

SCOTLAND'S HEIR

by
WINIFRED DUKE



"Woe's me for Prince Charlie"

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BONNY PRINCE CHARLIE

Reproduced by gracious permission of His Majesty the King
from the original painting by John Pettie in the
Palace of Holyrood House, Edinburgh.

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BY

WINIFRED DUKE

AUTHOR OF "THE HOUSE OF OGILVY," "THE WILD FLAME,"
"THE LAIRD"

"WAE'S ME FOR PRINCE CHARLIE!"

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PART I

FOLLOW MY LEADER

CHAPTER I

“Since you are tongue-tied and so loath to speak,
In dumb significants proclaim your thoughts:
Let him that is a true-born gentleman
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this brier pluck a white rose with me.”

SHAKESPEARE.

GEORGE OF HANOVER sat upon the throne of Great Britain, whilst Louis xv. comfortably occupied the throne of France. The English were poor and phlegmatic, the Scots poor and discontented, the French poor and outwardly resigned. In Italy and elsewhere the Pope ruled. In Rome the thoughts and hopes of the Chevalier de St. George were turned towards Paris, whither his Carluccio had gone. In Paris the gaze of the young Chevalier was strained towards Scotland, whither he hoped to go. “Lord, open the eyes of the young man!” might fittingly have been uttered over him, for he ever remained blind to what he did not wish to see. In his case there was no mountain full of horses and chariots of fire, no help from heaven, scant aid on earth. A dwindling cause, a dying ideal handed down through generations, abortive risings, furtive plots: on these he built his house of cards, and saw it a palace fair.

Round the corner and into the story comes Mr. Murray of Broughton. A small, bleak man, modishly attired, just returned from Paris to his native Scotland, halting, hesitating, grimacing at the nip of Edinburgh’s east winds, shrugging his shoulders under his fine cloak. It is only charitable to assume that the pallor of his complexion was due to a gusty crossing and a chilly ride from Leith. Gathering cloak and courage, he plunged down the uneven steps of a jeweller’s shop in the Luckenbooths.

The shop was dark and low, so that Mr. Murray might surely be pardoned for falling over the foot of a gentleman from Skye, seated in the darkest corner. The reader may pardon, but the Skye gentleman did not. With a terrible oath in Gaelic, he rose up and damned Mr. Murray’s inexcusable clumsiness. Mr. Murray clapped hand to sword, the Skye gentleman drew his dirk, the

goldsmith tore his hair, and the goldsmith's wife swooned. Faces peered in at the shop door, and onlookers shouted for the City Guard. The chimes of St. Giles' overhead rang out reprovingly.

"Deil tak' you, sir!" bawled the Skye gentleman. He possessed a local habitation and a name, both being MacLeod. "It is unpardonable that I cannot enter an honest merchant's booth in quest of a snuff-box, but you must bring your pestilential weight down upon my unoffending foot!"

Mr. Murray's hat swept the floor in the abasement of his bow. "Sir, one misfortune may lead to an advantage. I, who have the honour of addressing"—he coughed, and the Skye gentleman bowed—"er—you, possess, my friends tell me, a very pretty taste in snuff-boxes. If you will be so vastly good as to overlook my clumsiness, I shall be happy to tender my humble opinion."

"Plain lids," declared the Skye gentleman. His air was truculent.

"Sir—pardon me—chased. In Paris, from whence I have but lately returned, the chased lid is all the mode." He rapped on the counter. "Your wares, man, and cease to gape!"

"From Paris? Ah!" remarked Mr. MacLeod of MacLeod. His look was thoughtful.

"From Paris, sir," corroborated Mr. Murray of Broughton.

They bent bewigged heads over a glittering array of snuff-boxes.

The goldsmith wiped his brow. The goldsmith's wife collected her skirts and her dignity. The Peeping Toms, mightily disappointed, sheered away. St. Giles' had chimed again before the weighty question of plain versus chased lids had been thoroughly threshed out. It was by no means settled. Each gentleman still adhered firmly to his own opinion. They must have a second, nay, a third. Was there not a soul in Edinburgh, known to either, qualified to give the casting vote?

The chased lids were the more costly. Naturally the goldsmith sided with Mr. Murray. The Skye gentleman puckered his nose, and raked his wig with a thoughtful forefinger. The said forefinger presently joined the rest of its owner's hand in striking a forgetful brow. A plague upon his prodigious stupidity! Here was he, wasting his own time and that of his honoured new acquaintance, (more bows exchanged, followed by pinches of snuff presented from mulls long in their owners' possession, and deprecating flicks of fine handkerchiefs,) when all the while—"All the while, not a pennystone cast from us, is my dearest friend, an Appin gentleman, whose taste in snuff-boxes is, sir, positively the last word on the subject."

Mr. Murray cried out with raised hands of admiration. Where was this paragon to be found? At Peggy Ferrier's tavern? Prodigious fortunate! They

must visit and consult him without delay. They tumbled back the goldsmith's wares, vowed a speedy return armed with an unimpeachable decision, swept their hats off again to the goldsmith's bonny wife, and so forth. The doorway was low and narrow. The Skye gentleman became vastly humorous about his foot. He hoped that his new friend saw it in the daylight, and would not offend again. Mr. Murray dealt a sly nip to the arm beneath the peat-smelling coat. "'Twas the other I trod upon," he murmured softly.

Outside, Edinburgh was grey and comely. In the November dusk the long, climbing lines of houses framing the Lawnmarket were etched darkly against a dun sky. The air blew full of snow. Everything showed uniformly drab and colourless, the black bulk of St. Giles', the oblong of the Parliament Close, the towering *lands* beyond the Parliament House. Both men walked fast, muffled in their cloaks, their voices lowered only to catch the ear of the other.

"You bring letters?" MacLeod peered across at Murray.

"One letter." The three syllables were stressed.

The islander quickened his step. "From the Prince?"

"Hush! Yes." The speaker darted an apprehensive glance about him.

The pair turned down a wynd diving steeply between tall houses. These showed blank faces to the passer-by, offering a careless invitation only by gaping mouths leading to twisting turnpike stairs. The strip of walk was filthy, the strip of sky overhead a long, dun ribbon. Murray and his companion paused before a tavern built upon the steepest part of the close. It seemed to lurch downward, as if leaning against its neighbour. Its few lighted windows had a squint, peering appearance, like the sly gaze of a gled-eyed human being.

A woman opened to Murray's furtive knock. Mrs. Peggy Ferrier (let us give her brevet rank, for she possessed no legal claim to the appellation, poor soul) is not the heroine of this chronicle, so no space need be wasted in cataloguing her charms. Suffice it that she was as unattractive as her hostelry, and her method of securing custom a mystery. Custom she had in plenty, as the loud oaths and roaring choruses coming from various apartments with jealously-shut doors bore witness. The candle held in her hand threw wavering light upon peeling walls and dust-powdered floor, her rat's face and beady, shifting eyes. She nodded slowly, and led the way up stairs which creaked protest and warning. Perhaps the inanimate things, the house that had witnessed crime and treachery and bloodshed in its length of days, knew that these two were going to the discussion of a deed whose ending might be the ladder from which there is no descent. Fear not, he who reads. The necks of both were safe enough. MacLeod had craft and cunning sufficient not to risk his all in a desperate adventure. John Murray embarked upon it, lost everything

including honour, and lives in Scotland's annals as a traitor meaner than Judas Iscariot. Judas at least gave back the blood-money, and went and hanged himself. Murray of Broughton kept the price of dishonour, and lived till his appointed hour.

