge will denounce him."

"Alas!" she replied, almost wringing her hands, "alas! I fear as much myself. Yet Father Sholto says not-that it is impossible. For, he declares, should harm come to either of them through him, he will cause him also to be denounced. He knows some secret as to Fordingbridge's doings that, he says, would bring him to the block for a surety, which secret, if he turns traitor, he will use most remorselessly. And, do what he may, at least he is harmless now. He will be in Cheshire for a month. By that time I pray that both the others may be beyond the seas."

"Have you seen him?" he asked, still in a low voice.

He knew that in London at this time walls almost had ears, and that every footman or waiting-maid might be a spy of the Government-especially in a house but recently re-opened after many years of disuse, and, consequently, possessing a staff of servants new to their employers and taking neither interest nor sympathy in their affairs. Also he knew that, in the garb of servants, many a Government agent was carefully watching every action of his or her temporary employers. London especially had but recently recovered from too great a fright to cease as yet to fear for its safety, and saw a bugbear in many harmless strangers now in its midst; the house of a nobleman returned recently from France-the birthplace of the late invasion-and known to be a Catholic, would, therefore, be a particularly likely object to be subjected to supervision, quiet yet effectual.

"No," she replied; "no, I have not seen him. God forbid I should. And if I did, the only words I could, I think, find heart to utter would be to beseech him to fly at once. Oh! father, father, I dread some awful calamity, though I know not in what form or shape it may come."

As she spoke, a tap was heard at the door, and, a second afterwards, Father Sholto entered the room, while so much had her ladyship's fears and tremors overcome her and her father that both exclaimed at once, in the same words, "Is all well?"

"In so far as I know," he replied, after having exchanged morning greetings with them. "As well as all will ever be. Why do you ask? Have you reason to dread aught?"

"No, no," Kitty replied. "Still, I know not why, I am strangely uneasy, strangely nervous to-day. Some feeling of impending ills seems to hang over me."

"Yet," said Sholto, "if omens are to be supposed to have any power, no such feeling should trouble you to-day. Kitty, I bear good news--"

"Good news!" she exclaimed. "From--"

"From an acquaintance of mine--one who is in the office of the Scotch Secretary of State. Nay," he went on, seeing the look of disappointment on her face, and knowing she had expected matter of a different kind, "'tis worth hearing. Among the names of those now in London for whom diligent search is being made--the names of those who, if found, are doomed--three do not appear--three in whom we are concerned."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Lady Fordingbridge and her father together. "They are--"

"Our two friends across the river and--and--myself."

"Therefore you may escape at once?" she asked. "All of you? There is nothing to keep you here in England--the Cause is broken, it can never be regained now--you can all depart in peace?"

"Yes," he said, "we can." But letting his eye fall on Fane, he took her a little apart and said:

"Kitty, we have the chance of getting across the water; at least, we are safe at present. I, you know, can go at any moment; there is nothing to detain me. The glorious work, the accomplishment of which I crossed over to see, will never be done now--I may as well go. But--shall the others go too? It rests with you to say."

"With me," she said, looking up at him; "with me? Why, how should I prevent them going? Oh Archibald, if I could see them I would beg them on my knees to go while there is yet time."

"One will not leave England without the other; Douglas would never go without Bertie. And, Kitty, Elphinston will not go yet."

"Not yet! Why not? What does he tarry for? Is it to take vengeance on my husband, to--to--"

"To see you."

"To see me," she said, clasping her hands convulsively together, while from her soft blue eyes there shone so bright a light that Father Sholto knew how deeply the love still dwelt in her heart for the poor wanderer and outcast; "to see me. Oh! say, does he forgive--has he sent me one word of pardon, of pity?"

"Ay, child, he forgives, if he has aught to forgive. Those are his words. Yet, he bids me say, he must see you, speak with you; then--then he will go away for ever. Now," Sholto went on, "'tis for you to decide. If you see him, there is naught to prevent his going; only--I must tell you, it is my duty as a priest, though you need but little caution from me--remember this man loves you now as much as he ever loved you, and--you are another man's wife."

Fane had left the room when the others drew apart--perhaps he guessed that Sholto had some message for his daughter--so that now they could speak at ease. For a moment Lady Fordingbridge seemed lost in thought--as though struggling between conflicting desires, the one to see again the man she loved, the other to know that he was safe, a third to remember that, however hateful to her Lord Fordingbridge was, she was still his wife. Then suddenly she said:

"You are right. 'Tis best we should not meet. Yet--yet--you say he will not quit England without our doing so."

"I fear not. And time is precious. Remember, though the names are not in the list, they may be at any moment. Or he, or both of them, may be denounced. Many of Cumberland's and Cope's regiments are back in London; they may be recognised by some against whom they fought, and, if that were the case, their chance of existence would be small. Kitty, if you are strong enough, as you should be, 'tis almost best that you should see him. Then he can go in peace."

"I am strong enough," she replied. "Have no fear of me; I have none of myself. Yet, how can it be? He cannot come here-I cannot go to him. But oh! to hear from his own lips that he forgave me, that he would think of me sometimes without bitterness."

"What answer shall I give him, then?"

"Does he await one?"

"Eagerly. If you bade him meet you in George's Throne-room he would contrive to be there."

"When do you see him again?" she asked.

"To-night, after dark."

"So be it. To-night you shall bear him a message from me. Now, leave me a little while. At dinner we will meet again. Then, then, I will ask you to carry a note to him."

