

YONGE

CHARLOTTE

MARY

THE CAGED LION

Charlotte Yonge
The Caged Lion

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Содержание

PREFACE	5
CHAPTER I: THE GUEST OF GLENUSKIE	7
CHAPTER II: THE RESCUE OF COLDINGHAM	15
CHAPTER III: HAL	23
CHAPTER IV: THE TIDINGS OF BEAUGÉ	31
CHAPTER V: WHITTINGTON S FEAST	40
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	43

Charlotte M. Yonge

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PREFACE

When the venture has been made of dealing with historical events and characters, it always seems fair towards the reader to avow what liberties have been taken, and how much of the sketch is founded on history. In the present case, it is scarcely necessary to do more than refer to the almost unique relations that subsisted between Henry V. and his prisoner, James I. of Scotland; who lived with him throughout his reign on the terms of friend rather than of captive, and was absolutely sheltered by this imprisonment throughout his nonage and early youth from the frightful violence and presumption of the nobles of his kingdom.

James's expedition to Scotland is wholly imaginary, though there appears to have been space for it during Henry's progress to the North to pay his devotions at Beverley Minster. The hero of the story is likewise invention, though, as Froissart ascribes to King Robert II. 'eleven sons who loved arms,' Malcolm may well be supposed to be the son of one of those unaccounted for in the pedigrees of Stewart. The same may be said of Esclairmonde. There were plenty of Luxemburghs in the Low Countries, but the individual is not to be identified. Readers of Tyler's 'Henry V.,' of Agnes Strickland's 'Queens,' Tytler's 'Scotland,' and Barante's 'Histoire de Bourgogne' will be at no loss for the origin of all I have ventured to say of the really historical personages. Mr. Fox Bourne's 'English Merchants' furnished the tradition respecting Whittington. I am afraid the knighthood was really conferred on Henry's first return to England, after the battle of Agincourt; but human—or at least story-telling—nature could not resist an anachronism of a few years for such a story. The only other wilful alteration of a matter of time is with regard to the Duke of Burgundy's interview with Henry. At the time of Henry's last stay at Paris the Duke was attending the death-bed of his wife, Michelle of France, but he had been several times in the King's camp at the siege of Meaux.

Another alteration of fact is that Ralf Percy, instead of being second son of Hotspur, should have been Henry Percy, son of Hotspur's brother Ralf; but the name would have been so confusing that it was thought better to set Dugdale at defiance and consider the reader's convenience. Alice Montagu, though her name sounds as if it came out of the most commonplace novelist's repertory, was a veritable personage—the heiress of the brave line of Montacute, or Montagu; daughter to the Earl of Salisbury who was killed at the siege of Orleans; wife to the Earl of the same title (in her right) who won the battle of Blore Heath and was beheaded at Wakefield; and mother to Earl Warwick the King-maker, the Marquis of Montagu, and George Nevil, Archbishop of York. As nothing is known of her but her name, I have ventured to make use of the blank.

For Jaqueline of Hainault, and her pranks, they are to be found in Monstrelet of old, and now in Barante; though justice to her and Queen Isabeau compels me to state that the incident of the ring is wholly fictitious. Of the trial of Walter Stewart no record is preserved save that he was accused of '*roborica*.' James Kennedy was the first great benefactor to learning in Scotland, and founder of her earliest University, having been himself educated at Paris.

The Abbey of Coldingham is described from a local compilation of the early part of the century, with an account of the history of that grand old foundation, and the struggle for appointments between the parent house at Durham and the Scottish Government. Priors Akefield and Drax are historical, and as the latter really did commission a body of moss-troopers to divert an instalment of King James's ransom into his own private coffers, I do not think I can have done him much injustice. As the nunnery of St. Abbs has gone bodily into the sea, I have been the less constrained by the inconvenient action of fact upon fiction. And for the Hospital of St. Katharine's-by-the-Tower, its history is to be found

in Stowe's 'Survey of London,' and likewise in the evidence before the Parliamentary Commission, which shows what it was intended by Queen Philippa to have been to the river-side population, and what it might have been had such intentions been understood and acted on—nay, what it may yet become, since the foundation remains intact, although the building has been removed.

C. M. YONGE.

November 24, 1869.

CHAPTER I: THE GUEST OF GLENUSKIE

A master hand has so often described the glens and ravines of Scotland, that it seems vain and presumptuous to meddle with them; and yet we must ask our readers to figure to themselves a sharp cleft sloping downwards to a brawling mountain stream, the sides scattered with gray rocks of every imaginable size, interspersed here and there with heather, gorse, or furze. Just in the widest part of the valley, a sort of platform of rock jutted out from the hill-side, and afforded a station for one of those tall, narrow, grim-looking fastnesses that were the strength of Scotland, as well as her bane.

Either by nature or art, the rock had been scarped away on three sides, so that the walls of the castle rose sheer from the steep descent, except where the platform was connected with the mountain side by, as it were, an isthmus joining the peninsula to the main rock; and even this isthmus, a narrow ridge of rock just wide enough for the passage of a single horse, had been cut through, no doubt with great labour, and rendered impassable, except by the lowering of a drawbridge. Glenuskie Castle was thus nearly impregnable, so long as it was supplied with water, and for this all possible provision had been made, by guiding a stream into the court.

The castle was necessarily narrow and confined; its massive walls took up much even of the narrow space that the rock afforded; but it had been so piled up that it seemed as though the builders wished to make height compensate for straitness. There was, too, an unusual amount of grace, both in the outline of the gateway with its mighty flanking towers, and of the lofty donjon tower, that shot up like a great finger above the Massy More, as the main building was commonly called by the inhabitants of Glenuskie.

Wondrous as were the walls, and deep-set as were the arches, they had all that peculiar slenderness of contour that Scottish taste seemed to have learnt from France; and a little more space was gained at the top, both of the gateway towers and the donjon, by a projecting cornice of beautifully vaulted arches supporting a battlement, that gave the building a crowned look. On the topmost tower was of course planted the ensign of the owner, and that ensign was no other than the regal ruddy Lion of Scotland, ramping on his gold field within his tressure fiery and counter flory, but surmounted by a label divided into twelve, and placed upon a pen-noncel, or triangular piece of silk. The eyes of the early fifteenth century easily deciphered such hieroglyphics as these, which to every one with the least tincture of 'the noble science' indicated that the owner of the castle was of royal Stewart blood, but of a younger branch, and not yet admitted to the rank of knighthood.

The early spring of the year 1421 was bleak and dreary in that wild lonely vale, and large was the fire burning on the hearth in the castle hall, in the full warmth of which there sat, with a light blue cloth cloak drawn tightly round him, a tall old man, of the giant mould of Scotland, and with a massive thoughtful brow, whose grand form was rendered visible by the absence of hair, only a few remnants of yellow locks mixed with silver floating from his temples to mingle with his magnificent white beard. A small blue bonnet, with a short eagle feather, fastened with a brooch of river pearl, was held in the hands that were clasped over his face, as, bending down in his chair, he murmured through his white beard, 'Have mercy, good Lord, have mercy on the land. Have mercy on my son,—and guard him when he goes out and when he comes in. Have mercy on the children I have toiled for, and teach me to judge and act for them aright in these sore straits; and above all, have mercy on our King, break his fetters, and send him home to be the healer of his land, the avenger of her cruel wrongs.'

So absorbed was the old man that he never heard the step that came across the hall. It was a slightly unequal step, but was carefully hushed at entrance, as if supposing the old man asleep; and at a slow pace the new-comer crossed the hall to the chimney, where he stood by the fire, warming himself and looking wistfully at the old Knight.

He was wrapped in a plaid, black and white, which increased the gray appearance of the pale sallow face and sad expression of the wearer, a boy of about seventeen, with soft pensive dark eyes

and a sickly complexion, with that peculiar wistful cast of countenance that is apt to accompany deformity, though there was no actual malformation apparent, unless such might be reckoned the slight halt in the gait, and the small stature of the lad, who was no taller than many boys of twelve or fourteen. But there was a depth of melancholy in those dark brown eyes, that went far into the heart of any one who had the power to be touched with their yearning, appealing, almost piteous gaze, as though their owner had come into a world that was much too hard for him, and were looking out in bewilderment and entreaty for some haven of peace.

He had stood for some minutes looking thoughtfully into the fire, and the sadness of his expression ever deepening, before the old man raised his face, and said, 'You here, Malcolm? where are the others?'

'Patie and Lily are still on the turret-top, fair Uncle,' returned the boy. 'It was so cold;' and he shivered again, and seemed as though he would creep into the fire.

'And the reek?' asked the uncle.

'There is another reek broken out farther west,' replied Malcolm. 'Patie is sure now that it is as you deemed, Uncle; that it is a cattle-lifting from Badenoch.'

'Heaven help them!' sighed the old man, again folding his hands in prayer. 'How long, O Lord, how long?'

Malcolm took up the appeal of the Psalm, repeating it in Latin, but with none the less fervency; that Psalm that has ever since David's time served as the agonized voice of hearts hot-burning at the sight of wrong.

'Ah yes,' he ended, 'there is nothing else for it! Uncle, this was wherefore I came. It was to speak to you of my purpose.'

'The old purpose, Malcolm? Nay, that hath been answered before.'

'But listen, listen, dear Uncle. I have not spoken of it for a full year now. So that you cannot say it is the caresses of the good monks. No, nor the rude sayings of the Master of Albany,' he added, colouring at a look of his uncle. 'You bade me say no more till I be of full age; nor would I, save that I were safe lodged in an abbey; then might Patrick and Lily be wedded, and he not have to leave us and seek his fortune far away in France; and in Patie's hands and leading, my vassals might be safe; but what could the doited helpless cripple do?' he added, the colour rising hotly to his cheek with pain and shame. 'Oh, Sir, let me but save my soul, and find peace in Coldingham!'

'My poor bairn,' said his uncle, laying a kind hand upon him, as in his eagerness he knelt on one knee beside the chair, 'it must not be. It is true that the Regent and his sons would willingly see you in a cloister. Nay, that unmanly jeer of Walter Stewart's was, I verily believe, meant to drive you thither. But were you there, then would poor Lilius become a prize worth having, and the only question would be, whether Walter of Albany, or Robert of Athole, or any of the rest of them, should tear her away to be the lady of their fierce ungodly households.'

'You could give her to Patrick, Uncle.'

'No, Malcolm, that were not consistent with mine honour, or oaths to the King and State. You living, and Laird of Glenuskie, Lilius is a mere younger sister, whom you may give in marriage as you will; but were you dead to the world, under a cowl, then the Lady of Glenuskie, a king's grandchild, may not be disposed of, save by her royal kinsman, or by those who, woe worth the day! stand in his place. I were no better than yon Wolf of Badenoch or the Master of Albany, did I steal a march on the Regent, and give the poor lassie to my own son!'

'And so Lilius must pine, and Patrick wander off to the weary French war,' sighed Malcolm; 'and I must be scorned by my cousins whenever the House of Stewart meets together; and must strive with these fierce cruel men, that will ever be too hard for me when Patie is gone.' His eyes filled with tears as he continued, 'Ah! that fair chapel, with the sweet chant of the choir, the green smooth-shaven quadrangle, the calm cloister walk; there, there alone is rest. There, one ceases to be a prey and a laughing-stock; there, one sees no more bloodshed and spulzie; there, one need not be forced

to treachery or violence. Oh, Uncle! my very soul is sick for Coldingham. How many years will it be ere I can myself bestow my sister on Patie, and hide my head in peace!

Before his uncle had done more than answer, 'Nay, nay, Malcolm, these are no words for the oe of Bruce; you are born to dare as well as to suffer,' there was an approach of footsteps, and two young people entered the hall; the first a girl, with a family likeness to Malcolm, but tall, upright, beautiful, and with the rich colouring of perfect health, her plaid still hanging in a loose swelling hood round her brilliant face and dark hair, snooded with a crimson ribbon and diamond clasp; the other, a knightly young man, of stately height and robust limbs, keen bright blue eyes and amber hair and beard, moving with the ease and grace that showed his training in the highest school of chivalry.

'Good Uncle,' cried the maiden in eager excitement, 'there is a guest coming. He has just turned over the brae side, and can be coming nowhere but here.'

'A guest!' cried both Malcolm and the elder knight, 'of what kind, Lily?'

'A knight—a knight in bright steel, and with three attendants,' said Liliass; 'one of Patrick's French comrades, say I, by the grace of his riding.'

'Not a message from the Regent, I trust,' sighed Malcolm. 'Patie, oh do not lower the drawbridge, till we hear whether it be friend or foe.'

'Nay, Malcolm, 'tis well none save friends heard that,' said Patrick. 'When shall we make a brave man of you?'

'Nevertheless, Patie,' said the old gentleman, 'though I had rather the caution had come from the eldest rather than the youngest head among us, parley as much as may serve with honour and courtesy ere opening the gate to the stranger. Hark, there is his bugle.'

A certain look of nervous terror passed over young Malcolm's face, while his sister watched full of animation and curiosity, as one to whom excitement of any kind could hardly come amiss, exclaiming, as she looked from the window, 'Fear not, most prudent Malcolm; Father Ninian is with him: Father Ninian must have invited him.'

'Strange,' muttered Patrick, 'that Father Ninian should be picking up and bringing home stray wandering land-loupers;' and with an anxious glance at Liliass, he went forward unwillingly to perform those duties of hospitality which had become necessary, since the presence of the castle chaplain was a voucher for the guest. The drawbridge had already been lowered, and the new-comer was crossing it upon a powerful black steed, guided by Father Ninian upon his rough mountain pony, on which he had shortly before left the castle, to attend at a Church festival held at Coldingham.

The chaplain was a wise, prudent, and much-respected man; nevertheless, young Sir Patrick Drummond felt little esteem for his prudence in displaying one at least of the treasures of the castle to the knight on the black horse. The stranger was a very tall man, of robust and stalwart make, apparently aged about seven or eight and twenty years, clad in steel armour, enamelled so as to have a burnished blue appearance; but the vizor of the helmet was raised, and the face beneath it was a manly open face, thoroughly Scottish in its forms, but very handsome, and with short dark auburn hair, and eyes of the same peculiar tint, glancing with a light that once seen could never be forgotten; and the bearing was such, that Patrick at once growled to himself, 'One of our haughty loons, brimful of *outré cuidance*; and yet how coolly he bears it off. If he looks to find us his humble servants, he will find himself mistaken, I trow.'

'Sir Patrick,' said Father Ninian, who was by this time close to him, 'let me present to you Sir James Stewart, a captive knight who is come to collect his ransom. I fell in with him on the road, and as his road lay with mine, I made bold to assure him of a welcome from your honoured father and Lord Malcolm.'

Patrick's face cleared. It was no grace or beauty that he feared in any stranger, but the sheer might and unright that their Regency enabled the House of Albany to exercise over the orphans of the royal family, whose head was absent; and a captive knight could be no mischievous person. Still this might be only a specious pretence to impose on the chaplain, and gain admittance to the castle;

and Patrick was resolved to be well on his guard, though he replied courteously to the graceful bow with which the stranger greeted him, saying in a manly mellow voice and southern accent, 'I have been bold enough to presume on the good father's offer of hospitality, Sir.'

'You are welcome, Sir,' returned Patrick, taking the stranger's bridle that he might dismount; 'my father and my cousin will gladly further on his way a prisoner seeking freedom.'