In the room to which they were leisurely ascending five gentlemen awaited them, all presumably experts in the nice question of snuff-boxes. That long back and long face, topped by a shock of ill-powdered red hair, were the happy possessions of Stewart of Appin, to secure whose unimpeachable opinion Messrs. Murray and MacLeod were so anxiously hastening. He was standing by the window in the fading twilight, talking to the Earl of Traquair, Mr. Murray's near neighbour at Broughton. The Earl's conversation proclaimed him an ardent Jacobite, but in action, even as a simple messenger, he proved more cunning than capable. The youngest and the oldest of the gathering leaned together, one a slim, restless-eyed boy, the other a mountain of an aged man. His gross body, harassed by the evils of sciatica, dropsy, and strenuous living, was sunk in a vast chair in an attitude which yet lent him length and dignity. His heavy-jowled face was seamed by a thousand wrinkles of craft, laughter, and crime. At the fire, whose light beat upon a countenance singularly noble and thoughtful, stood the one honest man, who saved his soul alive by losing his great possessions. Has the reader been adequately introduced? If not, behold Mr. Stewart of Appin, Charles, fifth Earl of Traquair, young MacDonald of Glengarry, my Lord Lovat, and Cameron of Lochiel, while here come Mr. Murray of Broughton and Mr. MacLeod of MacLeod to complete the pleasant party.

The room was high and windy, lifted far above the bustle of the city. Its two rattling windows had screening shutters, which banged in the gale, and closed out a bird's-eye view over the slant of roofs, and the dark threads of precipitous wynds far below. Candles broke its dusk with their yellow glimmer, touching the heavy cloaks and brooding faces of the gathering. At the sight of the new-comers, old Lord Lovat heaved his bulk out of his chair, and the rest turned doorwards.

"Snuff-boxes!" giggled young Glengarry. "Oh, Egad, snuff-boxes!"

They came further into the room, and hands met other hands. There was an air of secrecy, of furtive, tentative preparedness in the atmosphere. Each man nudged his neighbour, and waited for him to speak. They drew their chairs about a worm-eaten table, and voices dropped as if the soiled, listening walls might overhear. A tavern catch was being roared out through the lighted windows of a house across the way.

"This is the mode of snuff-box fashionable over the water," said Mr. Murray.

He produced a small diamond mull, and pressed back the lid. The box was empty of its destined commodity, but the deft sliding aside of a false bottom revealed a portrait set in diamonds. The face of Prince Charles Edward Stuart smiled up at the eager gazers. They studied its delicate oval, the somewhat full mouth, the weak chin, the eyes, brown, prominent, bold of glance, hard of inquiry, the haughty carriage of the young head, slightly turned as if to meet the spectator, the bright, gold-tipped hair hanging down beneath the formal curve of the peruke. It was a startling thing, that young, vivid face, brilliant as the stones surrounding it, shining out of the dusk of this squalid room and the strange company. They passed it from hand to hand in silence.

"Is he as bonny as the artist's fancy paints him?" The sneer was Traquair's.

"Bonny! A thousand times bonnier than that piece of coloured ivory!" Murray struck the table. "Those eyes, the finest I ever saw, and the whole body built for war. I tell you, sirs, that that is a face which men will follow to the world's end, and the Highlanders into Hell itself!"

They took fire from his enthusiasm, his stark sincerity. Fate caught this man, of all men writhing in the desperate, tangled coil of the '45, the least fitted to choose between death and dishonour, but spared him the greatest shame of any—the opportunity to sell his king's son. Murray loved Charles Edward from the moment of their first meeting. He never wavered in his devotion to his Prince, though he served him ill, and betrayed lesser lives to save his own.

"You have word from His Royal Highness?" MacLeod asked.

Murray gave him a letter, and reclaimed his snuff-box. He was seeing, not the painted face, but the glowing original, as he and the Prince paced up and down behind the stables of the Tuileries in Paris. He saw the soft hair blown back from the eager brow, marked the restless, foreign gestures of the long hands, hearkened to a torrent of excited talk, as Charles outlined his plans and hopes. He was sick of dodging and skulking and evading notice, stifled by this half-life of furtive hiding and secret interviews, weary of his humiliating position, mean lodgings, interminable waiting for the promised aid of France. Plot after plot had miscarried or delayed since his headlong flight from Rome, buoyed up by such high hopes. He was resolved to strike a blow for his own hand, to win or lose all. He would come over in person, and throw himself on the loyalty of the Scots people. "If I bring with me but a single footman, I shall visit Scotland next summer," he declared.

His eagerness, his reckless enthusiasm, his youthful certainty carried

Murray, ordinarily cautious and a coward, off his feet. He had said little to discourage Charles, and was here to-night to aid him. He had opened the royal eyes as to the worthlessness and double-dealing of his agents in France, but looking at the surrounding faces now, his heart failed. Lovat, whom he was to herd to Tower Hill, young Glengarry, a future spy, Traquair the skulker, MacLeod the turncoat, Appin the coward, Lochiel, the one righteous man. Charles Edward was building on a quicksand if he relied on the support of such as these.

MacLeod kissed the letter, tears in his narrow eyes. "There's a Prince that I would aid to my last penny, my last man!" he cried.

"You would join him if he came?"

"Aye, would I not?"

"Even if he came alone?"

"Even then!"

"Well, write your promise to the Prince." Murray thrust across paper, a standish, and a dingy quill.

MacLeod drew back. "The spoken word of a Skye chief should be sufficient, sir."

They argued together, their voices lowered by caution, but rapidly rising in anger and annoyance. Murray was met by a craft which matched his own, an obstinacy as hard to shake as this rattling old house whose walls sheltered both. MacLeod would promise anything, but would write nothing. He should make it his business to advance the Prince's interest, as much as was in his power, would join him, "let him come when he would," but the written word was dangerous.

Murray turned in despair to Traquair and Appin. They were less reckless, more cautious, equally recalcitrant. Each had probing questions to put as to the force the Prince proposed to bring with him, the assistance in men and money that might be counted upon from France. They cried out together that it was a mad enterprise, unless strongly backed by the French king. All the time the old man and the young were silent: Glengarry because he had little but his sword to lend, Lovat because he had great possessions.

"And you, my lord?" Murray turned to him, pale and quiet.

Simon Fraser, a lifetime of adventure, hazard, and wickedness behind him, murmured that he was over-old for plots. He lapsed into the vernacular in his earnestness. "Look at me, sir, a mass of aches and pains and gouty flesh. Can a man o' eighty lead oot his clan to dance to the tune of that Popish spark's piping?" He cocked his great head slily to one side. "What are we tae get oot

o't, Mr. Murray, tell us that?"

"The honour and happiness of seeing your rightful king in St. James's, my lord." The retort was stern.

Lovat lolled in his chair. "Faith, sir, I think he's warmer at Rome."

Murray snatched out his snuff-box, and thrust the pictured Charles upon the other's rheumy-eyed attention. "I spoke not of the King, my Lord Lovat. I implore you to look upon his son's face, and tell me if you will leave young blood like his to cool in a Paris back-street? He would take scant account of a Highland winter and these Edinburgh haars!"

The old man sat drowned in thought. Out in the '15 on the Government side, before and after a lukewarm Jacobite, he possessed a powerful clan, far-reaching influence, an unassailable position, but he no longer boasted the clear wits and ready craft that had served him in past emergencies and tight corners. He wanted one thing, however, and if he obtained it, George of Hanover or James Stuart might sit upon the throne of England for all he cared.

"Harkee, sir." He laid his swollen hand upon Murray's arm. "The King promised me a dukedom. Let His Majesty make me Duke of Beaufort, let the Prince bring over my patent with him, and were my friend Duncan Forbes of Culloden, the Lord President, fifty times my friend, I'd follow the White Rose!"

Murray smiled at the old man's vanity. "You will lead out your clan, my lord, for a wreath of strawberry leaves?"

"Aye, sir, or, as the Scripture has it, I will send my beloved son." He turned suddenly to young Glengarry. "He is presently at St. Andrews University, and should be of your age, child."

Alastair Ruadh MacDonald laughed. "My younger brother, sir, but nineteen, is wedded, and the father of two bairns. I will quote Scripture against my Lord Lovat's, and say that he has married a wife and therefore cannot come, but I"—he rose with kindling eyes—"will serve in his stead, and our MacDonalds will follow the Prince to a man!"

"And what says Lochiel?" Murray turned to the one who hitherto had not spoken.

The grandson of Ewan Cameron, the son of an exiled and attainted Jacobite, smiled in the dusk. "You should not need to ask a Cameron that, sir, only I would have the Prince use caution. He is young and eager and ambitious, but we older heads know France. Go you back to him, Mr. Murray, bid him come *with French aid*, and Scotland will do the rest."