When she was alone she went to the standish and, taking pens and paper, wrote two notes. The first was easily despatched; it simply told Lady Belrose she would accompany her and her party to Vauxhall on the following night. The next took longer, caused her much deliberation.

She pined to see the man whom in her own heart she accused herself of having deceived; yet she dreaded the hour when she should stand face to face with him. Alas! how could she look into his eyes-eyes that she feared would look back but sternly upon her-and plead for forgiveness, remembering that, had she but trusted and believed in him, they who now met as strangers would by this time have been man and wife a twelvemonth. Yet, it was not only to gratify her own desire to once more touch his hand and hear his voice, even though that voice should reproach her, that she desired to see him. It was also to save him, since he would leave the country, he had said, after they had once met.

So, at last, she decided it should be so. She would see him once, would take his pardon from his own lips-Sholto had said that he forgave her-and then she would bid him go and consult nothing but his own safety and that of his true and tried friend.

She took the pen in her hand again and drew the paper towards her, but, at first, she knew not what to say. In the previous letter she had sent him the words and ideas had come easily enough, for then she was writing a straightforward narrative with, in it, a sad plea for forgiveness. But now it was different. She was making an assignation with a man she had once loved-once! – she was deceiving her husband.

"Bah!" she said, as this thought rose to her mind. "If 'tis deception let it be so. Out of his deceit to me is borne mine to him."

Whereon once more she pondered a moment on what she should say, and then wrote:

"Lady Fordingbridge will be at the masquerade at Vauxhall to-morrow night. May she hope she will hear none but gentle words there?"

That was all.

CHAPTER VII

"THE BIRD THAT DANCED THE RIGADOON."

The rejoicings into which London broke out when, at last, the Scottish rebellion was decisively crushed caused Ranelagh and Vauxhall Gardens to be, perhaps, more frequented in the warm spring and summer of 1746 than they had ever been previously. Indeed, after the fright which had fallen upon the capital when the news came that the Highland troops were at Derby and within four days' march of London, it was not very astonishing that the inhabitants should, on the removal of that terror, give themselves up to wholesale amusement. Six months before, imminent ruin stared them in the face; the Bank of England, by that time regarded as being almost as stable an institution as it is now considered, had only escaped closing its doors by the oft-quoted artifice of paying the demands made on it in sixpences. Regiments engaged in foreign campaigns-Ligonier's Horse and Hawley's and Rich's Dragoons-had been hurried home from Williamstadt; Admiral Vernon and Commodores Boscawen and Smith were each at sea with a squadron looking for ships carrying the invaders; while fifty merchantmen, styled "armed cruisers," were patrolling the Channels round our shores. Also, as an outcome of the panic, the inhabitants of London had purchased for the army about to take the field against the Pretender, 12,000 pairs of breeches and the same number of pairs of woollen gloves, 12,000 shirts, 10,000 woollen caps and pairs of stockings, and 9,000 pairs of woollen spatterdashes; while, not to be outdone by the other citizens, the managers of the then existing London theatres offered to form the members of their various companies into volunteers attached to the City regiment.

But, ere the springtime had come, the invasion was over, the danger past. The young Duke of Cumberland, fresh from his triumphs in Flanders, had not only destroyed the rebel army, but had taken terrible and bloody vengeance upon all who had opposed him.[\[Note C\]](#) Therefore London-indeed, all England-slept again in safety at night, and with the arrival of summer had plunged with greater fervour than ever into all its usual enjoyments. Amongst the enjoyments of the former none were more popular than those of Ranelagh and Vauxhall Gardens, the latter being more generally known and spoken of at that period as the Spring Gardens. Here, on the warm evenings which May brought with it, until the fashionable world departed for its country seats, or for Bath, Epsom, or Tunbridge, went on one continual round of pleasures and festivities-one night a masquerade, another a concert, vocal and instrumental, where, among others, the mysterious Tenducci-whose sex was always matter of discussion-sang and warbled, sometimes in a man's voice, sometimes in a woman's; illuminations took place every evening, and, as they died out and the company departed, the nightingales might be heard singing in the neighbouring fields and groves.

It was on one of these warm May nights that the wherry which brought Lady Belrose's party from Pimlico Fields to the Spring Gardens arrived at the latter place, while, as the boat touched the shore, from the gardens might already be heard the orchestra playing. In the wherry sat, of course, Lady Belrose herself, a still young and still good-looking woman, who, being a widow, thought herself entitled to always have in attendance upon her some beau or other, and who, to-night, had brought two, one a young lad from Oxford, the other almost as young a man, Sir Charles Ames. By her side sat Lady Fordingbridge, whose plain evening frock contrasted somewhat strongly with that of her friend, who was arrayed in a gorgeous brocade silk, while one of her cavaliers carried over his arm a green velvet mantle laced with gold, in case the evening turned cold and she should have occasion for it.

"I protest," said her ladyship, as stepping ashore she put on her mask, in which she was copied by the others-"I protest the very sound of the fiddles squeaking makes me long for a dance. Mr. Fane," she said, turning to that gentleman, who formed the last member of the party, "am I to have you for a partner to-night?"

Fane bowed and responded politely that he only trusted his old age and stiff joints would not prevent him from making himself acceptable, on at least one occasion, to her ladyship; while Sir Charles Ames, turning to Kitty, desired to know if she would so far favour him as to give him a dance.