'A captive may well be welcome, for the sake of one prisoner,' said his father, who had in the meantime come forward, and extended his hand to the knight, who took it, and uncovering his bright locks, respectfully said, 'I am in the presence of the noble Tutor of Glenuskie.'

'Even so, Sir,' returned Sir David Drummond, who was, in fact, as his nephew's guardian, usually known by this curious title; 'and you here see my wards, the Lord Malcolm and Lady Liliias.

Your knighthood will make allowances for the lad, he is but home-bred.' For while Liliias with stately grace responded to Sir James Stewart's courtly greeting, Malcolm bashfully made an awkward bow, and seemed ready to shrink within himself, as, indeed, the brutal jests of his rude cousins had made him dread and hate the eye of a stranger; and while the knight was led forward to the hall fire, he merely pressed up to the priest, and eagerly demanded under his breath, 'Have you brought me the book?' but Father Ninian had only time to nod, and sign that a volume was in his bosom, before old Sir David called out, 'What now, Malcolm, forgetting that your part is to come and disarm the knight who does you the honour to be your guest?' And Sir Patrick rather roughly pushed him forward, gruffly whispering, 'Leave not Lily to supply your lack of courtesy.'

Malcolm shambled forward, bewildered, as the keen auburn eye fell on him, and the cheery kindly voice said, 'Ha! a new book—a romance? Well may that drive out other thoughts.'

'Had he ears to hear such a whisper?' thought Malcolm, as he mumbled in the hoarse voice of bashful boyhood, 'Not a romance, Sir, but whatever the good fathers at Coldingham would lend me.'

'It is the "Itinerarium" of the blessed Adamnanus,' replied Father Ninian, producing from his bosom a parcel, apparently done up in many wrappers, a seal-skin above all.

'The "Itinerarium"!' exclaimed Sir James, 'methought I had heard of such a book. I have a friend in England who would give many a fair rose noble for a sight of it.'

'A friend in England!'—the words had a sinister sound to the audience, and while Malcolm jealously gathered up the book into his arms, the priest made cold answer, that the book was the property of the Monastery at Coldingham, and had only been lent to Lord Malcolm Stewart by special favour. The guest could not help smiling, and saying he was glad books were thus prized in Scotland; but at that moment, as the sunny look shone on his face, and he stood before the fire in the close suit of chamois leather which he wore under his armour, old Sir David exclaimed, 'Ha! never did I see such a likeness. Patie, you should be old enough to remember; do you not see it?'

'What should I see? Who is he like?' asked Patrick, surprised at his father's manner.

'Who?' whispered Sir David in a lowered voice; 'do you not see it? to the unhappy lad, the Duke of Rothsay.'

Patrick could not help smiling, for he had been scarcely seven years old at the time of the murder of the unfortunate Prince of Scotland; but a flush of colour rose into the face of the guest, and he shortly answered, 'So I have been told;' and then assuming a seat near Sir David, he entered into conversation with him upon the condition of Scotland at the period, inquiring into the state of many of the families and districts by name. Almost always there was but one answer—murder—harrying—foray; and when the question followed, 'What had the Regent done?' there was a shrug of the shoulders, and as often Sir James's face flushed with a dark red fire, and his hand clenched at the hilt of the sword by his side.

'And is there not a man in Scotland left to strike for the right?' he demanded at last; 'cannot nobles, clergy, and burghers, band themselves in parliament to put down Albany and his bloody house, and recall their true head?'

‘They love to have it so,’ returned Sir David sadly. ‘United, they might be strong enough; but each knows that his fellow, Douglas, Lennox, March, or Mar, would be ready to play the same game as Albany; and to raise a rival none will stir.’

‘And so,’ proceeded Sir James, bitterly, ‘the manhood of Scotland goes forth to waste itself in an empty foreign war, merely to keep France in as wretched a state of misrule as itself.’

‘Nay, nay, Sir,’ cried Patrick angrily, ‘it is to save an ancient ally from the tyranny of our foulest foe. It is the only place where a Scotsman can seek his fortune with honour, and without staining his soul with foul deeds. Bring our King home, and every sword shall be at his service.’

‘What, when they have all been lavished on the crazy Frenchman?’ said Sir James.

‘No, Sir,’ said Patrick, rising in his vehemence; ‘when they have been brightened there by honourable warfare, not tarnished by home barbarities.’

‘He speaks truly,’ said Sir David; ‘and though it will go to my heart to part with the lad, yet may I not say a word to detain him in a land where the contagion of violence can scarce be escaped by a brave man.’

Sir James gave a deep sigh as of pain, but as if to hinder its being remarked, promptly answered, ‘That may be; but what is to be the lot of a land whose honest men desert her cause as too evil for them, and seek out another, that when seen closer is scarce less evil?’

‘How, Sir!’ cried Patrick; ‘you a prisoner of England, yet speaking against our noble French allies, so foully trampled on?’

‘I have lived long enough in England,’ returned Sir James, ‘to think that land happiest where law is strong enough to enforce peace and order.’

‘The coward loons!’ muttered Patrick, chiefly out of the spirit of opposition.

‘You have been long in England, Sir?’ said Lilius, hoping to direct the conversation into a more peaceful current.

‘Many years, fair lady,’ he replied, turning courteously to her; ‘I was taken when I was a mere lad, but I have had gentle captors, and no over harsh prison.’

‘And has no one ransomed you?’ she asked pitifully, as one much moved by a certain patience on his brow, and in his sweet full voice.

‘No one, lady. My uncle was but too willing that the heir should be kept aloof; and it is only now he is dead, that I have obtained leave from my friendly captor to come in search of my ransom.’

Lilius would have liked to know the amount, but it was not manners to ask, since the rate of ransom was the personal value of the knight; and her uncle put in the question, who was his keeper.

‘The Earl of Somerset,’ rather hastily answered Sir James; and then at once Lilius exclaimed, ‘Ah, Uncle, is not the King, too, in his charge?’ And then questions crowded on. ‘What like is the King? How brooks he his durance? What freedom hath he? What hope is there of his return? Can he brook to hear of his people’s wretchedness?’

This was the first question at which Sir James attempted to unclothe his hitherto smiling and amused lip. Then it quivered, and the dew glittered in his eyes as he answered, ‘Brook it! No indeed, lady. His heart burns within him at every cry that comes over the Border, and will well-nigh burst at what I have seen and heard! King Harry tells him that to send him home were but tossing him on the swords of the Albany. Better, better so, to die in one grapple for his country’s sake, than lie bound, hearing her bitter wails, and unable to stir for her redress!’ and as he dashed the indignant tear from his eyes, Patrick caught his hand.

‘Your heart is in the right place, friend,’ he said; ‘I look on you as an honest man and brother in arms from this moment.’

‘Tis a bargain,’ said Sir James, the smile returning, and his eyes again glistening as he wrung Sir Patrick’s hand. ‘When the hour comes for the true rescue of Scotland, we will strike together.’

‘And you will tell the King,’ added Patrick, ‘that here are true hearts, and I could find many more, only longing to fence him from the Albany swords, about which King Harry is so good as to fash himself.’

‘But what like is the King?’ asked Lilius eagerly. ‘Oh, I would fain see him. Is it true that he was the tallest man at King Harry’s sacring? more shame that he were there!’

‘He and I are much of a height, lady,’ returned the knight. ‘Maybe I may give you the justest notion of him by saying that I am said to be his very marrow.’

‘That explains your likeness to the poor Duke,’ said Sir David, satisfied; ‘and you too count kindred with our royal house, methinks?’

‘I am sprung from Walter the Stewart, so much I know; my lands lie Carrick-wards,’ said Sir James lightly, ‘but I have been a prisoner so long, that the pedigree of my house was never taught me, and I can make no figure in describing my own descent.’ And as though to put an end to the inquiry, he walked to the window, where Malcolm so soon as they had begun to talk of the misrule of Scotland, had ensconced himself in the window-seat with his new book, making the most of the failing light, and asked him whether the Monk of Iona equalled his expectations.

Malcolm was not easy to draw out at first, but it presently appeared that he had been baffled by a tough bit of Latinity. The knight looked, and readily expounded the sentence, so that all became plain; and then, as it was already too dark to pursue the study with comfort, he stood over the boy, talking to him of books and of poems, while the usually pale, listless, uninterested countenance responded by looks of eager delight and flushing colour.

It seemed as though each were equally pleased with the other: Sir James, at finding so much knowledge and understanding in a Scottish castle; and Malcolm, at, for the first time, meeting anything but contempt for his tastes from aught but an ecclesiastic.

Their talk continued till they were summoned to supper, which had been somewhat delayed to provide for the new-comers. It was a simple enough meal, suited to Lent, and was merely of dried fish, with barley bread and kail brose; but there were few other places in Scotland where it would have been served with so much of the refinement that Sir David Drummond and his late wife had learnt in France. A tablecloth and napkins, separate trenchers, and water for hand cleansing, were not always to be found in the houses of the nobles; and in fact, there were those who charged Malcolm’s delicacy and timidity on the *nisété* or folly of his effeminate education; the having the rushes on the floor frequently changed, the preference of lamps for pine torches, and the not keeping falcons, dogs, swine, and all, pell mell in the great hall.

Lilius sat between her uncle and his guest, looking so fair and bright that Patrick felt fresh accessions of angry jealousy, while the visitor talked as one able to report to the natives from another world, and that world the hateful England, which as a Scotsman he was bound to abhor. Had it been France, it had been endurable, but praise of English habits was mere disloyalty; and yet, whenever Patrick tried to throw in a disparaging word, he found himself met with a quiet superiority such as he had believed no knight in Scotland could assume with him, and still it was neither brow-beating nor insolence, nothing that could give offence.

Malcolm begged to know whether there had not been a rare good poet in England, called Chaucer. Verily there had been, said the knight; and on a little solicitation, so soon as supper was over, he recited to the eager and delighted auditors the tale of patient Grisel, as rendered by Chaucer, calling forth eager comments from both Patrick and Lily, on the unknighthliness of the Marquis. Malcolm, however, added, ‘Yet, after all, she was but a mere peasant wench.’

‘What makes that, young Sir?’ replied Sir James gravely. ‘I would have you to know that the husband’s rank is the wife’s, and the more unequal were their lot before, the more is he bound to respect her, and to make her be respected.’

‘That may be, after the deed is done,’ said Sir David, in a warning voice; ‘but it is not well that like should not match with like. Many an evil have I seen in my time, from unequal mating.’

‘And, Sir,’ eagerly exclaimed Patrick, ‘no doubt you can gainsay the slander, that our noble King has been caught in the toils of an artful Englishwoman, and been drawn in to promise her a share in his crown.’

A flush of crimson flamed forth on Sir James Stewart’s cheeks, and his tawny eye glanced with a fire like red lightning, but he seemed, as it were, to be holding himself in, and answered with a voice forcibly kept low and calm, and therefore the more terribly stern, ‘Young Sir, I warn you to honour your future queen.’

Sir David made a gesture with his hand, enforcing restraint upon his son, and turning to Sir James, said, ‘Our queen will we honour, when such she is, Sir; but if you are returning to the King, it were well that he should know that our hot Scottish bloods, here, could scarce brook an English alliance, and certainly not one beneath his birth.’

‘The King would answer, Sir,’ returned Sir James, haughtily, but with recovered command over himself, ‘that it is for him to judge whom his subjects shall brook as their queen. Moreover,’ he added, in a different and more conciliatory voice, ‘Scotsmen must be proud indeed who disdain the late King’s niece, the great-granddaughter of King Edward III., and as noble and queenly a demoiselle as ever was born in a palace.’

‘She is so very fair, then?’ said Lilies, who was of course on the side of true love. ‘You have seen her, gentle Sir? Oh, tell us what are her beauties?’

‘Fair damsel,’ said Sir James, in a much more gentle tone, ‘you forget that I am only a poor prisoner, who have only now and then viewed the lady Joan Beaufort with distant reverence, as destined to be my queen. All I can tell is, that her walk and bearing mark her out for a throne.’

‘And oh!’ cried Malcolm, ‘is it not true that the King hath composed songs and poems in her honour?’

‘Pah!’ muttered Patrick; ‘as though the King would be no better than a wandering minstrel rhymester!’

‘Or than King David!’ dryly said Sir James.

‘It is true, then, Sir,’ exclaimed Lilies. ‘He doth verily add minstrelsy to his other graces? Know you the lines, Sir? Can you sing them to us? Oh, I pray you.’

‘Nay, fair maid,’ returned Sir James, ‘methinks I might but add to the scorn wherewith Sir Patrick is but too much inclined to regard the captive King.’

‘A captive, a captive—ay, minstrelsy is the right solace for a captive,’ said Patrick; ‘at least, so they say and sing. Our king will have better work when he gains his freedom. Only there will come before me a subtilty I once saw in jelly and blanc-mange, at a banquet in France, where a lion fell in love with a hunter’s daughter, and let her, for love’s sake, draw his teeth and clip his claws, whereupon he found himself made a sport for her father’s hounds.’

‘I promise you, Sir Patrick,’ replied the guest, ‘that the Lady Joan is more hike to send her Lion forth from the hunter’s toils, with claws and teeth fresh-whetted by the desire of honour.’

‘But the lay—the hay, Sir,’ entreated Lilies; ‘who knows that it may not win Patrick to be the Lady Joan’s devoted servant? Malcolm, your harp!’

Malcolm had already gone in quest of the harp he loved all the better for the discouragement thrown on his gentle tastes.

The knight leant back, with a pensive look softening his features as he said, after a little consideration, ‘Then, fair lady, I will sing you the song made by King James, when he had first seen the fair mistress of his heart, on the slopes of Windsor, looking from his chamber window. He feigns her to be a nightingale.’

‘And what is that, Sir?’ demanded Lilies. ‘I have heard the word in romances, and deemed it a kind of angel that sings by night.’

‘It is a bird, sister,’ replied Malcolm; ‘Philomel, that pierces her breast with a thorn, and sings sweetly even to her death.’

‘That’s mere minstrel leasing, Malcolm,’ said Patrick. ‘I have both seen and heard the bird in France—*Rossignol*, as we call it there; and were I a lady, I should deem it small compliment to be likened to a little russet-backed, homely fowl such as that.’

‘While I,’ replied the prisoner, ‘feel so much with your fair sister, that nightingales are a sort of angels that sing by night, that it pains me, when I think of winning my freedom, to remember that I shall never again hear their songs answering one another through the forest of Windsor.’

Patrick shrugged his shoulders, but Lilius was so anxious to hear the lay, that she entreated him to be silent; and Sir James, with a manly mellow voice, with an exceedingly sweet strain in it, and a skill, both of modulation and finger, such as showed admirable taste and instruction, poured forth that beautiful song of the nightingale at Windsor, which commences King James’s story of his love, in his poem of the King’s Quhair.

There was an eager pressing round to hear, and not only were Lilius and Malcolm, but old Sir David himself, much affected by the strain, which the latter said put him in mind of the days of King Robert III., which, sad as they were, now seemed like good old times, so much worse was the present state of affairs. Sir James, however, seemed anxious to prevent discussion of the verses he had sung, and applied to Malcolm to give a specimen of his powers: and thus, with music, ballad, and lay, the evening passed away, till the parting cup was sent round, and the Tutor of Glenuskie and Malcolm marshalled their guest to the apartment where he was to sleep, in a wainscoted box bedstead, and his two attendant squires, a great iron-gray Scot and a rosy honest-faced Englishman, on pallets on the floor.