"Plague take the wind! This room is like a vault!" The complaint was

Traquair's.

He went across and heaved a mass of wood a-top of the miserable fire. The flames shot up, showing faces secretive, watchful, calm, cunning, and afraid. The snuff-box lay open on the table. The diamonds winked as if in mockery of the mean room and meaner-hearted conspirators.

MacLeod called for wine, sending his voice ringing down the dark well of the impenetrable stair. A slovenly girl brought bottle and glasses, enduring with shut eyes when Lord Lovat squeezed and kissed her. They drank to the King across the water, and to the Prince who was his elder son. It is doubtful whether King James, then on his knees in the chapel of his palace at Rome, praying for his "dearest Carluccio," or Charles Edward, yawning over a game of cards with his Irish intimates, Sir Thomas Sheridan and Parson Kelly, was a penny the better or the worse for the toast.

CHAPTER II

“But, rising from the wave of the north, I beheld him bright in his looks. I beheld the son of the king. My beating soul is high. I laid my head down in night: again ascended the form. Why delayest thou thy coming, young rider of stormy waves!

But, there, far-distant, he comes, where seas roll their green ridges in mist! Young dweller of my soul, why dost thou delay——”

OLD GAELIC: *Fingal and Roscrana.*

DURING the month of June 1745 there were dwelling at Nantes seven gentlemen, whose main aim and object seemed to be the avoidance of each other. They had all arrived in the town at different times. They lodged under different roofs. Did two of them chance to meet, in street or tavern, either took snuff and glanced askant over the encountered one's head. Thus it was surely a strange coincidence which brought all seven together aboard a small vessel that slipped out of the mouth of the Loire on June 22nd. The oldest of the group, lean and humorous-looking, walked and talked much apart with a slim young man in the dress of a student of the Scots College. To a casual eye the pair might have passed for father and son.

These seven were the sole retinue that Prince Charles Edward brought with him on his rash and ill-judged expedition. “No Irish need apply” was not the royal motto, for they predominated in the little group immediately surrounding him. Take Sir Thomas Sheridan, cousin to King James on the wrong side of the blanket, ex-governor to His Royal Highness, whose spelling was a criterion of the amount of instruction the jovial Irishman had succeeded in imparting to his idle charge. He had known the Prince from childhood, spoilt him, petted him, called him endearing names in private, but in public was deferential and urbane. Take, if you prefer, Captain O'Sullivan of the rolling eye and wide mouth, an officer in French service, and destined to high promotion in Prince Charles's, though uncharitably declared by his detractors not to be overfond of appearing in action. Also and likewise there were Colonel Strickland, that bone of contention in letters between the Prince and his father, doomed to pass out of his own story and this narrative at Carlisle, Sir John MacDonald, crazy and convivial, and the Rev. George Kelly, once upon a time secretary to my Lord Bishop of Rochester. For burning his fingers in the episcopal pie known as the Atterbury Plot, the Rev. George had languished fourteen years in the Tower, but without losing his appetite or enthusiasm for Jacobite ploys. Hibernian enterprise and rashness were leavened by Scots commonsense in the person of the sober banker Æneas MacDonald, who knew to a fraction the strength of the Jacobite funds, and the attainted, exiled Marquis of Tullibardine, whose

younger brother reigned in his stead as Duke of Athol. This courageous Whig fled to London upon the approach of danger, while another brother, my Lord George Murray——But we are keeping His Royal Highness waiting.

His Royal Highness did not like waiting, far from it. If the miniature in Murray's snuff-box had moved men by its promise, the living Prince was a personality taut, vivid, bubbling over with ill-suppressed nervous energy. Without being actively restless, he was seldom still. The whole effect he gave was of something over-emphasised, over-brilliant, surcharged with vitality. The carriage of the head, right royal, the eyes, dropping haughty lids in disdain, or arching finely-curved brows in half-petulant inquiry, the long, beautiful hands, the firm body, big-boned without clumsiness, the clean lines of the straight limbs and erect young back marked him out from the rest as his mere youth could not do. He carried his burden of royalty easily, unconcernedly, but it showed in every gesture, every movement, each turn of head and body. He could not conceal it any more than he could change the colour of his eyes. In silks and jewels he was a very royal prince. Even in rags he looked a king's son. He was as selfish as the devil, as narrow-minded as a barren woman, as strong as a team of horses, and as full of tricks and slyness as a Jesuit priest. He walked through life with his head high, over the anguish of women and the tears of strong men. Yet for all this he lit a blaze in the Highland hearts destined never to be put out. "Tearlach's year" was a year of bloodshed and agony and disembowelled hopes, a year that left its legacy of burned hearthstones and vacant roof-trees to generations then unborn, but if he came again to-day he would find the same loyalty awaiting him amongst the children of men.

He paced the deck now, gay and sanguine. At last he had cut the fraying cable that held him to the rotting wharf of his past. He was young, glowing, ardent, with a head full of plots and ambitions, empty pockets, scant support save the pie-crust promises of France, and the lukewarm approval of Murray of Broughton. "If I fail, at least I shall have struck a blow for my own rights. If I die, at least I shall have lived first."

From the outset of the fated expedition the omens were unpropitious. They lingered a week at Belleisle, awaiting fair winds and the escort of a French war-ship. Four days after the two vessels had set sail for Scotland, the *Lion*, a British man-of-war, hove in sight. The *Doutelle*, fearful for her precious freight, sheered off and watched: the *Elizabeth* attacked and engaged. After five hours, she damaged her enemy sufficiently to oblige the beaten foe to retire, but she herself was forced to return to France, crippled and full of wounded men. The incident was ominous of the blood shortly to drench Scotland, but Charles, watching the fight with quick breath and shining eyes,

saw it not thus.

He was Papist, superstitious, full of unshaken belief in good or evil portents. They sighted Bernera Island, a smudge on the horizon, thirteen days later. He dreamed dreams, gliding through the dark nights without guiding light, for they dared burn no lamp. The little ship drove lonely amid the seas which sprayed her deck with lacy foam. Suddenly huge, dark wings shadowed it. The Prince looked up curiously at the large Hebridean eagle, tilted against the wind, poised above the vessel, a thing of loneliness and cruelty, a savage law unto itself. It followed steadily, swooping nearer, receding, returning. Fear clouded Charles's eyes, and he crossed himself furtively.

The bleak, low-lying island of Eriska, dropped down between South Uist and Barra, dawned upon their view in the late evening. They anchored beneath a languid sky, primrose with the end of the sunset. They had been eighteen days at sea, encountering boisterous winds and great waves, cold and mildness, tempest and calm. Leaving the Duke of Athol, groaning with gout, on board, the rest went ashore in the longboat. The Prince walked the remote little strand proudly, light of foot as of heart, treading the white sand as if it had been a royal carpet. Mist, louring over the landscape, was beginning to turn to thick rain. The rising wind dashed chill drops in their bent, unprotected faces. Smoke rose up from the thatched roof of a mean cottage. They hastened towards it to seek shelter. Charles was laughing and easy, but Sir Thomas Sheridan's teeth chattered, and the others thought longingly of France and fires.

The tenant of the hut, a dark MacDonald, received them sourly and with suspicion. He could offer them nothing to eat or drink. The hut boasted neither meal, bread, nor whisky. One of the party went out and fished for flounders, which he roasted roughly over bare coals. They were not a festive group. Sheridan had a sore throat, O'Sullivan toothache, George Kelly, mercurial Irishman, a fit of deep depression. The Prince perched on a heap of peats at the cheek of the little ingle. His fair head was thrown back in constant laughter at the gloomy faces. He chaffed Donald Cameron about his rough cookery and the primitive conditions. No thought of failure or of ignominious return menaced him. He had the rash confidence, the eager fatalism of his over-sanguine temperament. A few miles away the chiefs of great clans awaited him, friends and supporters. He was come to lead them, their rightful Prince, their King's son.

Night, wet, black, ragged, encompassed the little house. Rain made sodden the slanting thatch. Inside, the blue peat-reek eddied about the room, obscuring faces and detail. It smarted the Prince's eyes and teased his throat. At intervals he went to the door, and regardless of the falling rain, stood staring out at the

grey line of beach and the grey sea beyond. The breakers moaned and boomed.