But Lady Belrose, who had already gathered from her friend that she only made one of the party because of a serious and grave interview which she anticipated having with a gentleman whom she might meet at the *fête*, here interposed and, in a few well-chosen words, gave the baronet to understand that to dance was not Lady Fordingbridge's desire that evening. "She is not well," she said, "and will simply be an onlooker. Meanwhile, doubtless I can find you a sufficiency of partners among other friends." To this the young man protested that there was no need for Lady Belrose to endeavour to find him partners among her friends, since, if she would but condescend to be his partner, he could not possibly desire any other, and so, with these interchanges of politeness, they entered the gardens.

On this particular night at Vauxhall-the opening masquerade of the season-the fashionable world, as well as those who, though not in that world themselves, loved to gaze on the happier beings who were of it, assembled in large numbers and in a variety of costumes. Scaramouches in their black dresses, toques and masks, with rush lances in their hands, mingled with dancing girls clad in the Turkish costumes still known in these days as "Roxanas," in memory of the infamous woman who had first worn this garb; shepherdesses walked arm-in-arm with men dressed as grave and reverend clergymen; assumed victims of the Inquisition, invested in the San Benito, pirouetted and twirled with brazen-faced and under-clad Iphigenias and Phrynes-for the world was none too modest in those days! – mock soldiers, knights and satyrs, harlequins, and men in wizard's garments danced and drank, laughed and shouted with milkmaids, nuns, and Joans of Arc. And to testify, perhaps, the fact that they had not forgotten the dangers through which the country had recently passed, and also, perhaps, to hurl one last taunt at their crushed and broken foes, many of the maskers had arrayed themselves in the garbs of their late enemies-for some strutted round and round the orchestra pavilion and banqueting room dressed as Highlanders or French officers, others as miserable Scotch peasants having in their hands flails and reaping hooks. Others, again, had even attempted to portray the character of the unhappy Charles Edward, now in hiding in the Scotch wilds, and, as they danced and sang or drank their glasses of ale and ate their twopenny slices of hung-beef, and endeavoured even by their conversation to ape what they imagined to be the Scotch dialect. At the same time, outside all this seething, painted, and bedizened crowd were many others of the better classes, such as those who formed Lady Belrose's party, or visitors of a similar degree, who contented themselves by concealing their identity with masks, vizards, and dominos, or with hoods and laces.

In a somewhat retired spot beneath where stood a noble statue of Handel, now nearing his last days, executed by Roubiliac, and at the back of which were a small wooded green and bosquet in which were many arbours, Lady Belrose and her friends sat down to watch the kaleidoscopic crowd. Here, Sir Charles Ames, summoning a waiter, bade him bring refreshments for the party-viz., some iced fruits and a flask of champagne-and they being partaken of, he invited her ladyship to honour him by becoming his partner in a *quadrille de contredanse*, a new style of dancing introduced into the French ballets a year or so before, and but just come over to London. This the sprightly lady accepted at once, having already perfected herself in the new divertissement under Duharnel's tuition; but, on her other cavalier desiring also the honour of Lady Fordingbridge's hand, Kitty refused, on the ground that she knew not the dance, and neither was she very well.

"I' faith, Kate," said Lady Belrose, as she shook her sack over her great balloon-shaped hoop and fastened her mask more tightly under her hood, "yet have you lost but little to-night. The quadrille is well enough in our own houses or on our country lawns; here, I protest, the noise, the dust, and the stench of the oil lamps, to say nothing of the unknown and, doubtless, unclean creatures with whom we rub shoulders and touch hands, do not recommend it overmuch. However, lead me to it, Sir Charles, since you will have it so," and in another moment she, with her partner and the others who formed the sets, were bowing and curtsying to each other.

Meanwhile Mr. Wynn, Lady Belrose's second string, having begged that he might be allowed to find a partner and himself join in a set, since Lady Fordingbridge was so obdurate (he, too, had been learning the new dance from Monsieur Duharnel), took himself off, so that Kitty and her father were left alone together. And now it was that she, after scanning each male figure that was "more than common tall," began to tremble a little in her limbs and to feel as though she were about to faint. For in that portion of the crowd which was not dancing and which still followed its leaders round and round the orchestra pavilion, thereby illustrating the words of Bloomfield, a poet of the period, who wrote:

First we traced the gay circle all round,
Ay-and then we went round it again-

she saw two forms that, she doubted not, were those for whom she looked-partly in eagerness, partly with nervousness.

These maskers did not walk side by side, but one behind the other, and, possibly, to ordinary onlookers would not have appeared to have any connection with each other. Yet Kitty knew very well that, inseparable in almost all else, they were now equally so. The first, who was the tallest, was clad in a costume, perhaps unique that night in the Spring Gardens, perhaps almost unique among the many costumes that have ever been assumed since first masquerades were invented. It was that of the headsman. Arrayed in the garb of that dismal functionary, a rusty black velvet suit, with the breeches and black woollen stockings to match, the masker might yet have failed to inform those who saw him of the character he wished to portray, had it not been for at least one other accessory. On his back, strapped across it, he carried the long, narrow-bladed axe used for decapitation, its handle fringed and tasselled with leathern thongs. Yet there were other tokens also of the part he represented. In a girdle round his waistcoat he bore a formidable knife having a blade a foot long and an inch and a half deep-the knife with which the doomsman finished his ghastly task if the axe failed to do its duty, as had too often happened. His mask, too, was not that of the ordinary reveller at such places as this, not a mask made ostensibly to conceal the features, yet, as often as not, revealing them almost as clearly as though it had not been assumed; instead, it was long and full, covering not only the eyes and the bridge of the nose, but also the whole of the upper part of the face, and leaving only visible the lower jaw and the two ends of a thick brown moustache that hung below it. Alone by that moustache would Kitty have known the wearer, if by no other sign. It had been pressed too often against her own lips for her to forget it! Yet, also, would she have known him without it. His companion, the man who followed after him, was not so conspicuous by his appearance. He, indeed, wrapped in a long brown woollen cloak which descended to his shoes and must have been more than warm on such an evening as this, with at his side a Scotch claymore, or broadsword, and on his head a Scotch bonnet-the mask, of course, being worn-passed among the crowd as an excellent representative of their now despised and fallen enemies. Yet, had that crowd known that amongst them stalked in reality one whose prowess had been terribly conspicuous when exhibited against their own soldiers, they might not have gazed as approvingly as they now did on Douglas Sholto.