In the morning he went on his journey, but not without an invitation to rest there again on his way back, whether with or without his ransom. He promised to come, saying that he should gladly bear to the King the last advices from one so honoured as the Tutor of Glenuskie; and, on their sides, Malcolm and Sir David resolved to do their best to have some gold pieces to contribute, rather than so ‘proper a knight’ should fail in raising his ransom; but gold was never plenty, and Patrick needed all that his uncle could supply, to bear him to those wars in France, where he looked for renown and fortune.

For these were, as may have been gathered, those evil days when James I. of Scotland was still a captive to England, and when the House of Albany exercised its cruel misrule upon Scotland; delaying to ransom the King, lest they should bring home a master.

Old Robert of Albany had been King Stork, his son Murdoch was King Log; and the misery was infinitely increased by the violence and lawlessness of Murdoch’s sons. King Robert II. had left Scotland the fearful legacy of, as Froissart says, ‘eleven sons who loved arms.’ Of these, Robert III. was the eldest, the Duke of Albany the second. These were both dead, and were represented, the one by the captive young King James, the other by the Regent, Duke Murdoch of Albany, and his brother John, Earl of Buchan, now about to head a Scottish force, among whom Patrick Drummond intended to sail, to assist the French.

Others of the eleven, Earls of Athol, Menteith, &c., survived; but the youngest of the brotherhood, by name Malcolm, who had married the heiress of Glenuskie, had been killed at Homildon Hill, when he had solemnly charged his Stewart nephews and brothers to leave his two orphan children to the sole charge of their mother’s cousin, Sir David Drummond, a good old man, who had been the best supporter and confidant of poor Robert III. in his unhappy reign, and in embassies to France had lost much of the rugged barbarism to which Scotland had retrograded during the wars with England.

CHAPTER II: THE RESCUE OF COLDINGHAM

It was a lonely tract of road, marked only by the bare space trodden by feet of man and horse, and yet, in truth, the highway between Berwick and Edinburgh, which descended from a heathery moorland into a somewhat spacious valley, with copsewood clothing one side, in the midst of which rose a high mound or knoll, probably once the site of a camp, for it still bore lines of circumvallation, although it was entirely deserted, except by the wandering shepherds of the neighbourhood, or occasionally by outlaws, who found an admirable ambush in the rear.

The spring had hung the hazels with tassels, bedecked the willows with golden downy tufts, and opened the primroses and celandines beneath them, when the solitary dale was disturbed by the hasty clatter of horses' feet, and hard, heavy breathing as of those who had galloped headlong beyond their strength. Here, however, the foremost of the party, an old esquire, who grasped the bridle-rein of youth by his side, drew up his own horse, and that which he was dragging on with him, saying—

'We may breathe here a moment; there is shelter in the wood. And you, Rab, get ye up to the top of Jill's Knowe, and keep a good look-out.'

'Let me go back, you false villain!' sobbed the boy, with the first use of his recovered breath.

'Do not be so daft, Lord Malcolm,' replied the Squire, retaining his hold on the boy's bridle; 'what, rin your head into the wolf's mouth again, when we've barely brought you off haill and sain?'

'Haill and sain? Dastard and forlorn,' cried Malcolm, with passionate weeping. 'I—I to flee and leave my sister—my uncle! Oh, where are they? Halbert, let me go; I'll never pardon thee.'

'Hoot, my lord! would I let you gang, when the Tutor spak to me as plain as I hear you now?'

"Take off Lord Malcolm," says he; "save him, and you save the rest. See him safe to the Earl of Mar." Those were his words, my lord; and if you wilna heed them, I will.'

'What, and leave my sister to the reivers? Oh, what may not they be doing to her? Let us go back and fall on them, Halbert; better die saving her than know her in Walter Stewart's hands. Then were I the wretched craven he calls me.'

'Look you, Lord Malcolm,' said Halbert, laying his finger on his nose, with a knowing expression, 'my young lady is safe from harm so long as you are out of the Master of Albany's reach.

Had you come by a canny thrust in the fray, as no doubt was his purpose, or were you in his hands to be mewed in a convent, then were your sister worth the wedding; but the Master will never wed her while you live and have friends to back you, and his father, the Regent, will see she has no ill-usage. You'll do best for yourself and her too, as well as Sir David, if you make for Dunbar, and call ben your uncles of Athole and Strathern.—How now, Rab? are the loons making this way?'

'Na, na!' said Rab, descending; 'tis from the other gate; 'tis a knight in blue damasked steel: he, methinks, that harboured in our castle some weeks syne.'

'Hm!' said Halbert, considering; 'he looked like a trusty cheild: maybe he'd guide my lord here to a wiser wit, and a good lance on the way to Dunbar is not to be scorned.'

In fact, there would have been no time for one party to conceal themselves from the other; for, hidden by the copsewood, and unheeded by the watchers who were gazing in the opposite direction, Sir James Stewart and his two attendants suddenly came round the foot of Jill's Knowe upon the fugitives, who were profiting by the interval to loosen the girths of their horses, and water them at the pool under the thicket, whilst Halbert in vain tried to pacify and reason with the young master, who had thrown himself on the grass in an agony of grief and despair. Sir James, after the first momentary start, recognized the party in an instant, and at once leapt from his horse, exclaiming—

'How now, my bonnie man—my kind host—what is it? what makes this grief?'

'Do not speak to me, Sir,' muttered the unhappy boy. 'They have been reft—reft from me, and I have done nothing for them. Walter of Albany has them, and I am here.'

And he gave way to another paroxysm of grief, while Halbert explained to Sir James Stewart that when Sir Patrick Drummond had gone to embark for France, with the army led to the aid of Charles VI. by the Earl of Buchan, his father and cousins, with a large escort, had accompanied him to Eyemouth; whence, after taking leave of him, they had set out to spend Passion-tide and Easter at Coldingham Abbey, after the frequent fashion of the devoutly inclined among the Scottish nobility, in whose castles there was often little commodity for religious observances. Short, however, as was the distance, they had in the midst of it been suddenly assailed by a band of armed men, among whom might easily be recognized the giant form of young Walter Stewart, the Master of Albany, the Regent Duke Murdoch's eldest son, who was well known for his lawless excesses and violence. His father's silky sayings, and his own ruder speeches, had long made it known to the House of Glenuskie that the family policy was to cajole or to drive the sickly heir into a convent, and, rendering Lilius the possessor of the broad lands inherited from both parents, unite her and them to the Albany family.

The almost barbarous fierceness and wild licentiousness of Walter would have made the arrangement abhorrent to Lilius, even had not love passages already passed between her and her cousin, Patrick Drummond, and Sir David had hitherto protected her by keeping Malcolm in the secular life; but Walter, it seemed, had grown impatient, and had made this treacherous attack, evidently hoping to rid himself of the brother, and secure the sister. No sooner had the Tutor of Glenuskie perceived that his own party were overmatched, than he had bidden his faithful squire to secure the bairns—if not both, at least the boy; and Halbert, perceiving that Lilius had already been pounced upon by Sir Walter himself and several more, seized the bridle of the bewildered Malcolm, who was still trying to draw his sword, and had absolutely swept him away from the scene of action before he had well realized what was passing; and now that the poor lad understood the whole, his horror, grief, and shame were unspeakable.

Before Sir James had done more than hear the outline of Halbert's tale, however, the watchers on the mound gave the signal that the reivers were coming that way—a matter hitherto doubtful, since no one could guess whether Walter Stewart would make for Edinburgh or for Doune. With the utmost agility Sir James sprang up the side of the mound, reconnoitred, and returned again just as Halbert was trying to stir his master from the ground, and Malcolm answering sullenly that he would not move—he would be taken and die with the rest.

'You may save them instead, if you will attend to me,' said Sir James; and at his words the boy suddenly started up with a look of hope.

'How many fell upon you?' demanded Sir James.

'Full a hundred lances,' replied Halbert (and a lance meant at least three men). 'It wad be a fule's wark to withstand them. Best bide fast in the covert, for our horses are sair forfaughten.'

'If there are now more than twenty lances, I am greatly mistaken,' returned Sir James. 'They must have broken up after striking their blow, or have sent to secure Glenuskie; and we, falling on them from this thicket—'

'I see, I see,' cried Halbert. 'Back, ye loons; back among the hazels. Hold every one his horse ready to mount.'

'With your favour, Sir Squire, I say, bind each man his horse to a tree. The skene and broadsword, which I see you all wear, will be ten times as effective on foot.'

'Do as the knight bids,' said Malcolm, starting forth with colour on his cheek, light in his eye, that made him another being. 'In him there is help.'

'Ay, ay, Lord Malcolm,' muttered Halbert; 'you need not tell me that: I know my duty better than not to do the bidding of a belted knight, and pretty man too of his inches.'

The two attendants of Sir James were meantime apparently uttering some remonstrance, to which he lightly replied, 'Tut, Nigel; it will do thine heart good to hew down a minion of Albany.

What were I worth could I not strike a blow against so foul a wrong to my own orphan kindred?

Brewster, I'll answer it to thy master. These are his foes, as well as those of all honest men. Ha! thou art as glad to be at them as I myself.'

By this time he had exchanged his cap for a steel helmet, and was assuming the command as his natural right, as he placed the men in their ambush behind the knoll, received reports from those he had set to watch, and concerted the signal with Halbert and his own followers. Malcolm kept by him, shivering with intense excitement and eagerness; and thus they waited till the horses' hoofs and clank of armour were distinctly audible. But even then Sir James, with outstretched hand, signed his followers back, and kept them in the leash, as it were, until the troop was fairly in the valley, those in front beginning to halt to give their horses water. They were, in effect, riding somewhat carelessly, and with the ease of men whose feat was performed, and who expected no more opposition. Full in the midst was Lilius, entirely muffled and pinioned by a large plaid drawn closely round her, and held upon the front of the saddle of a large tall horse, ridden by a slender, light-limbed, wiry groom, whom Malcolm knew as Christopher Hall, a retainer of the Duke of Albany; and beside him rode her captor, Sir Walter Stewart, a man little above twenty, but with a bronzed, hardened, reckless expression that made him look much older, and of huge height and giant build. Malcolm knew him well, and regarded him with unmitigated horror and dread, both from the knowledge of his ruffianly violence even towards his father, from fear of his intentions, and from the misery that his brutal jests, scoffs, and practical jokes had often personally inflicted: and the sight of his sister in the power of this wicked man was the realization of all his worst fears. But ere there was time for more than one strong pang of consternation and constitutional terror, Sir James's shout of 'St. Andrew for the right!' was ringing out, echoed by all the fifteen in ambush with him, as simultaneously they leapt forward. Malcolm, among the first, darting with one spring, as it were, to the horse where his sister was carried, seized the bridle with his left hand, and flashing his sword upon the ruffian with the other, shouted, 'Let go, villain; give me my sister!' Hall's first impulse was to push his horse forward so as to trample the boy down, but Malcolm's hold rendered this impossible; besides, there was the shouting, the clang, the confusion of the outburst of an ambush all around and on every side, and before the man could free his hand to draw his weapon he necessarily loosed his grasp of Lilius, who, half springing, half falling, came to the ground, almost overthrowing her brother in her descent, but just saved by him from coming down prostrate. The horse, suddenly released, started forward with its rider and at the same moment Malcolm, recovering himself, stood with his sword in his hand, his arm round his sister's waist, assuring her that she was safe, and himself glowing for the first time with manly exultation. Had he not saved and rescued her himself?

It was as well, however, that the rescue did not depend on his sole prowess. Indeed, by the time the brother and sister were clinging together and turning to look round, the first shock was over, and the retainers of Albany, probably fancying the attack made by a much larger troop, were either in full flight, or getting decidedly the worst in their encounters with their assailants.

Sir James Stewart had at the first onset sprung like a lion upon the Master of Albany, and without drawing his sword had grappled with him. 'In the name of St. Andrew and the King, yield thy prey, thou dastard,' were his words as he threw his arms round the body of Sir Walter, and exerted his full strength to drag him from his horse. The young giant writhed, struggled, cursed, raged; he had not space to draw sword or even dagger, but he struck furiously with his gauntleted hand, strove to drive his horse forward. The struggle like that of Hercules and Antæus, so desperate and mighty was the strength put forth on either side, but nothing could unclasp the iron grip of those sinewy arms, and almost as soon as Malcolm and Lilius had eyes to see what was passing, Walter Stewart was being dragged off his horse by that tremendous grapple, and the next moment his armour rung as he lay prostrate on his back upon the ground.

His conqueror set his mailed foot upon his neck lightly, but so as to prevent any attempt to rise, and after one moment's pause to gather breath, said in a clear deep trumpet voice, 'Walter Stewart of Albany, on one condition I grant thee thy life. It is that thou take the most solemn oath on the spot

that no spulzie or private brawl shall henceforth stain that hand of thine while thy father holds the power in Scotland. Take that oath, thou livest: refuse it, and—' He held up the deadly little dagger called the misericorde.

'And who art thou, caitiff land-louper,' muttered Walter, 'to put to oath knights and princes?'

The knight raised the visor of his helmet. The evening sun shone resplendently on his damasked blue armour and the St. Andrew's cross on his breast, and lighted up that red fire that lurked in his eyes, and withal the calm power and righteous indignation on his features might have befitted an avenging angel wielding the lightning.

'Thou wilt know me when we meet again,' was all he said; and for the very calmness of the voice the Master of Albany, who was but a mere commonplace insolent ruffian, quailed with awe and terror to the very backbone.

'Loose me, and I will swear,' he faintly murmured.

Sir James, before removing his foot, unclasped his gorget, and undoing a chain, held up a jewel shaped like a St. Andrew's cross, with a diamond in the midst, covering a fragmentary relic. At the sight Walter Stewart's eyes, large pale ones, dilated as if with increased consternation, the sweat started on his forehead, and his breath came in shorter gasps. Malcolm and Liliass, standing near, likewise felt a sense of strange awe, for they too had heard of this relic, a supposed fragment of St. Andrew's own instrument of martyrdom, which had belonged to St. Margaret, and had been thought a palladium to the royal family and House of Stewart.

'Rise on thy knees,' said Sir James, now taking away his foot, 'and swear upon this.'

Walter, completely cowed and overawed, rose to his knees at his victor's command, laid his hand on the relic, and in a shaken, almost tremulous voice, repeated the words of the oath after his dictation: 'I, Walter Stewart, Master of Albany, hereby swear to God and St. Andrew, to fight in no private brawl, to spoil no man nor woman, to oppress no poor man, clerk, widow, maid, or orphan, to abstain from all wrong or spulzie from this hour until the King shall come again in peace.'

He uttered the words, and kissed the jewel that was tendered to him; and then Sir James said, in the same cold and dignified tone, 'Let thine oath be sacred, or beware. Now, mount and go thy way, but take heed *how* I meet thee again.'

Sir Walter's horse was held for him by Brewster, the knight's English attendant, and without another word he flung himself into the saddle, and rode away to join such of his followers as were waiting dispersed at a safe distance to mark his fate, but without attempting anything for his assistance.

'Oh, Sir!' burst forth Malcolm; but then, even as he was about to utter his thanks, his eye sought for the guardian who had ever been his mouthpiece, and, with a sudden shriek of dismay, he cried, 'My uncle! where is he? where is Sir David?'

'Alack! alack!' cried Liliass. 'Oh, brother, I saw him on the ground; he fell before my horse. I saw no more, for the Master held me, and muffled my face. Oh, let us back, he may yet live.'

'Yea, let us back,' said Sir James, 'if we may yet save the good old man. Those villains will not dare to follow; or if they do, Nigel—Brewster, you understand guarding the rear.'