“Go to bed, Sherry,” he told the baronet of the chattering teeth. “I am not weary, and shall sit up all night.” Sir Thomas declined, apprehensive of ague and rheumatism.

“What! scared of damp sheets?” mocked the Prince. Then he softened, changed his mood, tested the bed with his own hand. The host announced in grumbling Gaelic that a prince need not be ashamed to lie in it. When the remark had been translated by Donald Cameron, the laughter of the plainly-dressed guest, whose quality he never suspected, puzzled and exasperated him.

Charles had sent a message desiring the presence of MacDonald of Boisdale, the brother of Clanranald, chief of a branch of a mightily important clan. Hard upon the summons he came, long of stride, straight of glance, the wind blowing the plaid swung about his sinewy body. The little bay was grey in the rain, the sky broken by flying scuds of grey cloud. Boisdale kissed the Prince’s hand, and they paced the wet beach together, the one listening with pursed mouth to the other’s fairy-kist, visionary hopes.

“’Tis a mad scheme, sir.” He spoke in slow, careful English, his thoughts obviously framed in Gaelic and laboriously translated. “France is not minded to aid, England and the half of Scotland hostile to your Royal Highness’s Cause——”

“Your advice, Boisdale, your advice?” The words were rapped out peremptorily. The half-averted cheek burned suddenly scarlet.

“My best advice to your Royal Highness is to go home.” The Highlander spoke steadily.

Charles looked about him at the gaunt islet, the fathomless waste of tossing sea, the white sand whirled in eddies round his feet by the stinging east wind. “I am come home, sir, and can entertain no notion of returning to the place whence I came.” The lift of the young head, unconsciously royal, emphasised the words. “I am persuaded that my faithful Highlanders will stand by me.”

Boisdale, a cautious Scot, was unmoved by this. “I fear that your Royal Highness will find the contrary the case. Upon whom can you rely?”

The Prince glanced quickly at him. “MacLeod of MacLeod, and Sir Alexander MacDonald of Sleat. These are men able and willing to bring twelve hundred broadswords to the field.”

Boisdale shrugged massive shoulders. “These gentlemen, sir, not only decline to aid your Cause, but are resolved to act against it.”

“Impossible!” Charles struck his hands together. “I have MacLeod’s written promise, procured by Lochiel, and sent to me by Murray of

Broughton.”

Boisdale shrugged again. “Your Royal Highness can send to ask them.”

The Prince bit his lip and fell silent. He was cruelly disappointed, but wary of showing his feelings. An ingrained obstinacy, as much as any other motive, held him, drove him on. He softened subtly, slid a hand through the crook of Boisdale’s unresponsive arm, sank his voice. “Your brother, Boisdale? Surely he will follow his Prince?”

The Highlander stiffened, shifting the warm young arm beside his heart. “To be plain with your Royal Highness, the small influence I have with my brother will be exerted to dissuade him and his clan from taking arms,” he replied.

Charles entreated and expostulated, argued and appealed, but wasted his eloquence in vain. The last sight he had of MacDonald of Boisdale was an offended back descending into a small boat, watched by seven cross faces from the deck of the *Doutelle*. The handful which had come with him from France gathered round their Prince, he pleading, they proffering unpalatable advice. All he could do was to return, they declared. He looked about him, flying the colours of brilliant cheeks, bright eyes, long, wind-tossed hair. In answer to their entreaties that he would put back to Nantes: “You will see! You will see!” he cried impatiently.

They sailed to the mainland, Charles still resolute to pursue his course. He was very quiet, watching the strange scenery with listless eyes. The great mountains, sullen and aloof, glowed in the evening light, remote, serene, indifferent, still to stand when his little hopes and ambitions for a throne were less than dust. He spoke seldom, asking a few questions of the Duke of Athol as to the places they passed, or the species of birds which wheeled and cried about the ship. Later, he slept on deck, as he had done throughout the voyage.

The Duke looked down at the bright head, and drew the folds of a plaid that he had draped over the Prince closer round him. Even in sleep the Prince’s face was proud, haughty, wilful, high temper showing in every line, in the curves of the delicate nostrils, the fine, arched brows, the full, petulant mouth. The Duke knew him, loved him, feared for him. What did the future hold for this ardent spirit, so easily talked over, so mulishly determined?

Charles woke, chilled and apprehensive. The ominous eagle had gone, but its shadow lay heavy upon his heart. He sat, chin in hand, watching the mist that curled like smoke about the mountain-tops, the sky redden in the east. “It is all so bleak, so strange,” he told his companion. “Those years you wandered in exile, Athol, it stood there, just as remote and majestic, and now it has no welcome for me.” He turned and clung to his companion, crying: “If I fail,

Athol, if I fail——”

The Duke took the cold, clenched hands. “You will not fail, sir. Is MacDonald of Boisdale the voice of Scotland? I tell your Royal Highness that there are swords and right arms enough, only waiting their Prince and leader. The Athol men, the Frasers, countless MacDonalds, Camerons of Lochiel——”

“It is the land—the land.” Charles turned pettishly from the frowning, unfriendly peaks and bleak shore.

The other bowed his head. “ ’Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.’ ”

Young Clanranald, companioned by his kinsfolk and acquaintance, came on board next day. The pair talked in the Prince’s cabin, Charles eloquent and bright-eyed, resolved to land, Clanranald immovable and calm. He steeled himself equally as Boisdale had done against the Prince’s arguments, the mad enterprise. “There is no possibility of success, sir. If your Royal Highness had brought aid from France, or could promise aid——”

The water lapped against the sides of the stationary vessel, and the last of the sunset burned the floor of the cabin. Hue of blood, warning of blood to be spilt with splendid recklessness in a Cause whose representative now stood straight-backed, head flung up, confronting the young clansman. “Clanranald, I did not think it of you. I have had you in my heart all along. Every day”—he threw out his hands—“I have thought and said: ‘I am nearer by miles to Clanranald. He is the last to turn his back on his Prince, and where he goes, others will follow.’ ” His voice broke. “You cannot mean to disappoint and fail me?”

The young Scot hung his head. “Your Royal Highness does not understand. It is not of myself I think. My sword would be at my Prince’s service, gladly, proudly, but there are others, my poor clansmen, my father’s people. Are they to perish miserably in a Cause that had no hope from the first?”

The Prince cried out sharply. “*Mon Dieu!* and do you think that I risk nothing? There is not only my person”—he glanced down at his splendid young body—“but my hopes, my future, my very life are staked on this.” He caught Clanranald’s hands and held them. “Fail me! Desert me! Send me back to France, or to my father, the laughing-stock of Europe, and quiet your conscience as best you may!”

The other knelt, kissed the clinging hands, gave them back. Charles raised him, held him by the shoulders, looked long and pleadingly into the inexorable blue eyes. "You are as hard as your own mountains." He pushed Clanranald from him with a sob. "God help me! What a country, and what hearts!" he muttered brokenly.

The little cabin stifled him. He thrust from it, and went outside, followed by Clanranald. MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart, Clanranald's dark-eyed kinsman, was brought forward and presented. From a temporary tent erected on deck came the clinking of wine-bottles and men's laughter. Charles covered his face. "They laugh and jest and drink. It means little to them, but what does it not mean to me?"

They paced the deck, he arguing and pleading, the two Highlanders granite to his entreaties. Kinlochmoidart was even more adamant than Clanranald, readier of tongue, less personally swayed by Charles and his appeals. They made an odd trio, the Prince the tallest, yet palpably a foreigner in dress, gestures, and speech, the Highlanders sinewy, long-limbed, quiet, the far-off look in their eyes that comes to those who gaze all their lives across great spaces, their walk that of men accustomed to tread heather underfoot. The Prince stepped quickly, restlessly, taking three paces to their one, his mobile features working, his long hands never still. Now they caressed arm or shoulder of his two companions, or locked together nervously. He had a great hazard. He was pleading for a throne, and despair made him voluble.