As Kitty regarded these two figures-still trembling and feeling as though she were about to faint-she saw the eyes of the former one fix themselves upon her, and observed him hesitate for a moment ere continuing his course, then, in an instant, he went on again in the stream that continued to revolve round the orchestra pavilion. And she knew that a few moments would bring him again before her.

"Father," she said, nerving herself to that interview which she so ardently desired, yet which, womanlike, she almost feared now, "the green behind looks cool and inviting, especially now that the sun is gone and the lamps are lit. I will stroll down there awhile and take the air. Meanwhile, rest you here-there is some more champagne in the flask-and keep these seats until the others come back. The *contredanse* will be finished just now."

"Mind no gallant treats ye rudely, child. The crowd is none too orderly as regards some of its members. Ladies alone, and without a cavalier, may be roughly accosted."

"Have no fear," she said, "I can protect myself. I shall be back ere Lady Belrose takes part in the next dance," saying which she turned and went down the walk that led between the grassy lawn and the arbours, in each of which now twinkled the many-coloured oil lamps. And, as she so turned, that portion of the maskers in which was the man dressed as the headsman passed by the chair she had just vacated, and she knew that he must have seen her rise and move away.

A few moments later she was aware that such was the case. A heavy tread sounded behind her—she had now advanced considerably down the path and had almost reached a rustic copse, in which were two or three small arbours—another instant, and the voice she longed yet feared to hear, the voice that she thought trembled a little as it spoke, addressed her:

"Is Lady Fordingbridge not afraid to separate herself from her party thus?" she heard Bertie Elphinston say—surely his voice quivered as he spoke. "Or does pity prompt her to do so; pity for another?"

"Lady Fordingbridge," she replied, knowing that her own voice was not well under control, "has no fear of anyone, unless it be of those whom, all unwittingly, she has injured." Then, scarcely knowing what she said, or whether her words were intelligible, and feeling at a loss what else to say, she gazed up at him and exclaimed, "You come to these festivities in a strange garb, sir. Surely the executioner's is scarcely a suitable one for a night of rejoicing."

"Yet suitable to him who wears it. Perhaps 'tis best that I who may apprehend—"

"Oh, Mr. Elphinston!" she exclaimed suddenly, interrupting him, "it was not to hear such words as these that I came here to-night. You know why I have sought this meeting; have you nought to say to me but this?"

"Yes," he replied, "yes. But let us not stand here upon the path exposed to the gaze of all the crowd. Come, let us enter this arbour. We shall be unobserved there."

She followed him into the one by which they were standing, and—for she felt her limbs were trembling beneath her—sank on to a rustic bench. And he, standing above her, went on:

"The letter that you sent to me asked that I should pity and forgive you. Kate, we meet again, perhaps for the last time on earth; let me say at once, there is nothing for me to forgive. If fault there was, then it was mine. Let mine, too, be the blame. I should have told you that Elphinston of Glenbervy was about to marry Mademoiselle Baufremont. Yet, he had sworn me to silence, had bidden me, upon our distant kinsmanship, to hold my peace, had sought my assistance to enable him to wed the woman whom he loved. How could I disclose his secret even to you? How could I foresee that a scheming devil would turn so small a thing to so great an account?"

"But," she said, gazing up at him and noticing—for both had instinctively unmasked at the same time—how worn his face was, how, alas! in his brown hair there ran grey threads though he was still so young; "but why, to all those letters I sent, was no answer vouchsafed? I thought from one or from the other some reply must surely come. Have you forgotten how, for many years now, we four—Douglas and Archibald, you and I—had all been as brothers and sister—until—until," she broke off, and then continued: "how we had vowed that between us all there should be a link and bond of friendship that should be incessable?"

"I have forgotten nothing," he replied, "nothing. No word that was ever spoken between us, no vow, nor promise ever made."

Again the soft blue eyes were turned to him, imploringly it seemed; begging by their glance that he should spare her. And, ceasing to speak of his remembrance of the past, he continued: "Circumstances, strange though they were, prevented any one of us from receiving your letters—or from answering them in time. I was lying ill of Roman fever at the English College; Archibald Sholto was in Tuscany in the train of Charles Edward, Cardinal Aquaviva having provided their passports; Douglas was with De Roquefeuille, and received your letter only on his return to Paris, where it had

been sent back to him. Kate, in that stirring time, when the prince was passing from Rome to Picardy, was it strange no answer should come?"

"No, no," she replied. "No," and as she spoke she clasped both of her hands in her lap, and bent her head to hide her tears. Then she muttered, yet not so low but that he could hear her: "Had I but waited! but trusted!"