'Sir,' began Liliass, 'how can we thank—'

'Not at all, lady,' replied Sir James, smiling; 'you will do better to take your seat; I fear it must be *en croupe*, for we can scarce dismount one of your guards.'

'She shall ride behind me,' said Malcolm, in a more alert and confident voice than had ever been heard from him before.

'Ay, right,' said Sir James, placing a kind hand on his shoulder; 'thou hast won her back by thine own exploit, and mayst well have the keeping of her. That rush on the caitiff groom was well and shrewdly done.'

And for all Malcolm's anxiety for his uncle, his heart had never given such a leap as at finding himself suddenly raised from the depressed down-trodden coward into something like manhood and self-respect.

Lilias, who, like most damsels of her time, was hardy and active, saw no difficulties in the mode of conveyance, and, so soon as Malcolm had seated himself on horseback, she placed one foot upon his toe, and with a spring of her own, assisted by Sir James's well-practised hand, was instantly perched on the crupper, clasping her brother round the waist with her arms, and laying her head on his shoulder in loving pride at his exploit, while for her further security Sir James threw round them both the long plaid that had so lately bound her.

'Dear Malcolm'—and her whisper fell sweetly on his ear—'it will be bonnie tidings for Patie that thou didst loose me all thyself. The false tyrant, to fall on us the very hour Patie was on the salt sea.'

But they were riding so fast that there was scant possibility for words; and, besides, Sir James kept too close to them for private whispers. In about an hour's time they had crossed the bit of table-land that formed the moor, and descended into another little gorge, which was the place where the attack had been made upon the travellers.

This was where it was possible that they might find Sir David; but no trace was to be seen, except that the grass was trampled and stained with blood. Perhaps, both Lilias and old Halbert suggested, some of their people had returned and taken him to the Abbey of Coldingham, and as this was by far the safest lodging and refuge for her and her brother, the horses' heads were at once turned thitherwards.

The grand old Priory of Coldingham, founded by King Edgar, son of Margaret the Saint, and of Malcolm Ceanmohr, in testimony of his gratitude for his recovery of his father's throne from the usurper Donaldbane, was a Benedictine monastery under the dominion of the great central Abbey of Durham.

It had been a great favourite with the Scottish kings of that glorious dynasty which sprung from Margaret of Wessex, and had ample estates, which, when it was in good hands, enabled it to supply the manifold purposes of an ecclesiastical school, a model farm, a harbour for travellers, and a fortified castle. At this period, the Prior, John de Akecliff, or Oakcliff, was an excellent man, a great friend of Sir David Drummond, and much disliked and persecuted by the House of Albany, so that there was little doubt that this would be the first refuge thought of by Sir David's followers.

Accordingly Malcolm and his companions rode up to the chief gateway, a grand circular archway, with all the noble though grotesque mouldings, zigzag and cable, dog-tooth and parrot-beak, visages human and diabolic, wherewith the Norman builders loved to surround their doorways. The doors were of solid oak, heavily guarded with iron, and from a little wicket in the midst peered out a cowed head, and instantly ensued the exclamation—

'Benedicite! Welcome, my Lord Malcolm! Ah! but this will ease the heart of the Tutor of Glenuskie!'

'Ah! then he is here?' cried Malcolm.

'Here, Sir, but in woful plight; borne in an hour syne by four carles who said you had been set upon by the Master of Albany, and sair harried, and they say the Tutor doth nought but wail for his bairns. How won ye out of his hands, my Lord?'

'Thanks to this good knight,' said Malcolm; and the gate was opened, and the new-comers dismounted to pass under the archway, which taught humility. A number of the brethren met them as they came forth into the first quadrangle, surrounded by a beautiful cloister, and containing what was called Edgar's Walls, a house raised by the good founder, for his own lodging and that of visitors, within the monastery. It was a narrow building, about thirty feet from the church, was perfectly familiar to Malcolm, who bent his steps at once thither, among the congratulations of the monks; and Lilias was not prevented from accompanying him thus far within the convent, but all beyond the nave

of the church was forbidden ground to her sex, though the original monastery destroyed by the Danes had been one of the double foundations for monks and nuns.

Entering the building, the brother and sister hastily crossed a sort of outer hall to a chamber where Sir David lay on his bed, attended by the Prior Akecliff and the Infirmarer. The glad tidings had already reached him, and he held out his hands, kissed and blessed his restored charges, and gave thanks with all his heart; but there was a strange wanness upon his face, and a spasm of severe pain crossed him more than once, though, as Lilius eagerly asked after his hurts, he called them nothing, since he had her safe again, and then bade Malcolm summon the captive knight that he might thank him.

Sir James Stewart had been left in the hall without, to the hospitality of the monks; he had laid aside his helmet, washed his face, and arranged his bright locks, and as he rose to follow Malcolm, his majestic stature and bearing seemed to befit the home of the old Scottish King.

As he entered the chamber, Sir David slightly raised himself on the pillow, and, with his eyes dilating into a bewildered gaze, exclaimed, 'My liege, my dear master!'

'He raves,' sighed Lilius, clasping Malcolm's hand in dire distress.

'No,' muttered the sick man, sinking back. 'Good King Robert has been in his grave many a day; his sons, woe is me!—Sir,' recovering himself, 'pardon the error of an old dying man, who owes you more than he can express.'

'Then, Sir,' said James Stewart, 'grant me the favour of a few moments' private speech with you. I will not keep you long from him,' he added to Malcolm and Lilius.

His manner was never one to be disputed, there was an atmosphere of obedience about the whole monastery, and the Prior added—

'Yes, my children, it is but fitting that you should give thanks in the church for your unlooked-for deliverance.'

Malcolm was forced to lead Lilius away into the exquisite cross church, built in the loveliest Early English style, of which a few graceful remnants still exist. The two young things knelt together hand in hand in the lornness of their approaching desolation, neither of them having dared to utter the foreboding upon their hearts, but feeling it all the more surely; and while the sister's spirit longed fervently after him whose protection had been only just removed, the brother looked up to the sheltering vaults, lost in the tranquil twilight, and felt that here alone was his haven of peace, the refuge for the feeble and the fatherless.

Their devotions performed, they ventured back to the outer hall, and on their return being notified, they were again admitted. Sir James, who had been seated on a stool by the sick man's head, immediately rose and resigned his place to Lilius, but did not leave the room and Sir David thus spoke: 'Bairns, God in His mercy hath raised you up the best of guardians in the stead of your ain poor Tutor. Malcolm, laddie, you will ride the morn with this gentleman to the true head of your name, your ain King, whom God for ever bless!' His voice quivered. 'And be it your study so to profit by his example and nurture, as to do your devoir by him for ever.'

'Nay, father,' cried Malcolm, 'I cannot leave you and Lily.'

'If you call me father, do my bidding,' said Sir David. 'Lily can be safely bestowed with the good Sisters of St. Abbs, nor while you are out of Albany's reach is the poor lassie worth his molesting; but when I am gone, your uncles of Albany and Athole become your tutors, and the Prior has no power to save you. Only over the Border with the King is there safety from them, and your ruin is the ruin of your sister.'

'And,' added Sir James, 'when the King is at liberty, or when you yourself are of age, you will return to resume the charge of your fair sister, unless some nearer protector be found. Meantime,' he laid one hand on Malcolm's head, and with the other took out the relic which had had so great an effect upon Walter Stewart, 'I swear on this holy Rood of St. Andrew, that Malcolm Stewart of Glenuskie shall be my charge, not merely as my kinsman, but as my young brother.'

‘You hear, Malcolm,’ said Sir David. ‘You will strive to merit such goodness.’

‘Father,’ broke out the poor boy again, ‘you cannot mean to part us! Let us abide as we have been till I am of age to take my vows! I am not fit to serve the King.’

‘He is the best judge of that,’ returned Sir James.

‘And,’ added Sir David, ‘I tell you, lad, that I shall never be as I was before, and that were I a whole man and sain, riding back to Glenuskie the morn, I should still bless the saints and bid you gang.’

Rarely did the youth of the fifteenth century venture to question the authority of an elder, but Malcolm was only silenced for a moment, and though by no means understanding that his guardian believed his injuries mortal, he threw himself upon the advice of the Prior, whom he entreated to allow him to judge for himself, and to remain to protect his sister—he talked boldly of protecting her after this day’s exploit. But Prior Akecliff gave him no more encouragement than did his uncle. The Benedictine vows were out of the question till he should be eighteen, and the renunciation of the world they involved would be ruinous to Liliias, since she would become his heiress. Moreover, the Prior himself was almost in a state of siege, for the Regent was endeavouring to intrude on the convent one Brother William Drake, or Drax, by his own nomination, instead of the canonical appointment emanating from Durham, and as national feeling went with the Regent’s nominee, it was by no means certain that the present Prior would be able to maintain his position.

‘Oh, go! yes, go, dear brother,’ entreated Liliias. ‘I should be far happier to know you in safety. They cannot hurt me while you are safe.’

‘But you, Lily! What if this villain Drax have his way?’

‘He could not harm her in St. Ebba’s fold,’ returned the Prior. ‘The Abbess herself could not yield her; and, as you have so often been told, my young Lord, your absence is a far greater protection to your sister than your presence. Moreover, were the Tutor’s mind at rest, there would be far better hope of his recovery.’

There was no alternative, and Malcolm could not but submit. Liliias was to be conducted before daybreak to the monastery of St. Abbs, about six miles off, whence she could be summoned at any time to be with her uncle in Coldingham; and Malcolm was to set off at daybreak with the captive knight, whose return to England could no longer be delayed.

Poor children! while Sir James Stewart was in the Prior’s chamber, they sat silent and mournful by the bedside where their guardian lay dozing, even till the bell for Matins summoned them in common with all the other inmates of the convent; they knelt on the floor of the candle-lit church, and held each other’s hands as they prayed; Liliias still the stronger and more hopeful, while Malcolm, as he looked up at those dear familiar vaultings, felt as if he were a bird driven from its calm peaceful nest to battle with the tossing winds and storms of ocean, without one near him whom he had learnt to love.

It was still dark when the service had ended, and Prior Akecliff came towards them. ‘Daughter,’ he said to Liliias, ‘we deem it safer that you should ride to St. Abbs ere daylight. Your palfrey is ready, the Mother Abbess is warned, and I will myself conduct you thither.’

Priors were not people to be kept waiting, and as it was reported that the Tutor of Glenuskie was still asleep, Liliias had to depart without taking leave of him. With Malcolm the last words were spoken while crossing the court. ‘Fear not, Lily; my heart will only weary till the Church owns me, and Patie has you.’

‘Nay, my Malcolm; mayhap, as the Prior tells me, your strength and manhood will come in the south country.’

‘Let them,’ said Malcolm; ‘I will neither cheat the Church nor Patie.’

‘It were no cheat. There never was any compact. Patie is winning his fortune by his own sword; he would scorn—’

‘Hush, Lily! When the King sees what a weakling Sir James has brought him, he will be but too glad to exchange Patie for me, and leave me safe in these blessed walls.’

But here they were under the archway, and the convoy of armed men, whom the exigencies of the time forced the convent to maintain, were already mounted. Sir James stood ready to assist the lady to her saddle, and with one long earnest embrace the brother and sister were parted, and Lilius rode away with the Prior by her side, letting the tears flow quietly down her cheeks in the darkness, and but half hearing the long arguments by which good Father Akecliff was proving to her that the decision was the best for both Malcolm and herself.

By and by the dawn began to appear, the air of the March night became sharper, and in the distance the murmur and splash of the tide was heard. Then, standing heavy and dark against the clear pale eastern sky, there arose the dark mass of St. Ebba's monastery, the parent of Coldingham, standing on the very verge of the cliff to which it has left the name of St. Abb's Head, upon ground which has since been undermined by the waves, and has been devoured by them. The sea, far below, calmly brightened with the brightening sky, and reflected the morning stars in a lucid track of light, strong enough to make the lights glisten red in the convent windows. Lilius was expected, was a frequent guest, and had many friends there, and as the sweet sound of the Lauds came from the chapel, and while she dismounted in the court the concluding 'Amen' swelled and died away, she, though no convent bird, felt herself in a safe home and shelter under the wing of kind Abbess Annabel Drummond, and only mourned that Malcolm, so much tenderer and more shrinking than herself, should be driven into the unknown world that he dreaded so much more than she did.

CHAPTER III: HAL

The sun had not long been shining on the dark walls of St. Ebba's monastery, before the low-browed gate of Coldingham Priory opened to let pass the guests of the previous night. Malcolm had been kissed and blessed by his guardian, and bidden to transfer his dutiful obedience to his new protector; and somewhat comforted by believing Sir David to be mending since last night, he had rent himself away, and was riding in the frosty morning air beside the kinsman who had so strangely taken charge of him, and accompanied by Sir James's tall old Scottish squire, by the English groom, and by Malcolm's own servant, Halbert.

For a long space there was perfect silence: and as Malcolm began to detach his thoughts from all that he had left behind, he could not help being struck with the expressions that flitted over his companion's countenance. For a time he would seem lost in some deep mournful reverie, and his head drooped as if in sadness or perplexity; then a sudden gleam would light up his face, as if a brilliant project had occurred to him, his lips would part, his eyes flash, he would impel his horse forward as though leading a charge, or lift up his head with kindling looks, like one rehearsing a speech; but ever a check would come on him in the midst, his mouth closed in dejection, his brow drew together in an anguish of impatience, his eyelids drooped in weariness, and he would ride on in deep reflection, till roused perhaps by the flight of a moor-fowl, or the rush of a startled roe, he would hum some gay French hunting-song or plaintive Scottish ballad.

Scarcely a word had been uttered, until towards noon, on the borders of a little narrow valley, the merry sound of bells clashed up to their ears, and therewith sounds of music. 'Tis the toon of Christ's Kirk on the Green,' said the squire, as Sir James looked at him for information, 'where we were to bait. Methought in Lent we had been spared this gallimawfrey.'

'Tis Midlent week, you pagan,' replied Sir James. 'These good folk have come a-mothering, and a share of their simnels we'll have.'

'Sir,' entreated the squire, 'were it not more prudent of you to tarry without, and let me fetch provisions?'

'Hoot, man, a throng is our best friend! Besides, the horses must rest.'

So saying, Sir James rode eagerly forward; Malcolm following, not without wonder at not having been consulted, for though kept in strict discipline by his uncle, it had always been with every courtesy due to his rank as a king's grandson; and the cousins, from whom he had suffered, were of the same rank with himself. Did this wandering landless knight, now he had him in his power, mean to disregard all that was his due? But when Sir James turned round his face sparkling with good-humour and amusement, and laughed as he said, 'Now then for the humours of a Scottish fair!' all his offended dignity was forgotten.

The greensward was surrounded by small huts and hovels; a little old stone church on one side, and a hostel near it, shadowed by a single tall elm, beneath which was the very centre of the village wake. Not only was it Midlent, but the day was the feast of a local saint, in whose honour Lenten requirements were relaxed. Monks and priests were there in plenty, and so were jugglers and maskers, Robin Hood and Marion, glee-men and harpers, merchants and hucksters, masterful beggars and sorners, shepherds in gray mauds with wise collies at their feet, shrewd old carlines with their winter's spinning of yarn, lean wolf-like borderers peaceable for the nonce, merry lasses with tow-like locks floating from their snoods, all seen by the intensely glittering sun of a clear March day, dry and not too cold for these hardy northern folk.