"I do not choose to owe the restoration of my father to foreigners, but to his own friends." The brown eyes flashed. "I am now come to put it in your power, sirs, to have the glory of that event." He flung up his head. "As to returning again to France, foreigners shall never have it to say that I had thrown myself upon my friends, that they turned their backs upon me, that I had been forced to return from them to foreign parts." His voice rose. "In a word, if I can get but six stout, trusty fellows to join me, I would choose far rather to skulk with them among the mountains in Scotland than to return to France."

They reasoned quietly with him. They pointed out that he had no arms, little money, empty promises of help, and would only be bringing assured destruction on his followers. He fell silent, listening with frowning brows to their calm theories. Was it for this that he had passed listless years in the crumbling palace at Rome, secretly training his hardy body in all the arts and hardships of war, had schooled himself to patience and wisdom in France during heart-breaking months of lurking and inaction? He had taken the desperate step of coming single-handed to throw himself on the generosity of the Highland hearts, and found instead that he might equally well try to rase

their mountains with a dirk. Something very like despair rose in his breast.

In the old Greek drama the happy ending was as often as not accomplished by the descent to earth of a god or goddess who untied the tangled skein of fate. The Prince's deliverer bore a humbler aspect, for he was merely a slim Highland lad. Kinlochmoidart's younger brother had come on board from motives of idle curiosity, and on learning that the eloquent stranger was his Prince, remained to watch. The tenor of the conversation between Charles and the recalcitrant chiefs was easily guessed from their gestures. Turning despairingly away, Charles caught the eager eyes of the boy, saw the hand grasping his sword-hilt, and addressed him pleadingly. "Will not you assist me?" he asked. Young MacDonald, with a glare of fiery indignation towards the other two, caught the extended, imploring hands. The Prince drew him into his arms, and they clung together.

"You, at least, will not forsake me?"

"I will follow you to the death, even were there no other to draw a sword in your Cause!"

The Prince, proud and moved, turned from him to receive the proffered hands and sword-hilts of the other two. Such was the little spark destined to set Scotland in a blaze.

CHAPTER III

“From the Orkneys south to Manann
Many a man adores you dearly.

They would come, did you but call them,
Many a stalwart Highland hero.

Who, with claymore and with shield, would
Cannon’s thunder charge unfearing.

Many a youth with ardour swelling
Loves you well in high Dunedin.

These would gather boldly round you,
Once they found that you were near them.

All the Gael their love would show you,
Faithful, though the world should leave you.”

ALASDAIR MACMHAIGSTIR.

THE heather was alight, and burned like tinder. Men whose clan-names are a rosary or a poem flocked about the Prince—MacDonald of Scotus, MacDonald of Keppoch, MacDonald of Glencoe, MacDonald of Morar. Cameron of Lochiel came to redeem the promise passed in the tavern months before, came reluctant, gallant, clear-eyed to foresee the madness of it all, with his Camerons seven hundred strong. Clanranald’s MacDonalds never wavered from their allegiance. They sheltered their Prince, guarded him, gave him a roof-tree and undying loyalty. Young Clanranald sailed for Skye, saw Sir Alexander MacDonald and MacLeod. They temporised, lied, and finally joined the Government side. That crafty old fox Lord Lovat flattered his Duncan Forbes, called Prince Charles “a mad and unaccountable gentleman,” wrote to Lochiel bewailing his age and infirmities, and privately recalled his son from St. Andrews University. Old Glengarry fought shy of personal service, wrung his hands over his Alastair in France, vainly seeking the elusive Charles, and turned a blind eye on his Æneas, when that doomed youth led out the clan. July burned to August. The Prince sailed to Kinlochmoidart, and a week later to Glenfinnan. On August 19th they raised the royal standard, and the hunt was afoot.

Through it all the Prince held his young head high, coaxing, cajoling, charming, broadcasting letters, promises, commands. It was his hour, and he knew it. He had burned his boats, literally, when he sent away his ship, and flung himself upon the generosity of the Highlanders. In public he was gay, gracious, and accommodating. Who shall blame him if in private his heart

sometimes failed him, and he sat with hidden face, clinging to Sheridan, the strongest link between him and the old life of security? The other comforted him when he voiced his fears, lying cheerfully, strangling his own jealousy of these strange Scots who surrounded his darling.

At the head of Loch Shiel there stood a little barn, a crazy structure of warped, weather-darkened planks. The Prince quartered there on the night of the 19th, and lying wakeful, listened to the rain and the swell of water in the loch. A high, screaming wind went past. Through chinks he saw a torn sky and throbbing clouds. His mind roved over the strange, long day. There had been hours of suspense and disappointment when he first arrived in the bleak glen, companioned only by his few followers. They waited for hours, the Prince's eyes anxiously glancing about him at the indifferent hills, the great rocks narrowing the sky, stretches of thick heather, and no further sign of human life than cattle grazing, or whaups wailing harshly overhead. At last had come the shrilling of pipe-music, the tramp of men, and all his dreams took shape and reality as the silken standard of his house curtsied in the breeze. It fanned the hot faces of the clansmen while they listened to their Prince's impassioned speech, relying on their support, voicing the justice of his claim, his eager certitude that he did not doubt of bringing the affair to a happy issue. What he said was unintelligible to most of them, as their English was as limited as his Gaelic. He could stammer a few syllables, but nothing more. They regarded their chief as a god, and each clan followed where he led, although the Prince and his claims were incomprehensible to the majority. Now, in the vastness of the country, the greater vastness of the night, he felt his own insignificance. Whom was he to trust fully, to whom to turn? An alien in upbringing, outlook, religion, could he win these fierce, untamable Scots? He ran over their names in his mind, frowned at the lukewarmness of some that he had relied on confidently, drew out his beads, and, fingering them, slept. . . .

Meantime, the Government, angry and alarmed, started to bestir itself in earnest. Intelligence of the Prince's landing had startled Edinburgh on August 8th. Lord President Forbes hastened to Inverness, to rally loyalists to the Government side. An army under Sir John Cope reached Stirling, and subsequently marched northward, substantially reinforced. Thirty thousand pounds, a huge fortune in those days, were offered for Charles's slim body and stately head. The Prince heard of it, and shrugged his shoulders. "Am I worth so much?" He called for a mirror, a French toy amongst his baggage. Looking in it, he saw an oval face and dancing eyes. "'Tis true they set a reward likewise on Papa's head in the year 1715, but I imagined that as the world grew in politeness they had done so in humanity." He was pensive for the rest of the day.

The Highlanders began to worship him. He talked to them on the march southward (making MacDonald of Morar interpret), inquiring into their legends, customs, clan-histories, and inter-marriages. If he were on the hunt for popularity, he never cheapened himself. He could give a smile one minute, a snub the next. He dazzled by his laugh, his quick talk and gay gestures, his eager hopefulness, his innumerable little arts to please and win. He saw Scotland at its fairest, heather everywhere, a royal carpet for his feet, the spilt blood and scattered gold of the gorgeous northern sunsets, great mountains lying in the heat-mist, the sudden rain that blotted out the landscape and swelled the voice of many waters. The jewel-names of Scotland slipped past like pearls upon a silken string, Kinlochiel, Fassefern, Moy, Letterfinlay. Here stood a lonely inn, flat-faced, slant of roof, its windows like eyes looking over Loch Lochy, its grey walls backed by rising slopes of mountain, dark with fir-woods. Just before crossing Loch Lochy, Charles had received intelligence of Cope's march towards Fort Augustus, and was eager to push forward with his army to meet him. A great storm gathered and broke. Weather-bound at the inn, Charles learned that the enemy had reached Garvemore, prepared to cross the pass of Corryarrack. He swallowed food and wine, rested his men, and marched on to Invergarry.

Invergarry was a hoary hold, upon a crag, looking down into deep, still water, the house dark with many trees. Here MacDonald of Lochgarry met them, backed by a number of clansmen and young Æneas MacDonald. The old chief, his father, was absent. The dreamy-eyed boy, at nineteen already a husband and father, knelt to his Prince and bade him welcome. Charles gave the boy his hand, and received a heart of gold in exchange. Between him and this slim lad, loved of the gods, was never cloud or shadow, until Æneas MacDonald died in his Prince's arms at Falkirk. Better perhaps for Charles Edward had the same stray shot pierced his own heart also.