"It would have been best," he said very gently. And as he spoke, as though in mockery of their sad hearts, many of the maskers went by laughing and jesting, and the quadrille being finished the band was playing the merry old tune of "The Bird that danced the Rigadoon."

"You hear the air?" she said, looking up suddenly again. "You hear? Oh! my heart will break."

"Yes," he answered, "I hear."

CHAPTER VIII

"FORTUNE! AN UNRELENTING FOE TO LOVE."

That song in the old days in the Rue Trousse-Vache had been the air which Bertie Elphinston had whistled many a time to Kate to let her know that he was about to enter the "*salle d'escrime*," or to make her look out of the window and see the flowers he had brought her from his mother's garden in the suburbs. Also, on a Sunday morning early, he had often stood beneath the window of her room and had piped the "Rigadoon" to remind her that it was time for them to be away for their day's outing. For in those happy times-alas! but a year ago-these two fond, happy lovers had spent every Sabbath together and alone. Arm in arm the whole day; or, when the soft summer nights fell over the Bois de Boulogne, or the woods of St. Germain or the Forest of Fontainebleau, his arm round her waist and her soft fair head upon his shoulder, they had wandered together, taking a light meal here and there at any roadside *auberge* they happened on, and then both going back to supper, at her father's little house, where, as they had done all day, they talked of the future that was before them.

And now the future had come and they were parted for ever! No wonder that the old French song which had found its way to England grated harshly on their ears.

"Thank God, 'tis finished," he said, as the orchestra struck up a dance tune next. "For us, to our hearts, it awakens memories best left to slumber for ever." Then sitting down by her side on the rustic bench, he continued: "Kate, you wrote in your letter to me," and he touched his breast involuntarily as he spoke, so that she knew he bore it about him, "that there was private treachery to be feared. Is it to be feared from him?"

"Alas!" she whispered, "I almost dread 'tis so. He is not satisfied yet; he-

"He should be! He has all I wanted."

"To injure you," she continued, "would be, as he knows, the best way to strike at me."

"To strike at you?"

"Yes, to repay me for my scorn and contempt-my hate of him."

"You hate him!" he exclaimed.

"From the depths of my heart. How can it be otherwise? His treachery-when I learnt it-made me despise him; his conduct since has turned my contempt to hatred. Oh," she exclaimed, "it is awful, terrible for a woman to hate her husband! Yet what cause have I to do aught else? When he speaks-though I have long since ceased to reply to anything he says-his words are nothing but sneers and scorn; sometimes of you, sometimes of me. And he gloats over having separated us, of having taken your place, while at the same time he is so bitter against me that, if he dared, I believe he would kill me. Moreover, he fears your vengeance. That is another reason why, if he could betray you to the Government, he would."

"'Tis by betrayal alone that we can be injured," Bertie said, thoughtfully. "None of our names are known, nor in the proscribed list. Yet how can he do it? He it was who planned the attack upon the Fubbs² to be made when the Elector crossed from Holland; he who disseminated the tracts, nay, had them printed, counselling his taking off. He was worse than any-no honest Jacobite ever stooped to assassination! – and many of us know it."

"Be sure," she replied, "that what he could do would be done in secret; Bert-Mr. Elphinston, who is that man who has passed the arbour twice or more, and looks always so fixedly at you?"

"I know not," he replied, "yet he has been ever near Douglas and me-he and another man-since we entered the gardens. Perhaps a Government spy. Well, he can know nought of me."

² The remarkable name of one of the royal yachts of George II.

The man she had mentioned was a tall, stoutly-built individual, plainly enough clad in an old rusty black suit of broadcloth, patched black stockings and thick-soled shoes with rusty iron buckles upon them, and bore at his side a stout hanger. He might be a spy, it was true, but he might also have been anything else, a low follower of the worst creatures who infested the gardens, a gambling-hell tout, or a bagnio pimp. Yet his glance from under his vizard was keen and penetrating as it was fixed on them, but especially on Elphinston, each time he passed the summer house wherein they sat.

But now their conversation, which to both seemed all too short and to have left so much unsaid, was interrupted by the advent of Douglas Sholto, who came swiftly down the shell-strewn path, and, seeing them in the arbour, paused and entered at once.

"Kitty," he said, grasping her hand, "this is not the greeting I had intended to give you, though it's good to look upon your bonnie face again. But, Bertie, listen. We are watched, followed, perhaps known; indeed, I am sure of it. One of those fellows who have kept near to us, and whom we saw at Wandsworth as we set forth-I see the other down the path-spoke but now to three soldiers of the Coldstreams. Perhaps 'twas to identify us; you remember the First Battalion at Culloden," he added grimly; "perhaps to call on them for help. Bertie, we must be away at once."

"'Tis as I suspected," said Lady Fordingbridge, now pale as ashes and trembling from head to foot. "My words have too soon come true. How, how has he done it?"

"Farewell, Kate," said Bertie Elphinston, "we must, indeed, hasten if this is true. Yet first let me take you to your father and friends. Then," with a firm set look on his face, he said, "Douglas and I must see our way through this, if 'tis as he suspects. Come, Kate."

"No, no," she said, imploringly. "Wait not to think of me. Begone while there is yet time. Lose no moment. Farewell, farewell. We may meet again yet."