Nigel, the squire, sighed in despondency; and Malcolm, who hated crowds, and knew himself a mark for the rude observations of a free-spoken populace, shrank up to him, when Sir James, nodding in time to the tones of a bagpipe that was playing at the hostel door, flung his bridle to Brewster the groom, laughed at his glum and contemptuous looks, merrily hailed the gudewife with her brown face

and big silver ear-rings, seated himself on the bench at the long wooden table under the great garland of fir-boughs, willow catkins, and primroses, hung over the boughs of the tree, crossed himself, murmured his *Benedictus benedicat*, drew his dagger, carved a slice of the haunch of ox on the table, offered it to the reluctant Malcolm, then helping himself, entered into conversation with the lean friar on one side of him, and the stalwart man-at-arms opposite, apparently as indifferent as the rest of the company to the fact that the uncovered boards of the table were the only trenchers, and the salt and mustard were taken by the point of each man's dagger from common receptacles dispersed along the board. Probably the only person really disgusted or amazed was the English Brewster, who, though too cautious to express a word of his feelings, preserved the most complete silence, and could scarcely persuade himself to taste the rude fare.

Nor when the meal was over was Sir James disposed to heed the wistful looks of his attendants, but wandered off to watch the contest in archery at the butts, where arrow after arrow flew wide of the clout, for the strength of Scotland did not lie in the long-bow, and Albany's edict that shooting should be practised on Sundays and holidays had not produced as yet any great dexterity.

Sir James at first laughed merrily at the extraordinary screwings of visage and contortions of attitude, and the useless demonstration of effort with which the clowns aimed their shafts and drew their bow, sometimes to find the arrow on the grass at their feet, sometimes to see it producing consternation among the bystanders; but when he saw Brewster standing silently apart, viewing their efforts with a scorn visible enough in the dead stolidity of his countenance, he murmured a bitter interjection, and turned away with folded arms and frowning brow.

Nigel again urged their departure, but at that moment the sweet notes of a long narrative ballad began to sound to the accompaniment of a harp, and he stood motionless while the wild mournful ditty told of the cruelty of the Lady of Fren draught, and how

‘Morning sun ne’er shone upon
Lord John and Rothiemay.

Large tears were dropping from under the hand with he veiled his emotion; and when Nigel touched his cloak to remind him that the horses were ready, he pressed the old man's hand, saying, with a sigh, ‘I heard that last at my father's knee! It rung in my ears for many a year! Here, lad!’ and dropping a gold coin into the wooden bowl carried round by the blind minstrel's attendant, he was turning away, when the glee-man, detecting perhaps the ring of the coin, broke forth in stirring tones—

“It fell about the Lammas tide,
When moormen win their hay,
The doughty Earl of Douglas rode
Into England to catch a prey.”

Again he stood transfixed, beating time with his hand, his eyes beaming, his hips moving as he followed the spirit-stirring ballad; and then, as Douglas falls, and is laid beneath the bracken bush, unseen by his men, and Montgomery forces Hotspur to yield, not to him, but

‘to the bracken bush

That grows upon the lily lea,’

he sobbed without disguise; and no sooner was the ballad ended than he sprang forward to the harper, crying, ‘Again, again; another gold crown to hear it again!’

‘Sir,’ entreated Nigel, ‘remember how much hangs on your speed.’

‘The ballad I *must* have,’ exclaimed Sir James, trying to shake him off. ‘It moves the heart more than aught I ever heard! How runs it?’

'I know the ballad,' said Malcolm, half in impatience, half in contempt. 'I could sing every word of it. Every glee-man has it.'

'Nay—hear you, Sir—the lad can sing it,' reiterated Nigel; and Sir James, throwing the promised guerdon to the minstrel, let himself be led away to the front of the inn; but there was a piper, playing to a group of dancers, and as if his feet could not resist the fascination, Sir James held out his hand to the first comely lass he saw disengaged, and in spite of the steel-guarded boots that he wore, answered foot for foot, spring for spring, to the deft manoeuvres of her shoeless feet, with equal agility and greater grace. Nigel frowned more than ever at this exhibition, and when the knight had led his panting partner to a seat, and called for a tankard of ale for her refreshment, he remonstrated more seriously still. 'Sir, the gates of Berwick will be shut.'

'The days lengthen, man.'

'And who knows if some of yon land-louppers be not of Walter Stewart's meiné? Granted that they ken not yourself, that lad is only too ken-speckle. Moreover, you ye made free enough with your siller to set the haill crew of moss-troopers on our track.'

'Twenty mile to Berwick-gate,' said Sir James, carelessly; 'nor need you ever look behind you at jades like theirs. Nay, friend, I come, since you grudge me for once the sight of a little wholesome glee among my own people. My holiday is dropping from me like sands in an hour-glass!'

He mounted, however, and put his horse to as round a pace as could be maintained by the whole party with out distress; nor did he again break silence for many miles.

At the gates of Berwick, then in English hands, he gave a pass-word, and was admitted, he bade Nigel conduct Lord Malcolm to an inn, explaining that it was his duty to present himself to the governor; and, being detained to sup with him, was seen no more till they started the next morning.

The governor rode out with them some ten miles, with a strong guard of spearmen; and after parting with him they pushed on to the south.

After the first day's journey, Malcolm was amazed to see Sir James mount without any of his defensive armour, which was piled on the spare horse; his head was covered by a chaperon, or flat cap with a short curtain to it, and his sword was the only weapon he retained. Nigel was also nearly unarmed, and Sir James advised Malcolm himself to lay aside the light hawberk he wore; then, at his amazed look, said, 'Poor lad! he never saw the day when he could ride abroad scathless. When will the breadth of Scotland be as safe as these English hills?'

He was very kind to his young companion, treating him in all things like a guest, pointing out what was worthy of note, and explaining what was new and surprising. Malcolm would have asked much concerning the King, to whom he was bound, but these questions were the only ones Sir James put aside, saying that his kinsman would one day learn that it ill beseemed those who were about a king's person to speak of him freely.

One night was spent at Durham, the parent of Coldingham, and here Malcolm felt at home, far more grand as was that mighty cathedral institution. There it stood, with the Weir encircling it, on its own fair though mighty hill, with all the glory of its Norman mister and lovely Lady-chapel; yet it seemed to the boy more like a glorified Coldingham than like a strange region.

'The peace of God rests on the place,' he said, when Sir James asked his thoughts as he looked back at the grand mass of buildings. 'These are the only spots where the holy and tender can grow, like the Palestine lilies sheltered from the blast in the Abbot's garden at Coldingham.'

'Nay, lad, it were an ill world did lilies only grow in abbots' gardens.'

'It is an ill world,' said Malcolm.

'Let us hear what you say in a month's time,' replied the knight, lightly: then dreaming over the words.

A few days more, and they were riding among the lovely rock and woodland scenery of Yorkshire, when suddenly there leaped from behind a bush three or four young men, with a loud shout of 'Stand.'

‘Reivers!’ thought Malcolm, sick with dismay, as the foremost grasped Sir James’s bridle; but the latter merely laughed, saying, ‘How now, Hal! be these your old tricks?’

‘Ay, when such prizes are errant,’ said the assailant and Sir James, springing from his horse, embraced him and his companion with a cordiality that made Malcolm not a little uneasy. Could he have been kidnapped by a false Englishman into a den of robbers for the sake of his ransom?

‘You are strict to your time,’ said the chief robber. ‘I knew you would be. So, when Ned Marmion came to Beverley, and would have us to see his hunting at Tanfield, we came on thinking to meet you. Marmion here has a nooning spread in the forest; ere we go on to Thirsk, where I have a matter to settle between two wrong-headed churls. How has it been with you, Jamie? you have added to your *meiné*.’

‘Ah, Hal! never in all your cut-purse days did you fall on such an emprise as I have achieved.’

‘Let us hear,’ said Hal, linking his arm in Sir James’s, who turned for a moment to say, ‘Take care of the lad, John; he is a young kinsman of mine.’

‘Kinsman!’ thought Malcolm; ‘do all wandering Stewarts claim kin to the blood royal?’ but then, as he looked at Sir James’s stately head, he felt that no assumption could be unbecoming in one of such a presence, and so kind to himself; and, ashamed of the moment’s petulance, dismounted, and, as John said, ‘This is the way to our noon meat,’ he let himself be conducted through the trees to a glade, sheltered from the wind, where a Lenten though not unsavoury meal of bread, dried fish, and eggs was laid out on the grass, in a bright warm sunshine; and Hal, declaring himself to have a hunter’s appetite, and that he knew Jamie had been starved in Scotland, and was as lean as a greyhound, seated himself on the grass, and to Malcolm’s extreme surprise, not to say disgust, was served by Lord Marmion on the knee and with doffed cap.

While the meal was being eaten, Malcolm studied the strangers. Lord Marmion was a good-humoured, hearty-looking young Yorkshireman, but the other two attracted his attention far more.

They were evidently brothers, one perhaps just above, the other just below, thirty; both of the most perfect mould of symmetry, activity, and strength, though perhaps more inclining to agility than robustness. Both were fair-complexioned, and wore no beard; but John was the paler, graver, and more sedate, and his aquiline profile had an older look than that borne by Hal’s perfectly regular features. It would have been hard to define what instantly showed the seniority of his brother, for the clearness of his colouring—bright red and white like a lady’s—his short, well-moulded chin, and the fresh earnestness and animation of his countenance, gave an air of perpetual youth in spite of the scar of an arrow on the cheek which told of at least one battle; but there were those manifestations of being used to be the first which are the evident tokens of elder sonship, and the lordly manner more and more impressed Malcolm. He was glad that his own Sir James was equal in dignity, as well as superior in height, and he thought the terrible red lightning of those auburn eyes would be impossible to the sparkling azure eyes of the Englishman, steadfast, keen, and brilliant unspeakably though they were; but so soon as Sir James seemed to have made his explanation, the look was most winningly turned on him, a hand held out, and he was thus greeted: ‘Welcome, my young Prince Malcolm; I am happy that your cousin thinks so well of our cheer, that he has brought you to partake it.’

‘His keeper, Somerset,’ thought Malcolm, as he bowed stiffly; ‘he seems to treat me coolly enough. I come to serve my King,’ he said, but he was scarcely heard; for as Hal unbuckled his sword before sitting down on the grass, he thrust into his bosom a small black volume, with which he seemed to have been beguiling the time; and John exclaimed—

‘There goes Godfrey de Bulloin. I tell you, Jamie, ’tis well you are come! Now have I some one to speak with. Ever since Harry borrowed my Lady of Westmoreland’s book of the Holy War, he has not had a word to fling at me.’

‘Ah!’ said Sir James, ‘I saw a book, indeed, of the Holy Land! It would tempt him too much to hear how near the Border it dwells! What was it named, Malcolm?’

‘The “Itinerarium of Adamnanus,”’ replied Malcolm, blushing at the sudden appeal.

‘Ha! I’ve heard of it,’ cried the English knight. ‘I sent to half the convent libraries to beg the loan when Gilbert de Lannoy set forth for the survey of Palestine. Does the Monk of Iona tell what commodity of landing there may be on the coast?’

Malcolm had the sea-port towns at his fingers’ ends, and having in the hard process of translation, and reading and re-reading one of the few books that came into his hands, nearly mastered the contents, he was able to reply with promptness and precision, although with much amazement, for

‘Much he marvelled a knight of pride
Like book-bosomed priest should ride;’

nor had he ever before found his accomplishments treated as aught but matters of scorn among the princes and nobles with whom he had occasionally been thrown.

‘Good! good!’ said Sir Harry at last. ‘Well read, and clearly called to mind. The stripling will do you credit, James. Where have you studied, fair cousin?’

Cousin! was it English fashion to make a cousin of everybody? But gentle, humble Malcolm had no resentment in him, and felt gratified at the friendly tone of so grand and manly-looking a knight. ‘At home,’ he answered, ‘with a travelling scholar who had studied at Padua and Paris.’

‘That is where you Scots love to haunt! But know you how they are served there? I have seen the gibbet where the Mayor of Paris hung two clerks’ sons for loving his daughters over well!’

‘The clerks’ twa sons of Owsenford that were foully slain!’ cried Malcolm, his face lighting up. ‘Oh, Sir, have you seen their gibbet?’

‘What? were they friends of yours?’ asked Hal, much amused, and shaking his head merrily at Sir James. ‘Ill company, I fear—’

‘Only in a ballad,’ said Malcolm, colouring, ‘that tells how at Yuletide the ghosts came to their mother with their hats made of the birk that grew at the gates of Paradise.’

‘A rare ballad must that be!’ exclaimed Hal. ‘Canst sing it? Or are you weary?—Marmion, prithee tell some of the fellows to bring my harp from the baggage.’

‘His own harp is with ours,’ said Sir James; ‘he will make a better figure therewith.’

At his sign, the attendant, Nigel, the only person besides Lord Marmion of Tanfield who had been present at the meal, besides the two Stewarts and the English brothers, rose and disappeared between the trees, beyond which a hum of voices, an occasional laugh, and the stamping of horses and jingling of bridles, betokened that a good many followers were in waiting. Malcolm’s harp was quickly brought, having been slung in its case to the saddle of Halbert’s horse; and as he had used it to beguile the last evening’s halt, it did not need much tuning. Surprised as his princely notions were at being commanded rather than requested to sing, the sweet encouraging smile and tone of kind authority banished all hesitation in complying, and he gave the ballad of the Clerks’ Twa Sons of Owsenford with much grace and sweetness, while the weakness of his voice was compensated by the manlier strains with which Sir James occasionally chimed in. Then, as Harry gave full meed of appreciative praise and thanks, Sir James said, ‘Lend me thine harp, Malcolm; I have learnt thy song now; and thou, Harry, must hear and own how far our Scottish minstrelsy exceeds thy boasted Chevy Chase.’

And forth rang in all the mellow beauty of his voice that most glorious of ballads, the Battle of Otterburn, as much more grand than it had been when he heard it from the glee-man or from Malcolm, as a magnificent voice, patriotic enthusiasm, and cultivation and refinement, could make it. He had lost himself and all around in the passion of the victory, the pathos of the death. But no such bright look of thanks recompensed him. Harry’s face grew dark, and he growled, ‘Douglas dead? Ay, he wins more fields so than alive! I wish you would keep my old Shrewsbury friend, Earl Tyneman, as you call him, at home.’

‘Tis ill keeping the scholars in bounds when the master is away,’ returned Sir James.

‘Well, by this time Tom has taught them how to transgress—sent them home with the long scourge from robbing orchards in Anjou. He writes to me almost with his foot in the stirrup, about to give Douglas and Buchan a lesson. I shall make short halts and long stages south. This is too far off for tidings.’

‘True,’ said Sir John, with a satirical curl of the lip; ‘above all, when fair ladies brook not to ink their ivory fingers.’

‘There spake the envious fiend,’ laughed the elder brother. ‘John bears not the sight of what he will not or cannot get.’

‘I’ll never be chained to a lady’s litter, nor be forced to loiter till her wimple is pinned,’ retorted John. ‘Nor do I like dames with two husbands besides.’