The storm lifted and passed. It was late evening, with a long skein of rooks drifting lazily homewards, and the dull pink of the sky deepening to rose. The wind made music in the old trees. Hither came Fraser of Gortleg, sly mouthpiece of his kinsman Lovat. He paid his court to Lochiel, who brought him to the Prince. They sat across the table from one another, the stout Fraser with his heavy jowl and crafty eyes, the slim Prince with head flung back and sun-kissed face and hands. Charles, pinching his chin between finger and thumb, listened to the other's arguments. "Loyal, sir? There is no more loyal man in the whole of Scotland than my cousin Lovat. He wept, sir, wept, because his infirmities of body must plead his excuse for not coming in person to throw himself at your Royal Highness's feet. He longs to serve you."

"C'est très bien." The brown eyes narrowed. "And he has sent you to me,

sir, *pourquoi?*”

“To carry assurance of his loyalty and devotion to your Royal Highness, and”—the coarse mouth took a greedy curve—“to request the patent creating him Duke of Beaufort, as promised by his gracious Majesty——”

“They all want something.” The Prince’s look was cynical. “The patent! I had it of a certainty.” He ruffled up his bright hair with both hands. “Mr. Murray!” he called.

The summons produced our old friend of the snuff-boxes. He had joined the Prince at Kinlochmoidart, with a still tongue and an uneasy conscience. He vowed that he had not encouraged Charles to land, but neither had he dissuaded him. Traquair, entrusted with letters conveying warning tales of scant support, had never delivered them. On his lordly shoulders should rest the blame. Charles had been delighted to see Murray again, and a little later appointed him his secretary. Murray would vastly have preferred to be aide-de-camp, but was given no choice. The appointment, a wise one from the point of view of Murray’s capability for the task, aroused jealousy directly by the Prince’s obvious partiality for this ready writer. He made him the repository of secrets, confidences, and wild enterprises, and the cold man listened and advised.

He and Fraser of Gortleg looked at one another, disliked one another. “The patent, sir? I will make inquiry.” He went from the room, returning with the information that Lochiel, who had had the desired document in custody for some time, had delivered it to the Prince. Charles looked charmingly vague. “Your Royal Highness may recollect that you gave orders to Colonel O’Sullivan, who has charge of the baggage, to retain everything of your own except one portmanteau, and to follow here with all speed.” The silky voice stopped.

Charles looked vexed. “It must be in one of my trunks. *Peste!*” He turned to his visitor. “I shall write my Lord Lovat a letter of compliment and apology, sir, which you will be good enough to deliver.” He beckoned his secretary over, who composed an admirable epistle, promising the patent as soon as found, expressing graceful thanks for my lord’s good intentions, the which Charles signed with a flourish. “And now, sir, possibly you have some advice to give us, from my Lord Lovat?”

Fraser of Gortleg stretched out stout legs. “My cousin’s advice to your Royal Highness is to march north through Stratherrick to Inverness.”

“On what grounds, sir? I design to meet Cope.”

“On the grounds of substantial support.” He struck the table. “At Inverness, the Frasers will come out, the MacLeods, Sir Alexander MacDonald, the

Mackenzies, Grants, Mackintoshes.” He recited great names glibly.

Charles sat, elbows on table, his chin cupped in his hands. “This requires wiser heads than yours or mine, sir.” He turned to Murray. “Desire the Duke of Athol to come to us, Mr. Murray.”

The Duke came, saluted his Prince, bowed coldly to Mr. Fraser, and took no more fancy to him than Mr. Murray had previously done. He shook his fine head over the Inverness scheme. “My advice, sir, (as your Royal Highness has done me the honour to ask it,) is to push southward towards Edinburgh, where it will be easier to unite your followers.”

Murray of Broughton nodded approval. “There are many well disposed to your Royal Highness in the city. It should not be difficult to gain possession, and once Edinburgh is yours——”

Charles was flushed and dreaming. “A mirage, Murray, and yet—and yet——” He saw himself leading the clans southward, saw the gates of Scotland’s capital fall as fell the walls of Jericho, saw the sombre, haunted palace of Holyrood receive him, as it had received others of his fated race. He sat erect, bright-cheeked, with happy, shining eyes. “Yes, yes, I will march south,” he cried, “and you, my lord Duke”—he turned to Athol eagerly—“may be able to raise your clan before your wicked brother claims them for the Government.”

“He is not wicked, sir, merely misguided.” Athol smiled and kissed the slim hand, flung out to him in a sudden spasm of penitence.

They marched early next day, the Prince at their head, wearing Highland dress. He looked very bonny, with flushed cheeks, bright hair lifted in the wind, and the nameless charm and grace inherited from a line of kings. His heart beat fast, his hopes soared very high. The hoary walls of Invergarry rang with cheers, as the chiefs who had gathered round him gave their united pledge that each would not lay down his arms, nor seek to make peace, without the consent of the rest. Their chief had declined to come out, but under Ardshiel the Appin Stewarts mustered, two hundred and sixty strong. These comprised, besides Stewarts, MacIntyres, MacColls, MacLarens, MacInneses, and lesser names, led by the Stewarts of Invernahyle, Fasnacloich, and Achnacone. More MacDonalds came out under Lochgarry, Grants of Glenmoriston, and a notable prisoner was brought in by some Camerons. Charles looked at Cluny MacPherson, a short, dark, silent man, Lochiel’s cousin-german, old Lovat’s son-in-law. He and his clan were worth securing as allies. The Prince exerted all his fascinations, and won Cluny for evermore. It was an ill day for him when he looked into those brown eyes, and turned his back upon Hanoverian safety and support.

They came along the great Corryarrack Pass, treading Wade’s road,

dipping down through the moors. They started in mist, the track wet and slippery beneath their feet, but gradually the sun unveiled, and the scent of honey hung on the still air. The far-flung country lay dim and spacious, stern mountains laughed at by impertinent little streams, the darkness of deep glens, the blue oval of innumerable lochs. Nothing broke the rare silence save the whirr of wings as some startled game-bird flew up out of cover. Even the bagpipes would have seemed a desecration.

Garvemore, that solid, non-committal stage-house, showed its gable-end as the road dived down towards it. Here they learned that Cope had disappointed and evaded them. He was marching with his army towards Inverness, taking the road by Ruthven. The Highlanders hesitated whether to turn and pursue him, but eventually continued their southward course. The brief days passed like a many-coloured pageant. One night of wind and stars the Prince slept in the heather in the midst of his army. At Blair Castle he learned to drink healths in Gaelic, and to eat haggis and cockie-leekie, at Lude to dance reels. On the evening of September 4th he rode triumphantly into Perth, gaily displaying to George Kelly the solitary guinea which represented his worldly wealth.

At Perth the anxieties and troubles of Mr. Secretary Murray began. He could afford to stand aside, bored and superior, from the open-mouthed group surrounding the Duke of Perth, as that young nobleman, in alternate voluble French or honest Scots vernacular, described the disgraceful stratagem employed by the English Government to seize him in the house of his friends. Back stairs, unsaddled horse, breathless cross-country ride, and here was His Grace, safe in the Prince's entourage. Mr. Murray had no fear of a rival in the Duke. He was of a delicate constitution, a foreign upbringing, an unpopular religion. Colonel John Roy Stewart, my Lord Nairne, my lord's brother, swarthy Mr. Mercer of Aldie, had all come out a few days previously. Mr. Murray ran his eye over the lot, critical and appraising. No danger did he apprehend from any of them, from the laird of Gask and his tall son, the Viscount Strathallan, doomed to fall at Culloden, or the Chevalier Johnstone, boasting of his connection with Lord Rollo, and tactfully suppressing his own association with trade. His lip curled as he contemplated young Lord Ogilvy, arrived from Angus companioned by a wife whose years, combined with his own, numbered less than forty. Well, well, youth will be served. Mr. Murray, himself but thirty, took snuff and smiled.