But ere another word could be said a fresh interruption occurred. From either end of the path that ran between the arbour and the lawn, both spies-for such they soon proclaimed themselves-advanced to where the others were; the first, the one of whom Kate had spoken, coming back from the end by the bosquet, the other from the platform where the orchestra and dancing were. And in the deepening twilight, for it was now almost dark, the three soldiers of the Coldstreams came too, followed by two others belonging to the "Old Buffs," a regiment also just brought back to London after Falkirk and Culloden. And behind these followed a small knot of visitors to the gardens who had gleaned that there was something unusual taking place, or about to do so.

"Your names," said the first man, who had kept watch over the movements of Elphinston, as he came close to the two comrades, while his own companion and the soldiers also drew very near, "are, if I mistake not, Bertie Elphinston and Douglas Sholto. Is that the case?"

"My friend," said the former, "I would bid you have a care how you ask persons unknown to you, and to whom you are unknown, what their names are. It is a somewhat perilous proceeding to take liberties with strangers thus."

"You are not persons unknown to me. I can give a full description of your actions during the last year, which would cause you to be torn limb from limb by the people in this garden. As it is, I require you to go with us to the nearest magistrate, where I shall swear an information against you, and-"

"By what process," asked Douglas Sholto, "do you propose to carry out your requirements? By your own efforts, perhaps?"

"By our own efforts, aided by those of five soldiers here, of several others now in the Spring Gardens, and by the general company herein assembled, if necessary. But come, sirs, we trifle time away. Will you come, or won't you?"

For answer Douglas Sholto dealt the man such a blow with his fist that he fell back shrieking that his jaw was broken; while his comrade, calling on the soldiers for aid in the name of the King against rebels who had fought at Culloden, hurled himself on Elphinston, with his sword drawn and in his hand. But the latter, drawing from his back the long lean-bladed axe, presented so formidable an appearance, that the other shrank back appalled, though he called on the soldiers still for assistance.

"Beware," said Elphinston, as he ranged himself by the side of his friend, "beware! We are not men to be played with, and, as sure as there's a heaven above, if any of you come within swing of my arm, I'll lop your heads off!"

"The hound fought at Culloden; I saw him there," said one of the Coldstreams. "By heavens, I'll attempt it on him if he had fifty axes," and so saying he sprang full at the young Scotchman. As he came, the latter might have cleft his head open from scalp to chin, but he was a soldier himself; and the other had not drawn the short sword he wore at his side ere he flew at him. Therefore, he only seized him by the throat as he would have seized a mad bull-dog that attacked him, and in a minute had hurled the fellow back among the others. But now all the soldiers as well as the two police agents had had time to draw their weapons, and seven gleaming blades were presented at the breasts of the two young men when a timely assistance arrived.

Sir Charles Ames burst through the crowd on the outskirts of the antagonists, his own bright court rapier flashing in the air, and following him came Mr. Wynn and Doyle Fane, also with their weapons drawn.

"For shame! For shame!" said Sir Charles. "Five great hulking soldiers and two others against two men. Put up your weapons, or we'll make you."

"Put up your own," said one of the Old Buffs; "they are rebels. Curse them! We have met before," and as he spoke he lunged full at the breast of Elphinston.

"Hoot!" said Fane, the spirit of the old swordsman, the old Irishman, aroused at this, "if it's for tilting, my boys, come along. It's a pretty dance I'll teach ye. There, now, look to that." And with the easiest twist of his wrist he parried the soldier's thrust at Elphinston, with another he had slit the sleeve of the man's uniform to the elbow, while a thin line of blood ran quickly out from his arm.

"My word," he continued, "I've always said the worst hands in the world with a sword were soldiers-of these present days. Your mother's broom handles would suit ye better," whereon he turned his point towards another.

Meanwhile Sir Charles Ames had placed himself by Bertie and Douglas, and had already exchanged several passes with the others, when, stepping back a moment into the arbour, he saw to his intense astonishment the figure of Kitty, she being in a swoon, and consequently unconscious.

"Lady Fordingbridge," he murmured, "Lady Fordingbridge. So, so! A little assignation with our rebel friends. Humph! I'd scarce have thought it of her. However, 'tis no affair of mine, and as she's Molly Belrose's friend, why, I must be the same to her friends." Whereon he again took his place alongside the two Jacobites and assisted at keeping the others at bay.

But the crowd still augmented in their neighbourhood, and while the soldiers-all of whom had of late fought in Flanders as well as Scotland, and were as fierce as their chief, Cumberland-were pressing the others hardy, some of the livelier masqueraders began to feel disposed to assist one side or another. Therefore, 'twas almost a riot that now prevailed in the Spring Gardens; and as among the company there were numerous other Jacobites, who, although they had probably not been out with Charles Stuart, were very keen in their sympathies with his cause, they took the opportunity of joining the fracas on their own account and of breaking the heads of several Hanoverian supporters. And also, gathering that the scene arose from the attempted apprehension of two of their own leaning, they gradually directed their way towards the arbour where the affray had begun-summarily knocking down or tripping up all who opposed them, so that the next morning many shopboys, city clerks, and respectable city puts themselves appeared at their places of business with broken crowns, bruised faces, and black eyes.

At present nothing serious had occurred beyond a few surface wounds given on either side; the soldiers and police agents were no match for the five skilful swordsmen to whom they were opposed, and the latter refrained from shedding the blood of men beneath them.

"Yet," said Sir Charles Ames to Mr. Wynn, while he wiped his face with his lace-embroidered handkerchief, "if the canaille do not desist soon I must pink one for the sake of my gentility. Wynn, where is Lady Belrose during this pleasing interlude?"