‘One would have cancelled the other, as grammarians tell us,’ said Harry, ‘if thy charms, John, had cancelled thine hook nose! I would they had, ere her first marriage. Humfrey will burn his fingers there, and we must hasten back to look after that among other things.—My Lord Marmion,’ he added, starting hastily up, and calling to him as he stood at some distance conversing with the Scottish Nigel, ‘so please you, let us have the horses;’ and as the gentleman hastened to give the summons, he said, ‘We shall make good way now. We shall come on Watling Street. Ha, Jamie, when shall we prove ourselves better men than a pack of Pagan Romans, by having a set of roads fit for man or beast, of our own making instead of theirs half decayed? Look where I will, in England or France, their roads are the same in build—firm as the world itself, straight as arrows. An army is off one’s mind when once one gets on a Roman way. I’ll learn the trick, and have them from Edinburgh to Bordeaux ere ten years are out; and then, what with traffic and converse with the world, and ready justice, neither Highland men minor Gascons will have leisure or taste for robbery.’

‘Perhaps Gascons and Scots will have a voice in the matter,’ said James, a little stiffly; and the horses being by this time brought, Sir Harry mounted, and keeping his horse near that of young Malcolm, to whom he had evidently taken a fancy, he began to talk to him in so friendly and winning a manner, that he easily drew from the youth the whole history of his acquaintance with Sir James Stewart, of the rescue of his sister, and the promise to conduct him to the captive King of Scots, as the only means of saving him from his rapacious kindred.

‘Poor lad!’ said Harry, gravely.

‘Do you know King James, Sir?’ asked Malcolm, timidly.

‘Know him?’ said Harry, turning round to scan the boy with his merry blue eye. ‘I know him—yes; that as far as a poor Welsh knight can know his Grace of Scotland.’

‘And, Sir, will he be good lord to me?’

‘Eh! that’s as you may take him. I would not be one of yonder Scots under his hands!’

‘Has he learned to hate his own countrymen?’ asked Malcolm, in an awe-stricken voice.

‘Hate? I trow he has little to love them for. He is a good fellow enough, my young lord, when left to himself; but best beware. Lions in a cage have strange tempers.’

A courier rode up at the moment, and presented some letters, which Sir Harry at once opened and read, beckoning his brother and Sir James to his side, while Malcolm rode on in their wake, in a state of dismay and bewilderment. Nigel and Lord Marmion were together at so great an interval that he could not fall back on them, nor learn from them who these brothers were. And there was something in the ironical suppressed pity with which Harry had spoken of his prospects with the King of Scots, that terrified him all the more, because he knew that Sir James and Nigel would both hold it unworthy of him to have spoken freely of his own sovereign with an Englishman. Would James be another Walter? and, if so, would Sir James Stewart protect him? He had acquired much affection for, and strong reliance on, the knight; but there was something unexplained, and his heart sank.

The smooth line of Watling Street at length opened into the old town of Thirsk, and here bells were ringing, flags flying from the steeple, music sounded, a mayor and his corporation in their robes

rode slowly forth, crowds lined the road-side, caps were flung up, and a tremendous shout arose, 'God save King Harry!'

Malcolm gazed about more utterly discomfited. There was 'Harry,' upright on his horse, listening with a gracious smile, while the mayor rehearsed a speech about welcome and victories, and the hopeful queen, and, what was still more to the purpose, tendered a huge pair of gauntlets, each filled to the brim, one with gold, and the other with silver pieces.

'Eh! Thanks, Master Mayor, but these gloves must be cleared, ere there is room for me to use them in battle!'

And handing the gold glove to his brother, he scattered the contents of the silver one far and wide among the populace, who shouted their blessings louder than ever, and thus he reached the market-place. There all was set forth as for the lists, a horseman in armour on either side.

'Heigh now, Sirs,' said Harry, 'have we not wars enough toward without these mummings of vanity?'

'This is no show, my Lord King,' returned the mayor, abashed. 'This is deadly earnest. These are two honourable gentlemen of Yorkshire, who are come hither to fight out their quarrel before your Grace.'

'Two honourable foolsheads!' muttered Harry; then, raising his voice, 'Come hither, gentlemen, let us hear your quarrel.'

The two gentlemen were big Yorkshiremen, heavy-browed, and their native shrewdness packed far away behind a bumpkin stolidity and surliness that barely allowed them to show respect to the King.

'So please you, Sir,' growled the first in his throat, 'here stands Christopher Kitson of Barrowbridge, ready to avouch himself a true man, and prove in yonder fellow's teeth that it was not a broken-kneed beast that I sent up for a heriard to my Lord Archbishop when my father died; but that he of Easingwold is a black slanderer and backbiter.'

'And here,' shouted the other, 'stands honest William Trenton of Easingwold, ready to thrust his lies down his throat, and prove on his body that the heriard he sent to my Lord Archbishop was a sorry jade.'

'That were best proved by the beast's body,' interposed the King.

'And,' proceeded the doughty Kitson, as though repeating a lesson, 'having vainly pleaded the matter these nine years, we are come to demand licence to fight it out, with lance, sword, and dagger, in your royal presence, to set the matter at rest for ever.'

'Breaking a man's head to prove the soundness of a horse!' ejaculated Harry.

'Your licence is given, Sir King?' demanded Kitson.

'My licence is given for a combat *à l'outrance*,' said Henry; but, as they were about to flounder back on their big farm-horses, he raised his voice to a thundering sound: 'Solely on this condition, that he who slays his neighbour, be he Trenton or Kitson, shall hang for the murder ere I leave Thirsk.'

There was a recoil, and the mayor himself ventured to observe something about the judgment of God, and 'never so seen.'

'And I say,' thundered Henry, and his blue eyes seemed to flame with vehement indignation, 'I say that the ordeal of battle is shamefully abused, and that it is a taking of God's name—ay, and man's life—in vain, to appeal thereto on every coxcomb's quarrel, risking the life that was given him to serve God's ends, not his own sullen fancy. I will have an end of such things!—And you, gentlemen, since the heriard is dead, or too old to settle the question, shake hands, and if you must let blood, come to France with me next month, and flesh your knives on French and Scots.'

'So please you, Sir,' grumbled Kitson, 'there's Mistress Agnes of Mineshull; she's been in doubt between the two of us these five years, and she'd promised to wed whichever of us got the better.'

'I'll settle her mind for her! Whichever I find foremost among the French, I'll send home to her a knight, and with better sense to boot than to squabble for nine years as to an old horse.'

He then dismounted, and was conducted into the town-hall, where a banquet was prepared, taking by the hand Sir James Stewart, and followed by his brother John, and by Malcolm, who felt as though his brain were turning, partly with amazement, partly with confusion at his own dulness, as he perceived that not only was the free-spoken Hal, Henry of Monmouth, King of England, but that his wandering benefactor, the captive knight, whose claim of kindred he had almost spurned, was his native sovereign, James the First of Scotland.

CHAPTER IV: THE TIDINGS OF BEAUGÉ

Malcolm understood it at last. In the great chamber where he was bidden to wait within 'Nigel' till 'Sir James' came from a private conference with 'Harry,' he had all explained to him, but within a curtness and brevity that must not be imitated in the present narrative.

The squire Nigel was in fact Sir Nigel Baird, Baron of Bairdsbrae, the gentleman to whom poor King Robert II. had committed the charge of his young son James, when at fourteen he had been sent to France, nominally for education, but in reality to secure him from the fate of his brother Rothsay.

Captured by English vessels on the way, the heir of Scotland had been too valuable a prize to be resigned by the politic Henry IV., who had lodged him at Windsor Castle, together with Edmund Mortimer, earl of March, and placed both under the nominal charge of the Prince of Wales, a youth of a few years older. Unjust as was the detention, it had been far from severe; the boys had as much liberty as their age and recreation required, and received the choicest training both in the arts of war and peace. They were bred up in close intercourse with the King's own four sons, and were united with them by the warmest sympathy.

In fact, since usurpation had filled Henry of Lancaster's mind with distrust and jealousy, his eldest son had been in no such enviable position as to be beyond the capacity of fellow-feeling for the royal prisoner.

Of a peculiarly frank, open, and affectionate nature, young Henry had so warmly loved the gentle and fascinating Richard II., that his trust in the father, of whom he had seen little in his boyhood, had received a severe shock through Richard's fate. Under the influence of a new, suspicious, and avaricious wife, the King kept his son as much at a distance as possible, chiefly on the Welsh marches, learning the art of war under Hotspur and Oldcastle; and when the father and son were brought together again, the bold, free bearing and extraordinary ability of the Prince filled the suspicious mind of the King with alarm and jealousy. To keep him down, give him no money, and let him gain no influence, was the narrow policy of the King; and Henry, chafing, dreaming, feeling the injustice, and pining for occupation, shared his complaints within James, and in many a day-dream restored him freely to his throne, and together redressed the wrongs of the world. Meantime, James studied deep in preparation, and recreated himself with poetry, inspired by the charms of Joan Beaufort, the lovely daughter of the King's legitimized brother, the Earl of Somerset; while Henry persisted in a boy's passionate love to King Richard's maiden widow, Isabel of France. Entirely unrequited as his affection was, it had a beneficial effect. Next after his deep sense of religion, it kept his life pure and chivalrous. He was for ever faithful to his future wife, even when Isabel had been returned to France, and his romantic passion had fixed itself on her younger sister Catherine, whom he endowed in imagination with all he had seen or supposed in her.

Credited with every excess by the tongue of his stepmother, too active-minded not to indulge in freakish sports and experiments in life very astounding to commonplace minds, sometimes when in dire distress even helping himself to his unpaid allowance from his father's mails, and always with buoyant high spirits and unflinching drollery that scandalized the grave seniors of the Court, there is full proof that Prince Hal ever kept free from the gross vices which a later age has fancied inseparably connected with his frolics; and though always in disgrace, the vexation of the Court, and a by-word for mirth, he was true to the grand ideal he was waiting to accomplish, and never dimmed the purity and loftiness of his aim. That little band of princely youths, who sported, studied, laughed, sang, and schemed in the glades of Windsor, were strangely brought together—the captive exiled King, the disinherited heir of the realm, and the sons of the monarch who held the one in durance and occupied the throne of the other; and yet their affection had all the frank delight of youthful friendship.

The younger lads were in more favour with their father than was the elder. Thomas was sometimes preferred to him in a mortifying manner, John's grave, quiet nature prevented him from ever incurring

displeasure, and Humfrey was the spoilt pet of the family; but nothing could lessen Harry's large-minded love of his brothers; and he was the idol and hero of the whole young party, who implicitly believed in his mighty destinies as a renovator of the world, the deliverer of Jerusalem, and restorer of the unity and purity of the Church.

'Harry the Fifth was crowned,' and with the full intention of carrying out his great dream. But his promise of releasing James became matter of question. The House of Albany, who held the chief power in Scotland, had bound Henry IV. over not to free their master; and it was plain that to send him home before his welcome was ensured would be but tossing him on their spears. In vain James pleaded that he was no boy, and was able to protect himself; and vowed that when the faithful should rally round his standard, he would be more than a match for his enemies; or that if not, he would rather die free than live in bondage. Henry would not listen, and insisted upon retaining him until he should himself be at leisure to bring him home with a high hand, utterly disregarding his assurance that this would only be rendering him in the eyes of his subjects another despised and hated Balliol.

Deeming himself a divinely-appointed redresser of wrongs, Henry was already beginning on his great work of purifying Europe in preparation for his mighty Crusade; and having won that splendid victory which laid distracted France at his feet, he only waited to complete the conquest as thoroughly and rapidly as might be; and, lest his grand purpose should be obstructed, this great practical visionary, though full of kindness and generosity, kept in thralldom a whole troop of royal and noble captives.

He had, however, been so far moved by James's entreaties, as to consent that when he himself offered his devotions at the shrine of St. John of Beverley, the native saint who shared with the two cordwainers his gratitude for the glories of 'Crispin Crispian's day,' his prisoner should, unknown to any save the few who shared the pilgrimage, push on to reconnoitre his own country, and judge for himself, having first sworn to reveal himself to no one, and to avoid all who could recognize him. James had visited Glenuskie within a special view to profiting by the wisdom of Sir David Drummond, and had then been at Stirling, Edinburgh, and Perth. On his way back, falling in with Malcolm in his distress, he had conceived the project of taking him to England; and finding himself already more than half recognized by Sir David, had obtained his most grateful and joyous consent.

In truth, James's heart had yearned to his young cousin, his own situation had become much more lonely of late; for Henry was no longer the comrade he had once been, since he had become a keeper instead of a fellow-sufferer. It was true that he did his best to forget this by lavishing indulgences on his captive, and insisting on being treated on terms of brotherly familiarity; but though his transcendent qualities commanded love, the intimacy could be but a semblance of the once equal friendship. Moreover, that conspiracy which cost the life of the Earl of Cambridge had taught James that cautious reserve was needed in dealing with even his old friends the princes, so easily might he be accused of plotting either with Henry's immediate heir or with the Mortimers; and, in this guarded life, he had hailed with delight the opportunity of taking to himself the young orphan cousin of kindred blood, of congenial tastes, and home-like speech, whom he might treat at once as a younger brother and friend, and mould by and by into a trusty counsellor and assistant. That peculiar wistfulness and gentleness of Malcolm's look and manner, together with the refinement and intellect apparent to all who conversed with him without alarming him, had won the King's heart, and made him long to keep the boy with him. As to Malcolm's longing for the cloister, he deemed it the result of the weakly health and refined nature which shrank from the barbarism of the outer world, and he thought it would pass away under shelter from the rude taunts of the fierce cousins, at a distance from the well-meaning exhortations of the monks, and at the spectacle of brave and active men who could also be pious, conscientious, and cultivated. In the renewed sojourn at Windsor which James apprehended, the training of such a youth as Malcolm of Glenuskie would be no small solace.

By the time Malcolm had learnt as much of all this as Sir Nigel Baird knew, or chose to communicate, the King entered the room. He flung himself on his knees, exclaiming, with warm gratitude, as he kissed the King's hand, 'My liege, I little kenned—'

‘I meant thee to ken little,’ said James, smiling. ‘Well, laddie, wilt thou share the prisoner’s cell?—Ay, Bairdsbrae, you were a true prophet. Harry will do all himself, and will not hear of losing me to deal with my own people at my own gate. No, no, he’ll have me back with Southron bows and bills, so soon as this small trifle of France lies quiet in his grasp! I had nearly flung back my parole in his face, and told him that no English sword should set me on the Bruce’s throne; but there is something in Harry of Monmouth that one *must* love, and there are moments when to see and hear him one would as soon doubt the commission of an angel with a flaming sword.’

‘A black angel!’ growled Sir Nigel.

‘Scoff and chafe, Baird, but look at his work. Look at Normandy, freed from misrule and exaction, in peace and order. Look at this land. Was ever king so loved? Or how durst he act as he did this day?’

‘Nay, an it were so at home,’ said Baird, ‘I had as lief stay here as where a man is not free to fight out his own feud. Even this sackless callant thought it shame to see two honest men baulked.’

‘Poor Scotland!’ sighed James. ‘Woe is the land where such thoughts come readiest to gray-haired men and innocent boys. I tell you, cousin, this precious right is the very cause that our poor country is so lawless and bloody, that yon poor silly sparrow would fain be caged for fear of the kites and carrion-crows.’

‘Alack, my Lord, let me but have my way. I cannot fight! Let Patrick Drummond have my sister and my lands, and your service will be far better done,’ said Malcolm.

‘I know all that,’ said the King, kindly. ‘There is time enough for settling that question; and meantime you will not be spoilt for monk or priest by cheering me awhile in my captivity. I need you, laddie,’ he added, laying his hand on the boy’s shoulder, with all the instinctive fascination of a Stewart. ‘I lack a comrade of my own blood, for I am all alone!’