He left off smiling and nearly dropped the snuff-box when he saw my lord Duke of Athol enter, arm in arm with a stranger. The likeness between them betokened a close relationship, though the prematurely-aged Duke, crippled and bent by hardships and rheumatism, might have been his companion's

father instead of his brother, elder by only six years. Pride, temper, obstinacy, haughty impatience: Mr. Murray read them all in that high-nosed, aristocratic face. There was no subservience about the act as he knelt on one knee and kissed the hand which the Prince extended, smiling with alarming graciousness. Mr. Murray's mind moved swiftly, his thin blood quickened, sensing danger. Here was his namesake, my Lord George Murray, of the house of Athol, a valuable ally in Charles's eyes, a serious rival in Mr. Secretary's. Rumour ran that the Prince had that day appointed Lord George Lieutenant-General of his forces. What was my lord's history? Mr. Murray took instant steps to find this out.

He laid his gleanings before Charles's feet at an early date. He walked warily, for it was a ticklish business, this of advising princes. Already he had summed up His Royal Highness pretty accurately. He saw that he was weak, easily swayed, very much under the dominion of stronger personalities, though a vein of stubborn obstinacy in his nature manifested itself frequently, no judge of men's characters or motives, secretive and suspicious. The time was ripe for a gentle warning, the Secretary told himself.

He had been sent for, so could quiet his conscience by declaring that he did not seek the interview. Charles was easy of access, but very seldom to be found alone. The Duke of Perth, Lord George, Lord Strathallan, and others constantly dined or supped with him at John Hickson's tavern, where he had taken up his quarters. Despite the dignity of frequent visitors in Highland clothes, with broadswords and white cockades, the inn speedily resembled a bear-garden, for the Prince could be, on occasion, as full of tricks and jests as a schoolboy. He was busy and happy, his purse replenished at the town's expense, his father proclaimed king, himself fêted, flattered, and worshipped. He greeted Murray cordially, and bent his bright head over the papers the Secretary produced.

"Lord, don't sit and look so glum, man!" He laughed into the sour face. "We are succeeding everywhere," he boasted. "Lord Ogilvy has just left me, to go home, promising to return in a few days with his Angus men; Robertson of Struan has brought two hundred, MacGregor of Glencairnaig has come out, and likewise forty of Glengyle's MacGregors." He pouted gaily. "What a work 'tis to get my tongue round their names. I smile at them, and all the while I walk on ice of the thinnest. If you sound a chief as to another chief, ten to one he will draw himself up and say: 'Your Royal Highness does me the honour to speak of my cousin, or my son-in-law, or my brother.' " He broke off. "Why en't you laughing, Murray?"

"I see no reason to, sir." The Secretary smiled wryly.

The Prince poured out wine for both, and chattered, undeterred by the

remark. The light, high voice, with the accent that was so different from the varied brogues of the Irish, or the rough tongues of the Scots, ran on in the low-browed room. Outside, fields of ripe oats tossed in the wind, and the river talked to itself. The town, with its narrow streets and secretive wynds, was dark under a watching moon.

“And the letters from France and Spain.” Charles rattled on eagerly. “They were brought to me to-day by one Arbuthnot. You have read them?” He scrambled amongst scattered papers on an untidy table. “Plague take the things! Where have they vanished?” he exclaimed. “The Spanish Ambassador in Flanders, the Duc de Bouillon, promise in their masters’ names money, arms, and troops. We shall win, Murray. We shall win!”

He was so gay and confident, prattling like an excited child, that the other felt a pang at the thought of damping him. But Murray’s own position was neither so impregnable nor so secure as he wished, and he was beginning to know his Charles. He murmured something non-committal about the recent appointments His Royal Highness had made: the Duke of Perth Lieutenant-General, O’Sullivan Quartermaster-General, Sir John MacDonald Instructor of Cavalry——

“You forget my Lord George Murray.” The Prince, who had added smoking to his other Scottish accomplishments, was leaning back, watching the blue rings sailing ceilingwards.

“It is of my Lord George Murray that I would speak to your Royal Highness.” The Secretary’s eyes glowed like a cat’s in the dark.

“*Comment?*” The Prince was plainly unsuspecting.

Murray leaned nearer. “What does your Royal Highness know of him?”

“Do you want his biography?” Charles grinned lazily. “Athol’s brother, laird of Tullibardine, supported us in ’15 and ’19——” He broke off. “What does that look mean, *mon cher?*”

The thin lips unclosed slowly. “Your Royal Highness is possibly unaware of two small facts. Lord George is—or was—a Sheriff-Deputy, and”——the words dropped out like distilled poison——“on the 21st of August last, my lord visited General Cope at Crieffi.”

The Prince, pipe in hand, sat staring. “*C’est impossible!*”

“Truth is never impossible.” The Secretary tidied papers with meticulous care. “Lord George has practically betrayed the Government. Take care, sir, that he does not betray your Royal Highness.”

The pipe clattered to the floor. “*Mon Dieu!* Is *that* why he joined?”

Murray’s narrow shoulders lifted. “Thirty thousand pounds is a vast sum,

sir, and my Lord George is very much a younger son. I should beware of him.”

He went, having transacted the business for which he had been summoned, and sowed the first seeds of suspicion and mistrust in the Prince's mind. It was ripe soil for such. Charles had already been deceived many times during his twenty-four years. He had been forced to recognise the faithlessness of the Jacobite agents, from Cockburn, who left the key to the Jacobite cipher lying on a window-seat, down to Lord Sempil and MacGregor of Balhaldie, both of whom (to use the forcible if inelegant language of Sir Thomas Sheridan) had made a nice fool of His Royal Highness. Small wonder if the young brow began to show faint furrows, the brown eyes to look askance at men whose honour was their life. In his growing perplexities he clung closer to the little coterie of Irish, John Murray, whom he had known before coming to Scotland, and the grave, loyal Athol. Athol's brother! Impossible that he should be a traitor, the young, rebellious, warm heart cried out. Then distrust and warning laid cold hands over it. Twice a rebel, Lord George had sought and obtained a pardon from the Government after his second transgression. He had been reinstated, trusted, made the familiar friend of his Whig brother, and his eldest son held the Elector's commission. On the heels of that damning interview with Cope, he had donned the white cockade. Why?

Perhaps Lord George himself could scarcely have answered the question. His motives in coming out were mixed, but treachery was the last thought his mind harboured. He had gone to Crieff with his Whig brother, but took no part in the conference between the latter and the Hanoverian general. He made no personal promises, although it was tacitly implied that in his recently-appointed capacity of Sheriff-Deputy he should give necessary directions for furnishing the Government troops with everything requisite during their passage through his county. But the old aim, the ancient Cause, stirred his blood strongly. The meeting with his elder, exiled brother, who had lost all for the Stuarts, the remembrance that he had fought under him at Glenshiel in '19, swayed him yet further. He vowed fidelity to the Prince, calling down a curse if he should not prove true, and the die was cast. He was convinced, but not enthusiastic, sensible, but not sanguine, clear-eyed to face the risk and count the cost. He knew that if the rising failed, the block, the halter, or at best life-long exile, would be his portion, and ruin for his wife and family. He was prepared for everything except the element of his personal relationship with Charles, which did so much to wreck all.

Charles was a continual surprise to him. Lord George had anticipated a shy foreigner, alien in creed and custom, whom he should mould, lead, and advise. Instead, he found a brilliant, hot-headed, impetuous young creature, tireless and despotic, stiff with royal dignity one moment, the next publicly shedding

impulsive tears if his plans were thwarted at a council, or playing schoolboy tricks on his Irish intimates. Lord George did not know what to make of him, nor how to deal with him.

He was like a child, one time running out unescorted into the street, and seizing his lieutenant-general, who was passing. "Lord George! Lord George! you must come and see my new horse. I have got him in a present from the Duke of Perth." He laughed delightedly. "There! Observe how Scotch I am becoming. 'In a present.'"

"I see that your Royal Highness has nothing on your head." Lord George shook his own disapprovingly.

"Why, the sun is good for me, and this is not Italy." Charles turned and shouted up at the window. "Sheridan! Sheridan! I want my bonnet. No, no, don't bring it down. Throw it out to me." A blue object whizzed through the air. He caught it deftly, and crammed it back-foremost on his sunny hair. "*En avant*, my lord!"

Lord George turned to issue an order in fluent Gaelic to his groom James Robertson before following. Charles sighed.

"I wish I knew Gaelic." His brow puckered. "Will you give me lessons, my lord?"