"Safe in the supper room," replied the young beau. "She is very well. I saw to that. Ames, who are these stalwart Highlanders whose cause we espouse?"

"The devil himself only knows," replied the worldly exquisite. "Ha! would you?" to one of the Coldstreams as he tried a pass at him. "Go home, my man, go home. I know your colonel; you shall be whipped for this. Yet," he whispered to his friend, "I do think these knocks are *pour les beaux yeux de madame*. What's that shout?"

"The constables, I imagine."

"The more the merrier! Ha! Wynn, we are borne along the path. The deuce take it, we have lost the shelter of the arbour!"

"For Heaven's sake," whispered Elphinston to the baronet, "as I see you are a gentleman, go back and look to Lady Fordingbridge. I cannot see her after to-night-sir, on your honour, tell her 'All is well.' She will understand."

"On my honour, I will," the baronet replied. "London will be too hot for you-perhaps for me, too. I do fear I'm a little of a Stuart myself; but listen, my aunt, Lady Ames, lives at Kensington, by the Gravel Pits; direct a letter to-to the fair one, under cover to my respected relative, and she shall get it. Oh, no thanks, I beg; I have my own *affaires de cœur*. I know, I know-"

And now the *mêlée* became more general, and gradually the partisans of both sides were borne asunder, two only keeping together, Bertie and Douglas.

"Where is Fane?" whispered the former.

"With Kate. I saw him in the bower with her. Heaven grant-"

He was interrupted by a man who at this moment ranged himself alongside them both, and who muttered, "Follow me, through the copse here. There is an exit by which you can escape from the gardens. Back yourselves to the copse as easily as you can, then watch my movements."

"To leave her thus is impossible!" exclaimed Elphinston. "I cannot."

"Tush, nonsense!" replied Sholto, "her father is with her and our dandy friends by now. Come, come, we can do better for her and all of us by escaping than by being taken."

"But Fane; they will arrest him."

"If they do he has his answer. He was protecting his daughter. And her position will assure his. Come, Bertie, come. Once outside, we can seek new lodgings in another part of the town; put on new disguises. Come."

All the time this colloquy had taken place they had still been struggling with others, though by now the affray had lost the sanguinary character it once threatened to possess. The soldiers and the agents were separated from them by a mass of people, among whom were many of their sympathisers; but none were using deadly weapons, rather preferring buffeting and hustling than aught else. So that, as the tall man entered another summer house and, dragging Sholto and Elphinston after him, shut a door which guarded its entrance, the thing was done so quickly that the two originals of the disturbance had disappeared in the darkness ere they were missed.

"This," said the man, "is a private entrance and exit, reserved for some very high and mighty personages whom I need not mention. They are good patrons of ours-I am the proprietor's, Mr. Jonathan Tyers, chief subordinate. Also a Scotchman like yourselves, or by now you would probably have been taken. Hark to them!"

The people were howling outside, "Down with the rebels!" "Find the Culloden dogs and cut them to pieces!" etc., the soldiers' voices being heard the loudest of all, while in response many shouted, "Charlie Stuart for aye!" and some bolder spirits shrieked a then well-known song, "The Restoration," which had been originally composed in honour of the return of Charles II.

"Come," said the tall man, "come, your safety is here." Wherewith he opened another door in the back of the arbour and showed them a quiet leafy lane which was entirely deserted. "There," he continued, "is your way. Follow the grove in this direction, and 'twill bring you to Kennington," and he pointed south; "the other leads to the river. Fare ye well, and if you are both wise, quit London as soon as you have changed your garments. For myself I must go round to the front entrance; if I go back through the gardens I may be called to account by the mob for your escape."

Upon which, and not waiting for his countrymen's thanks, he took himself off quickly.

"Which way now, Bertie?" asked Douglas. "Wandsworth is done with. Where to?"

"To Kensington. I, at least, must watch the square to see if Kate gets safe back to her home."

"Then we go together. Only, what of these accursed clothes? We must make shift to get rid of them."

CHAPTER IX

DENOUNCED

To put the river between them and their late antagonists and would-be captors naturally occurred to the young men as their wisest plan, although as, urged by Douglas, the other strode towards it, he more than once reproached himself for coming away and leaving Lady Fordingbridge behind. Nor could any words uttered by his friend persuade him to regard his departure as anything else than pusillanimous.

"She went there to meet me; to see me once again," he repeated, "and I have left her to Heaven knows what peril. These men know me-know us-well enough for what we are. 'Tis not difficult to guess whence comes their knowledge! They may accuse her of being a rebel, too. Oh! Kate, Kate! what will be the end of it all; what the finish of our wrecked and ruined lives?"

"No harm can come to her, I tell you," replied his comrade. "Why, man, heart up! Has not the fox, Fordingbridge, made his peace with George; how shall they arrest his wife or her father as rebels? Tush! 'tis not to be thought on. Come, fling away as much of this disguise as possible. We near the end of the lane, and I can hear the shouts of the watermen to their fares; and still we must go a mile or two higher up and take boat ourselves."