‘Oh, Sir!’ and Malcolm, looking into his face, saw it full of tenderness.

‘Books and masters you shall have,’ continued James, ‘such as for church or state, cathedral, cloister, or camp, shall render you the meeter prince; and I pass you my royal word, that if at full age the cowl be your choice, I will not gainsay you. Meantime, abide with me, and be the young brother I have yearned for.’

The King threw his arms round Malcolm, who felt, and unconsciously manifested, a strange bliss in that embrace, even while fixed in his determination that nothing should make him swerve from his chosen path, nor render him false to his promise to Patrick and Lilius. It was a strange change, from being despised and down-trodden by fierce cousins, or only fondled, pitied, and treated with consideration by his own nearest and dearest friends, to be the chosen companion of a king, and *such* a king. Nor could it be a wile of Satan, thought Malcolm, since James still promised him liberty of choice. He would ask counsel of a priest next time he went to confession; and in the meantime, in the full tide of gratitude, admiration, and affection, he gave himself up to the enjoyment of his new situation, and of time King’s kindness and solicitude. This was indeed absolutely that of an elder brother; for, observing that Malcolm’s dress and equipments, the work of Glenuskie looms, supplemented by a few Edinburgh purchases, was uncouth enough to attract some scornful glances from the crowd who came out to welcome the royal entrance into York the next day, he instantly sent Brewster in search of the best tailor and lorimer in the city, and provided so handsomely for the appearance of young Glenuskie, his horse, and his attendants, that the whole floor of their quarters was strewn with doublets, boots, chaperons, and gloves, saddles, bridles, and spurs, when the Duke of Bedford loitered into the room, and began to banter James for thus (as he supposed) pranking himself out to meet the lady of his love; and then bemoaned the fripperies that had become the rage in their once bachelor court, vowing, between sport and earnest, that Hal was so enamoured of his fair bride, that anon the conquest of France would be left to himself and his brother, Tom of Clarence; while James retorted by thrusts at Bedford’s own rusticity of garb, and by endeavouring to force on him a

pair of shoes with points like ram's horns, as a special passport to the favour of Dame Jac—a lady who seemed to be the object of Duke John's great distaste.

Suddenly a voice was heard in the gallery of the great old mansion where they were lodged.

'John! John! Here!—Where is the Duke, I say?' It was thick and husky, as with some terrible emotion; and the King and Duke had already started in dismay before the door was thrown open, and King Henry stood among them, his face of a burning red.

'See here, John!' he said, holding out a letter; and then, with an accent of wrathful anguish, and a terrible frown, he turned on James, exclaiming, 'I would send you to the Tower, Sir, did I think you had a hand in this!'

Malcolm trembled, and sidled nearer his prince; while James, with an equally fierce look, replied, 'Hold, Sir! Send me where you will, but dare not dishonour my name!' Then changing, as he saw the exceeding grief on Henry's brow, and heard John's smothered cry of dismay, 'For Heaven's sake, Harry, what is it?'

'This!' said Henry, less loudly, less hotly, but still with an agony of indignation: 'Thomas is dead—and by the hand of two of your traitor Scots!'

'Murdered!' cried James, aghast.

'Murdered by all honest laws of war, but on the battlefield,' said Henry. 'Your cousin of Buchan and old Douglas fell on my brave fellows at Beaugé, when they were sent with travel to stop the robberies in Anjou. They closed in with their pikes on my brave fellows, took Somerset prisoner, and for Thomas, while he was dealing with a knight named Swinton in front, the villain Buchan comes behind and cleaves his head in twain; and that is what you Scots call fighting!'

'It was worthy of a son of Albany!' said James. 'Would that vengeance were in my power!'

'Ay, you loved him!' said Henry, grasping James's hand, his passion softened into a burst of tears, as he wrung his prisoner's hand. 'Nay, who did not love him, my brave, free-hearted brother?'

And that I—I should have dallied here and left him to bear the brunt, and be cut off by you felon Scots!' And he hid his face, struggling within an agony of heart-rending grief, which seemed to sway his whole tall, powerful frame as he leant against the high back of a chair; while John, together with James, was imploring him not to accuse himself, for his presence had been needful at home; and, to turn the tenor of his thought, James inquired whether there were any further disaster.

'Not as yet,' said Henry; 'there is not a man left in that heaven-abandoned crew who knows how to profit by what they have got! but I must back again ere the devil stir them up a man of wit!—And you, Sir, can you take order with these heady Scots?'

'From Windsor? no,' said James; 'but set me in the saddle, let me learn war under such a captain as yourself, and maybe they will not take the field against me; or if they do, the slayer of Clarence shall rue it.'

'Be it so,' said Henry, wringing his hand. 'You shall with me to France, Jamie, and see war. The Scots should flock to the Lion rampant, and without them the French are no better than deer, under the fool and murderer they call Dauphin. Yet, alas! will any success give me back my brother—my brother, the brave and true?' he added, weeping again within time *abandon* of an open nature and simple age. 'It was for my sins, my forgetfulness of my great work, that this has come on me.—Ho, Marmion! carry these tidings from me to the Dean; pray him that the knell be tolled at the Minster, and a requiem sung for my brother and all who fell with him. We will be there ourselves, and the mayor must hold us excused from his banquet; these men are too loyal not to grieve for their King.'

And, with his arm round the neck of his brother John, Henry left the room; and before another word could be said, Sir Nigel was there, having only retired on the King's entrance. The news was of course all over the house, and with an old attendant's freedom he exclaimed, 'So, Sir, the English have found tough cummers at last!'

'Not too honourably,' said James, sadly.

‘Hout, would not the puir loons be glad enow of any gate of coming by a clout at the man’s brother that keeps you captive!’

‘They have taken away one of those I loved best!’ said James.

‘I’m no speaking ill of the lad Clarence himself,’ said Nigel; ‘he was a braw youth, leal and bold, and he has died in his helm and spurs, as a good knight should. I’d wish none of these princes a waur ending. Moreover, could Swinton have had the wit to keep him living, he’d have been a bonnie barter for you, my Lord; but ony way the fight was a gallant one, and the very squire that brought the tidings cannot deny that our Scots fought like lions.’

‘Would Douglas but so fight in any good quarrel!’ sighed the King. ‘But what are you longing to ask, Malcolm? Is it for your kinsman Patrick? I fear me that there is little chance of your hearing by name of him.’

‘I wot not,’ said Sir Nigel; ‘I did but ask for that hare-brained young cousin of mine, Davie Baird, that must needs be off on this journey to France; and the squire tells me he was no herald, to be answerable for the rogues that fought on the other side.’

‘We shall soon see for ourselves,’ said James; ‘I am to make this campaign.’

‘You! you, my liege! Against your own ally, and under the standard of England! Woe’s me, how could ye be so lost!’

James argued on his own conviction that the true France was with poor Charles VI., and that it was doing the country no service to prolong the resistance of the Armagnacs and the Dauphin, who then appeared mere partisans instead of patriots. As to fighting under the English banner, no subjection was involved in an adventurer king so doing: had not the King of Bohemia thus fought at Crecy? and was not the King of Sicily with the French army? Moreover, James himself felt the necessity of gaining some experience in the art of war. Theoretically he had studied it with all his might, from Cæsar, Quintus Curtius, and that favourite modern authority, the learned ecclesiastic, Jean Pavé, who was the Vauban of the fifteenth century; and he had likewise obtained greedily all the information he could from Henry himself and his warriors; but all this had convinced him that if war was to be more than a mere raid, conducted by mere spirit and instinct, some actual apprenticeship was necessary. Even for such a dash, Henry himself had told him that he would find his book-knowledge an absolute impediment without some practice, and would probably fail for that very reason when opposed to tough old seasoned warriors. And, prudence apart, James, at five-and-twenty, absolutely glowed with shame at the thought that every one of his companions had borne arms for at least ten years past, while his arrows had no mark but the target, his lances had all been broken in the tilt-yard.

It was this argument that above all served to pacify old Bairdsbrae; though he confessed himself very uneasy as to the prejudice it would create in Scotland, and so evidently loathed the expedition, that James urged on him to return to Scotland, instead of continuing his attendance. There was no fear but that his ransom would be accepted, and he had been absent twelve years from his home.

‘No, no, my Lord; I sware to your father that I’d never quit you till I brought you safe home again, and, God willing, I’ll keep my oath. But what’s this puir callant to do, that you were set upon rearing upon your books at Windsor?’

‘He shall choose,’ said James. ‘Either he shall study at the learned university at Oxford or at Paris, or he shall ride with me, and see how cities and battles are won. Speak not yet, cousin; it takes many months to shake out the royal banner, and you shall look about you ere deciding. Now give me yonder black cloak; they are assembling for the requiem.’

Malcolm, as he followed his king, was not a little amazed to see that Henry, the magnificent victor, was wrapped in a plain black serge garment, his short dark hair uncovered, his feet bare; and that on arriving at the Minster he threw himself on his knees, almost on his face, before the choir steps, there remaining while the *De profundis* and the like solemn and mournful strains floated through the dark vaultings above him, perhaps soothing while giving expression to the agony of his

affliction, and self-accusation, not for the devastation of the turbulent country of an insane sovereign, but for his having relaxed in the mighty work of renovation that he had imposed on himself.

Even when the service was ended, the King would not leave the Minster. He lifted himself up to bid Bedford and his companions return; but for himself, he intended to remain and confess, in preparation for being 'houcelled' at the Mass for the dead early the next morning, before hastening on the southern journey.

Was this, thought the bewildered Malcolm as he fell asleep, the godless atmosphere he had been used to think all that was not Glenuskie or Coldingham—England above all?

Indeed, in the frosty twilight of the spring morning, though Henry was now clad in his usual garb, sleeplessness, sorrow, and fasting made him as wan and haggard as any ascetic monk; his eyes were sunken, and his closed lips bore a stern fixed expression, which scarcely softened even when the sacrificial rite struck the notes of praise; and though a light came into his eye, it was rather the devotion of one who had offered himself, than the gleam of hopeful exultation. The horses stood saddled at the west door, for Henry was feverishly eager to reach Pontefract, where he had left his queen, and wished to avoid the delay of breaking his fast at York, but only to snatch a meal at some country hostel on his way.

Round the horses, however, a crowd of the citizens were collected to gaze; and two or three women with children in their arms made piteous entreaties for the King's healing touch for their little ones. The kind Henry waited, ungloved his hand, asked his treasurer for the gold pieces that were a much-esteemed part of the cure, and signed to his attendant chaplain to say the Collect appointed for the rite.

Fervent blessings were meantime murmured through the crowd, which broke out into loud shouts of 'God save King Harry!' as he at length leapt into the saddle; but at that moment, a feeble, withered old man, leaning on a staff, and wearing a bedesman's gown, peered up, and muttered to a comrade—

'Fair-faced, quotha—fair, maybe, but not long for this world! One is gone already, and the rest will not be long after; the holy man's words will have their way—the death mark is on him.'

The words caught James's ear, and he angrily turned round: 'Foul-mouthed raven, peace with thy traitor croak!' but Bedford caught his arm, crying—

'Hush! 'tis a mere bedesman;' and bending forward to pour a handful of silver into the beggar's cap, he said, 'Pray, Gaffer, pray—pray for the dead and living, both.'

'So,' said James, as both mounted, 'there's a fee for a boding traitor.'

'I knew his face,' said Bedford, with a shudder; 'he belonged to Archbishop Scrope.'

'A traitor, too,' said James.

'Nay, there was too much cause for his words. Never shall I forget the day when Scrope was put to death on this very moor on which we are entering. There sat my father on his horse, with us four boys around him, when the old man passed in front of us, and looked at him with a face pitiful and terrible. "Harry of Bolingbroke," he said, "because thou hast done these things, therefore shall thy foes be of thine own household; the sword shall never depart therefrom, but all the increase of thy house shall die in the flower of their age, and in the fourth generation shall their name be clean cut off." The commons will have it that at that moment my father was struck with leprosy; and struck to the heart assuredly he was, nor was he ever the same man again. I always believed that those words made him harder upon every prank of poor Hal's, till any son save Hal would have become his foe! And see now, the old bedesman may be in the right; poor pretty Blanche has long been in her grave, Thomas is with her now, and Jamie,'—he lowered his voice,—'when men say that Harry hath more of Alexander in him than there is in other men, it strikes to my heart to think of the ring lying on the empty throne.'

‘Now,’ said James, ‘what strikes *me* is, what doleful bodings can come into a brave man’s head on a chill morning before he has broken his fast. A tankard of hot ale will chase away omens, whether of bishop or bedesman.’

‘It may chase them from the mind, but will not make away with them,’ said John. ‘But I might have known better than to speak to you of such things—you who are well-nigh a Lollard in disbelief of all beyond nature.’

‘No Lollard am I,’ said James. ‘What Holy Church tells me, I believe devoutly; but not in that which she bids me loathe as either craft of devils or of men.’

‘Ay, of which? There lies the question,’ said John.

‘Of men,’ said the Scottish king; ‘of men who have wit enough to lay hold of the weaker side even of a sober youth such as Lord John of Lancaster! Your proneness to believe in sayings and prophecies, in sorceries and magic, is the weakest point of all of you.’

‘And it is the weakest point in you, James, that you will not credit upon proof, such proof as was the fulfilment of the prophecy of the place of my father’s death.’

‘One such saying as that, fulfilled to the ear, though not in truth, is made the plea for all this heart-sinking—ay, and what is worse, for the durance of your father’s widow as a witch, and of her brave young son, because forsooth his name is Arthur of Richemont, and some old Welsh rhymester hath whispered to Harry that Richmond shall come out of Brittany, and be king of England.’

‘Arthur is no worse off than any other captive of Agincourt,’ said Bedford; ‘and I tell you, James, the day may come when you will rue your want of heed to timely warnings.’

‘Better rue once than pine under them all my life, and far better than let them betray me into deeming some grewsome crime an act of justice, as you may yet let them do,’ said James.

Such converse passed between the two princes, while King Henry rode in advance, for the most part silent, and only desirous of reaching Pontefract Castle, where he had left the young wife whose presence he longed for the more in his trouble. The afternoon set in with heavy rain, but he would not halt, although he gave free permission to any of his suite to do so; and James recommended Malcolm to remain, and come on the next day with Brewster. The boy, however, disclaimed all weariness, partly because bashfulness made him unwilling to venture from under his royal kinsman’s wing, and partly because he could not bear to let the English suppose that a Scotsman and a Stewart could be afraid of weather. As the rain became harder with the evening twilight, silence sank upon the whole troop, and they went splashing on through the deep lanes, in mud and mire, until the lights of Pontefract Castle shimmered on high from its hill. The gates were opened, the horses clattered in, torches came forth, flickering and hissing in the darkness. The travellers went through what seemed to Malcolm an interminable number of courts and gateways, and at length flung themselves off their horses, when Henry, striding on, mounted the steps, entered the building, and, turning the corner of a great carved screen, he and his brother, with James and Malcolm, found themselves in the midst of a blaze of cressets and tapers, which lighted up the wainscoted part of the hall.

The whole scene was dazzling to eyes coming in from the dark, and only after a moment or two could Malcolm perceive that, close to the great fire, sat a party of four, playing at what he supposed to be that French game with painted cards of which Patrick Drummond had told him, and that the rest seemed to be in attendance upon them.

Dark eyed and haired, with a creamy ivory skin, and faultless form and feature, the fair Catherine would have been unmistakable, save that as Henry hurried forward, the lights glancing on his jaded face, matted hair, and soaked dress, the first to spring forward to meet him was a handsome young man, who wrung his hand, crying, ‘Ah, Harry, Harry, then ’tis too true!’ while the lady made scarcely a step forwards: no shade of colour tinged her delicate cheek; and though she did not resist his fervent embrace, it was with a sort of recoil, and all she was heard to say was, ‘*Eh, Messire, vos bottes sont crottées!*’

‘You know all, Kate?’ he asked, still holding her hand, and looking afraid of inflicting a blow.

‘The battle? Is it then so great a disaster?’ and, seeing his amazed glance, ‘The poor Messire de Clarence! it was pity of him; he was a handsome prince.’

‘Ah, sweet, he held thee dear,’ said Henry, catching at the crumb of sympathy.

‘But yes,’ said Catherine, evidently perplexed by the strength of his feeling, and repeating, ‘He was a *beau sieur courtois*. But surely it will not give the Armagnacs the advantage?’

‘With Heaven’s aid, no! But how fares it with poor Madge—his wife, I mean?’

‘She is away to her estates. She went this morn, and wished to have taken with her the Demoiselle de Beaufort; but I forbade that—I could not be left without one lady of the blood.’

‘Alack, Joan—’ and Henry was turning, but Catherine interrupted him. ‘You have not spoken to Madame of Hainault, nor to the Duke of Orleans. Nay, you are in no guise to speak to any one,’ she added, looking with repugnance at the splashes of mud that reached even to his waist.

‘I will don a fresh doublet, sweetheart,’ said Henry, more rebuked than seemed fitting, ‘and be ready to sup anon.’

‘Supper! We supped long ago.’

‘That may be; but we have ridden long since we snatched our meal, that I might be with thee the sooner, my Kate.’

‘That was not well in you, my Lord, to come in thus dishevelled, steaming with wet—not like a king. You will be sick, my Lord.’

The little word of solicitude recalled his sweet tender smile of gratitude. No fear, *ma belle*; sickness dares not touch me.’

‘Then,’ said the Queen, ‘you will be served in your chamber, and we will finish our game.’

Henry turned submissively away; but Bedford tarried an instant to say, ‘Fair sister, he is sore distressed. It would comfort him to have you with him. He has longed for you.’

Catherine opened her beautiful brown eyes in a stare of surprise and reproof at the infraction of the rules of ceremony which she had brought with her. John of Bedford had never seemed to her either *beau* or *courtois*, and she looked unutterable things, to which he replied by an elevation of his marked eyebrows.

She sat down to her game, utterly ignoring the other princes in their weather-beaten condition; and they were forced to follow the King, and make their way to their several chambers, for Queen Catherine’s will was law in matters of etiquette.

‘The proud peat! She is jealous of every word Harry speaks—even to his cousin,’ muttered James, as he reached his own room. ‘You saw her, though,—you saw her!’ he added, smiling, as he laid his hand on Malcolm’s shoulder.

The boy coloured like a poppy, and answered awkwardly enough, ‘The Lady Joan, Sir?’

‘Who but the Lady Joan, thou silly lad? How say’st thou? Will not Scotland forget in the sight of that fair face all those fule phantasies—the only folly I heard at Glenuskie?’

‘Methinks,’ said Malcolm, looking down in sheer awkwardness, ‘it were easier to bow to her than to King Harry’s dame. She hath more of stateliness.’

‘Humph!’ said James, ‘dost so serve thy courtly ‘prenticeship? Nay, but in a sort I see thy meaning. The royal blood of England shows itself to one who hath an eye for princeliness of nature.’

‘Nay,’ said Malcolm, gratified, ‘those dark eyes and swart locks—’

‘Dark eyes—swart locks!’ interrupted the King. ‘His wits have gone wool-gathering.’

‘Indeed, Sir!’ exclaimed Malcolm, ‘I thought you meant the lady who stood by the Queen’s table, with the grand turn of the neck and the white wimple and veil.’

‘Pshaw!’ said James; ‘the foolish callant! he hath taken that great brown Luxemburg nun of Dame Jac’s for the Rose of Somerset.’

However, James, seeing how confounded the boy was by this momentary displeasure, explained to him who the other persons he had seen were—Jaqueline, the runaway Countess of Hainault in her own right, and Duchess of Brabant by marriage; Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, the King’s young,

brilliant brother; the grave, melancholy Duke of Orleans, who had been taken captive at Agincourt, and was at present quartered at Pontefract; the handsome, but stout and heavy-looking Earl of March; brave Lord Warwick; Sir Lewis Robsart, the old knight to whose charge the Queen had been specially committed from the moment of her betrothal; and a young, bold, gay-looking lad, of Malcolm's own age, but far taller and stouter, and with a merry, half-defiant, half-insouciant air, who had greatly taken his fancy, was, he was told, Ralf Percy, the second son of Sir Harry Percy.

'Of him they called Hotspur?—who was taken captive at Otterburn, who died a rebel!' exclaimed Malcolm.

'Ay,' said James; 'but King Harry had learnt the art of war as a boy, first under Hotspur, in Wales; nor doth he love that northern fashion of ours of keeping up feud from generation to generation.

So hath he restored the eldest son to his barony, and set him to watch our Borders; and the younger, Ralf, he is training in his own school of chivalry.'

More wonders for Malcolm Stewart, who had learnt to believe it mere dishonour and tameness to forgive the son for his father's deeds. A cloistered priest could hardly do so: pardon to a hostile family came only with the last mortal throe; and here was this warlike king forgiving as a mere matter of course!

'But,' added James, 'you had best not speak of your bent conventwards in the Court here. I should not like to have you called the monkling!'

Malcolm crimsoned, with the resolution never to betray himself.

CHAPTER V: WHITTINGTON S FEAST

The next day the royal train set forth from Pontefract, and ere mounting, James presented his young kinsman to the true Joan Beaufort—fair-haired, soft-featured, blue-eyed, and with a lovely air of graciousness, as she greeted him with a sweet, blushing, sunny smile, half that of the queen in anticipation, half that of the kindly maiden wishing to set a stranger at ease. So beautiful was she, that Malcolm felt annihilated at the thought of his blunder of last night.

As they rode on, James was entirely occupied with the lady, and Malcolm was a good deal left to himself; for, though the party was numerous, he knew no one except the Duke of Bedford, who was riding with the King and Lord Warwick, in deep consultation, while Sir Nigel Baird, Lord Marmion, and the rest were in the rear. He fell into a mood of depression such as had not come upon him since he passed the border, thinking himself despised by all for being ill-favoured and ill-dressed, and chafing, above all, at the gay contempt he fancied in young Ralf Percy's eye. He became constantly more discontented with this noisy turmoil, and more resolved to insist on returning to the peaceful cloister where alone he could hide his head and be at rest.

The troop halted for what they called their noon meat at the abode of a hospitable Yorkshire knight; but King Henry, in order that the good gentleman's means should not be overtaken, had given directions that only the ladies and the princes should enter the house, while the rest of the suite should take their meal at the village inn.

King James, in attending to Joan, had entirely forgotten his cousin; and Malcolm, doubtful and diffident, was looking hesitatingly at the gateway, when Ralf Percy called out, 'Ha! you there, this is our way. That is only for the royal folk; but there's good sack and better sport down here! I'll show you the way,' he added, good-naturedly, softened, as most were, by the startled, wistful, timid look.

Malcolm, ashamed to say he was royal, but surprised at the patronage, was gratefully following, when old Bairdsbrae indignantly laid his hand on the rein. 'Not so, Sir; this is no place for you!'

'Let me alone!' entreated Malcolm, as he saw Percy's amazed look and whistle of scorn. 'They don't want me.'

'You will never have your place if you do not take it,' said the old gentleman; and leading the trembling, shrinking boy up to the door, he continued, 'For the honour of Scotland, Sir!' and then announcing Malcolm by his rank and title, he almost thrust him in.

Fancying he detected a laugh on Ralf Percy's face, and a sneer on that of the stout English porter, Malcolm felt doubly wretched as he was ushered into the hall and the buzz of talk and the confusion made by the attendance of the worthy knight and his many sons, one of whom, waiting with better will than skill, had nearly run down the shy limping Scotsman, who looked wildly for refuge at some table. In his height of distress, a kindly gesture of invitation beckoned to him, and he found himself seated and addressed, first in French, and then in careful foreign English, by the same lady whom he had yesterday taken for Joan of Somerset, namely, Esclairmonde de Luxemburg.

He was too much confused to look up till the piece of pasty and the wine with which the lady had caused him to be supplied were almost consumed, and it was not till she had made some observations on the journey that he became at ease enough to hazard any sort of answer, and then it was in his sweet low Scottish voice, with that irresistibly attractive look of shy wistful gratitude in his great soft brown eyes, while his un-English accent caused her to say, 'I am a stranger here, like yourself, my Lord;' and at the same moment he first raised his eyes to behold what seemed to him perfect beauty and dignity, an oval face, richly-tinted olive complexion, dark pensive eyes, a sweet grave mouth smiling with encouraging kindness, and a lofty brow that gave the whole face a magnificent air, not so much stately as above and beyond this world. It might have befitted St. Barbara or St. Katherine, the great intellectual virgin visions of purity and holiness of the middle ages; but the kindness of the smile went to Malcolm's heart, and emboldened him to answer in his best French, 'You are from Holland, lady?'

‘Not from the fens,’ she answered. ‘My home lies in the borders of the forest of Ardennes.’

And then they found that they understood each other best when she spoke French, and Malcolm English, or rather Scotch; and their acquaintance made so much progress, that when the signal was again given to mount, the Lady Esclairmonde permitted Malcolm to assist her to her saddle; and as he rode beside her he felt pleased with himself, and as if Ralf Percy were welcome to look at him now.

On Esclairmonde’s other hand there rode a small, slight girl, whom Malcolm took for quite a child, and paid no attention to; but presently old Sir Lewis Robsart rode back with a message that my Lady of Westmoreland wished to know where the Lady Alice Montagu was. A gentle, timid voice answered, ‘O Sir, I am well here with Lady Esclairmonde. Pray tell my good lady so.’

And therewith Sir Lewis smiled, and said, ‘You could scarcely be in better hands, fair damsel,’ and rode back again; while Alice was still entreating, ‘May I stay with you, dear lady? It is all so strange and new!’

Esclairmonde smiled, and said, ‘You make me at home here, Mademoiselle. It is I who am the stranger!’

‘Ah! but you have been in Courts before. I never lived anywhere but at Middleham Castle till they fetched me away to meet the Queen.’

For the gentle little maiden, a slender, fair-haired, childish-faced creature, in her sixteenth year, was the motherless child and heiress of the stout Earl of Salisbury, the last of the Montacutes, or Montagues, who was at present fighting the King’s battles in France, but had sent his commands that she should be brought to Court, in preparation for fulfilling the long-arranged contract between her and Sir Richard Nevil, one of the twenty-two children of the Earl of Westmoreland.

She was under the charge of the Countess—a stately dame, with all the Beaufort pride; and much afraid of her she was, as everything that was shy or forlorn seemed to turn towards the maiden whose countenance not only promised kindness but protection.

Presently the cavalcade passed a gray building in the midst of green fields and orchards, where, under the trees, some black-veiled figures sat spinning.

‘A nunnery!’ quoth Esclairmonde, looking eagerly after it as she rode past.

‘A nunnery!’ said Malcolm, encouraged into the simple confidingness of a young boy. ‘How unlike the one where my sister is! Not a tree is near it; it is perched upon a wild crag overhanging the angry sea, and the winds roar, and the gulls and eagles scream, and the waves thunder round it!’

‘Yet it is not the less a haven of peace,’ replied Esclairmonde.

‘Verily,’ said Malcolm, ‘one knows what peace is under that cloister, where all is calm while the winds rave without.’

‘You know how to love a cloister,’ said the lady, as she heard his soft, sad tones.

‘I had promised myself to make my home in one,’ said Malcolm; ‘but my King will have me make trial of the world first. And so please you,’ he added, recollecting himself, ‘he forbade me to make my purpose known; so pray, lady, be so good as to forget what I have said.’

‘I will be silent,’ said Esclairmonde; ‘but I will not forget, for I look on you as one like myself, my young lord. I too am dedicated, and only longing to reach my cloistered haven.’

She spoke it out with the ease of those days when the monastic was as recognized a profession as any other calling, and yet with something of the desire to make it evident on what ground she stood.

Lady Alice uttered an exclamation of surprise.

‘Yes,’ said Esclairmonde, ‘I was dedicated his my infancy, and promised myself in the nunnery at Dijon when I was seven years old.’

Then, as if to turn the conversation from herself, she asked of Malcolm if he too had made any vow.

‘Only to myself,’ said Malcolm. ‘Neither my Tutor nor the Prior of Coldingham would hear my vows.’ And he was soon drawn into telling his whole story, to which the ladies both listened with great interest and kindness, Esclairmonde commending his resolution to leave the care of his lands

and vassals to one whom he represented as so much better fitted to bear them as Patrick Drummond, and only regretting the silence King James had enjoined, saying she felt that there was safety and protection in being avowed as a destined religious.

‘And you are one,’ said Lady Alice, looking at her in wonder. ‘And yet you are with *that* lady —’ And the girl’s innocent face expressed a certain wonder and disgust that no one could marvel at who had heard the Flemish Countess talk in the loudest, broadest, most hoydenish style.

‘She has been my very good lady,’ said Esclairmonde; ‘she has, under the saints, saved me from much.’

‘Oh, I entreat you, tell us, dear lady!’ entreated Alice. It was not a reticent age. Malcolm Stewart had already avowed himself in his own estimation pledged to a monastic life, and Esclairmonde of Luxemburg had reasons for wishing her position and intentions to be distinctly understood by all with whom she came in contact; moreover, there was a certain congeniality in both her companions, their innocence and simplicity, that drew out confidence, and impelled her to defend her lady.

‘My poor Countess,’ she said, ‘she has been sorely used, and has suffered much. It is a piteous thing when our little imperial fiefs go to the spindle side!’

‘What are her lands?’ asked Malcolm.

‘Hainault, Holland, and Zealand,’ replied the lady. ‘Her father was Count of Hainault, her mother the sister of the last Duke of Burgundy—him that was slain on the bridge of Montereau. She was married as a mere babe to the Duke of Touraine, who was for a brief time Dauphin, but he died ere she was sixteen, and her father died at the same time. Some say they both were poisoned. The saints forbend it should be true; but thus it was my poor Countess was left desolate, and her uncle, the Bishop of Liége—Jean Sans Pitié, as they call him—claimed her inheritance. You should have seen how undaunted she was!’

‘Were you with her then?’ asked Alice Montagu.

‘Yes. I had been taken from our convent at Dijon, when my dear brothers, to whom Heaven be merciful! died at Azincourt. My *oncles à la mode de Bretagne*—how call you it in English?’

‘Welsh uncles,’ said Alice.

‘They are the Count de St. Pol and the Bishop of Théroüenne. They came to Dijon. In another month I should have been seventeen, and been admitted as a novice; but, alack! there were all the lands that came through my grandmother, in Holland and in Flanders, all falling to me, and Monseigneur of Théroüenne, like almost all secular clergy, cannot endure the religious orders, and would not hear of my becoming a Sister. They took me away, and the Bishop declared my dedication null, and they would have bestowed me in marriage at once, I believe, if Heaven had not aided me, and they could not agree on the person. And then my dear Countess promised me that she would never let me be given without my free will.’

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