As he spoke he discarded his own woollen cloak, and tossed it over a high fence into the grounds of a country house by which they were now passing, while, slowly enough, for his heart was sore within him, Bertie imitated his actions. The axe (which, like the principal part of his dress, had been hired from a costumer or fashioner—a class of tradesmen more common even in those days than these, since fancy dresses were greatly in demand for the masques, *ridottos al fresco*, and fancy dress balls which took place so frequently) had been lost in the latter part of the riot, and now he discarded also the peculiar mask he had worn, producing from his pocket the ordinary vizard used at such entertainments, and which the forethought of Douglas had induced him to bring. For the rest, his clothes would attract no attention. They were suitable either to a man whose circumstances did not permit of his wearing velvet, silk, or fine broadcloth, or to one who had assumed the simple disguise of a superior workingman. The headsman's knife, however, he did not discard, but slipped up his sleeve, and Douglas retained his sword.

And now they drew near to the end of the lane, when, to their satisfaction, they perceived an alley running out of it and parallel to the course of the river, as they supposed, by the aid of which they might be enabled to follow its course for some distance without coming out on to the bank where, at this moment, there would be many persons from the garden taking boat to the other side.

"Fortune favours us up to now," exclaimed Sholto to his moody companion, as they turned into this smaller lane; "Heaven grant it may continue to do so!" Then, changing the subject, he said, "Bertie, lad, who do you think set those bloodhounds on us? 'Twas some one who knew of our hiding-hole. As we remarked, we were followed from Wandsworth."

"Who!" said Elphinston, stopping to look in his friend's face and peering at him under the light of the stars, "who, but one? The man whom I have to kill; whom I am ordained to kill sooner or later."

"You will kill him?" the other asked, stopping also.

"As a dog, when next I see him—or, no, not as a dog, for that is a creature faithful and true, and cannot conceive treachery—but as some poisonous, devilish thing, adder or snake, that stings us to the death when least we expect the blow. Why," he asked, pausing, "do you shudder?"

"I know not," replied Douglas; "yet I have done so more than once when his name has been mentioned. I know not why," he repeated, "unless I am fey."

"Fey! fey!" echoed Elphinston. "Let him be fey! He should be! It is predestined; his fate at my hands is near. He cannot avoid it."

As they ceased speaking they continued on their way until, at last, the lane opened on to a dreary waste of fields and marshes which stretched towards the very places which they most desired to avoid, Battersea and Wandsworth; while opposite to them, on the other side of the river, were the equally dreary marshes known as Tothill and Pimlico Fields.

"I' faith," said Douglas, as his eye roamed over all this extent of barrenness, which was more apparent than it would otherwise have been owing to the late rising of the moon, now near its full, "I' faith, we're atwixt the devil and the deep sea-or, so to speak, the river. How are we to cross; or shall we go back and over the bridge at Westminster?"

"Nay," replied Bertie; "as we came down the lane I saw a house to the right of us; doubtless 'tis to that the lane belongs. Now, 'tis certain there must be boats somewhere. Let us down to the shore and see. Hark! there is the clock of Chelsea Church striking. The west wind brings the sound across the marshes. Ha! 'tis eleven of the clock. Come, let us waste no time."

They turned therefore down to the river's bank, walking as quietly as possible so that their feet should make no more noise than necessary on the stones and shingle, for it was now low tide; and then, to their great joy, they saw drawn up by the water's edge a small wherry in which sat a man, and by his side he had a lantern that glimmered brightly in the night.

"Friend," said Elphinston, "we have missed our way after leaving the Spring Gardens; can you put across the river? We will pay you for your trouble."

The fellow looked at them civilly enough, then he said, "Yes, so that you waste no time. I have business here which I may not leave for more than a quarter of an hour. Wilt give me a crown to ferry you across?"

"The price is somewhat high," said Douglas. "Yet, since we would not sleep in these marshes all night, nor retrace our steps to Westminster Bridge, we'll do it."

"In with you, then," replied the man, "yet, first give me the crown; I have been deceived by dissolute maskers ere now." Then, when he had received the money, he said he supposed Ranelagh or the New Chelsea Waterworks³ would do very well. "Aye," said Douglas, "they will do," whereupon, having taken their seats, the man briskly ferried them across.

Yet, as they traversed the river, the fear sprang into their hearts that they had been tracked from Vauxhall, that even yet they were not safe from pursuit. For scarcely were they half way across the stream when the man's lantern, which he had left on the bank-perhaps as a signal-was violently waved about in the air by some hand, while a couple of torches were also seen flickering near it and voices were heard calling to him.

"Ay! ay!" the man bellowed back; "ay! ay! What! may I not earn a crown while you do your dirty work? In good time. In good time," he roared still louder, in response to further calls from the bank, while he pulled more lustily than before towards the north shore.

"What is it?" asked Elphinston. "Who are they who seem so impatient for your services?"

"A pack of fools," the man replied. "Young sprigs of fashion who have been quarrelling there," nodding towards Ranelagh Gardens, to which they were now close, "quarrelling over their wine and their women, I do guess, and two of them have crossed over to measure the length of their swords. Well, well; if one's left on the grass I'll be there pretty soon to see what pickings there are in his pockets. 'Tis the fools that provide the wise men's feasts," whereon this philosopher pulled his boat to the bank, set the young men ashore, and, a moment later, was quickly pulling away back to the duelling party.

Ranelagh itself was shut up as they stepped ashore, all its lights were out and the hackney coachmen and chairmen gone with their last fares; and of that night's entertainment-which was sure to have been a great one in rivalry to its neighbour and opponent at Vauxhall-nothing was left but the shouting figures of those on the other bank, and, perhaps, a dead man on the grass of the marshes,

³ Inaugurated 1724.

with a sword-thrust through his lungs and his wide-staring eyes gazing up at the moon. It seemed, therefore, that they must walk to Kensington, since no conveyance was to be found here.

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