"I have not the time, sir, and besides Gaelic is a life-study." The tone was stiff. "Unless one is accustomed from childhood to speak it, and to be beside those speaking it continually, it is impossible to become proficient in it."

The Prince shrugged his slim shoulders. "Braid Scots is worse. I cannot understand the half my friends say." He gurgled reminiscently. "I was talking of Papa to Gordon of Glenbucket yesterday, saying how much I missed him, and Glenbucket said, 'No doubt His Majesty makes of your Royal Highness,' and when I said, 'Makes what of my Royal Highness?' he looked quite vexed. *Hélas!*"

The breach between the two incompatible temperaments widened slowly but surely. Lord George, a born soldier, skilled in warfare, double the Prince's age, found himself obliged to conciliate, consult, and take orders from one whom, prince or no prince, he regarded as an inexperienced boy. Charles discovered a temper as fiery as that which he inherited from his Polish mother, a mulishness matching his own stiff-necked obstinacy. Young and crude, he sensed the other's secret smile at his ignorance and rashness. The Prince was proud and imperious, Lord George haughty to a degree. Had it been a question of these two against one another, the stronger might have worn the weaker down, or the Kilkenny cats have found a parallel. But there were other actors in the play, and Charles lent a ready ear to tales.

It was not only Murray of the poisoned heart and glib tongue. Lord George and the Irish fell foul of one another directly. He summed up O'Sullivan as lazy, incompetent, and interfering, fonder of compounding new drinks than of attending to his duties as quartermaster-general—an opinion promptly carried to the Prince. Charles rose up in a fury, embraced the injured O'Sullivan, and abused Lord George. Sir Thomas Sheridan also came in for his share of censure. Lord George was openly contemptuous of the ex-tutor's ignorance concerning the British laws and constitution, and Sheridan naturally sided with Charles when the Prince and Lord George differed. In addition, Lord George and the Duke of Perth, supposedly colleagues and raised to an equal military rank, pulled badly together from the start. Lord George despised the Duke's youth and inexperience. The Duke distrusted Lord George ever since a bird of the air had dropped a casual hint to the effect that Lord George knew something about the Government's attempt to arrest the Duke a few weeks previously. The whole state of affairs was miserable, undignified, unworthy of the Cause linking these men together. Lord George, the finer nature, suffered. Charles sulked.

He skirmished round the subject with the Duke of Athol, when the latter came to take his leave. The army was prepared to march southward, the taking of Edinburgh its objective before Cope's troops, sailing from Aberdeen, could reach Leith. The Duke was to return to Blair Castle, and strive to raise more of his tenantry for the Prince's service. Charles clung to him affectionately at parting.

"I shall miss you, my friend. Your brother is——" He made a little face. "We do not—how do you say it?—pull together."

"My brother is sacrificing his all in your Royal Highness's Cause." The grave tone was a rebuke. "It is not a light thing, at his years, and with his ties, his family, his estates, all at stake."

The Prince pouted. "You too have made sacrifices, Athol."

"Gladly, sir." He smiled into the wistful young face. "But it was only my poor life at hazard." He rose painfully.

Charles still clung to him. "I shall miss your Grace. I wish you were to go along with us. Come to me soon, I beg." The other promised silently. "Kiss me, *mon ami*. No, no, not my hand." He whipped both slim ones behind him, and held up his flushed face.

The Duke, aging, ailing, childless, felt a disloyal pang of envy towards his king. Uncrowned, disappointed, at least King James had the right to call this bonny creature "My son." "God keep your Royal Highness," he whispered unsteadily. He gathered the slight body to him for a second, and kissed the

smooth, hot cheek.

At Tullibardine the Prince ate Lord George's salt, and softened to him somewhat. They left the wilder part of Scotland behind them, and now the Forth lay at their feet. The army halted, hesitated, whilst the chiefs consulted. Charles solved their difficulties by wading into shallow water, and coolly crossing the ford. On the far side he stood laughing and greeting each detachment that came up. He was "fey," all declared, smiling and jesting, unknowing that every step he took brought him nearer to the woman who awaited him at Bannockburn House.

She came into his life almost abruptly. The army had marched by Stirling, a smaller Edinburgh in the way of immensely high houses and a castle built upon a rock. The latter fired a few stray shots, but while the more cowardly ducked or scattered for shelter, the Prince walked erect, his fair head high. He halted his force at Bannockburn, and went to dine with Sir Hugh Paterson. The old gentleman was Jacobite, but wary, declining to commit himself further than by a handsome entertainment. Charles was flushed and excited. His Highlanders' approach had frightened Gardiner's dragoons, left to guard the Forth, the length of Linlithgow. Their flight was a good omen for future victories. The sight of Bannockburn field, where his great ancestor had won his triumph, stirred him to eager talk. In the midst of it a door opened, and a woman entered the room.

She was then twenty years of age, and God, who gave her youth, had never given her beauty. Her skin was sallow, her features undistinguished, her face only saved from plainness by a pair of flashing black eyes. Beside their diamond-bright depths the Prince's own looked hazel. Bright gaze met bright gaze before she sank in a great curtsy. Sir Hugh Paterson named her, his niece, Miss Walkinshaw, begged leave to present her——

"What! my mother's namesake?" cried the Prince. Clementina Walkinshaw rose up from her curtsy, and made to kiss his hand, when he drew her to him, and kissed her cheek instead. He did it stiffly, formally, once for himself and once for his mother, but Miss Walkinshaw had no fault to find with the salute. There was a fine colour in her face for the nonce, and her eyes shone like black stars, as she melted unobtrusively behind her uncle's wife, the Lady Jean. Charles neither glanced after her, nor thought of her again.

Historians have flung mud at her, calling her the evil genius of the last of the Stuarts. In sober truth she was the one woman who made any permanent impression upon Charles Edward. She served him with stark faithfulness, for him forsook her own people and her father's house, shared with him exile and

poverty, reaped no advantage, social, political, or financial, from their dubious nine years' association, gave up their only child to comfort her "august Papa's" last broken and forgotten days, and goes down to posterity merely as Prince Charlie's mistress.

Charles was treading in the footsteps of his ancestors, for he passed the evening at Callander House, where Mary and the sick Darnley had halted on that last journey which had its sinister ending at Kirk-o'-Field. Between the stately walls where the fair siren slept and plotted, her thoughts busy with black-browed Bothwell, her slim descendant wove his own dreams around a shadowy crown. His host, the Earl of Kilmarnock, a ruined, desperate man, at the end of his fortunes, strove to mend them by recklessly throwing in his lot with the Prince's wild venture. He was as ill-starred as his royal guest. For one, disappointment, defeat, years of disillusion and deepening shadow; for the other, a shorter, quicker agony, the field of Culloden, and a windy morning on Tower Hill.

They came to Linlithgow on a still, misty Sunday. It was barely six o'clock, the east flushed with red, when the Prince's army took possession of the town. He was quiet and grave, issuing commands that the men should encamp outside, that the usual services might be held. He spent the long day in Linlithgow Palace, where he shut himself up alone with his confessor. For the office he had chosen one of Clanranald's MacDonalds, a dour, silent man, a priest holding the rank of captain in his army. "If I am to enter Edinburgh, or fall in the attempt, I would be clean," the Prince said. He knelt on the bare floor, and told the tale of his sins, omitting nothing. When he came forth, his face was very calm, his look high. He passed the night at a little farmhouse, east of the town. The yellow square of his lighted window stared down on his men slumbering contentedly upon the bare ground, their officers beside them, wrapped in their plaids. "So would I rather sleep," said Charles Edward.

CHAPTER IV

“Shift your feet in nimble flight,
You’ll be home by candle-light,
Open the gates as wide as the sky,
And let the king come riding by.”

Barley Bridge.

THAT fresh-complexioned citizen, Mr. Alves, W.S., mounted upon a sober cob, riding at his leisure towards Edinburgh on a fine September morning, chanced to pass near the rebel army. A blue-eyed gentleman accosted him, in whom he recognised his acquaintance, the Duke of Perth. They exchanged snuff and greetings, but His Grace made no attempt to present Mr. Alves, or to present to Mr. Alves the slim young man with the brown eyes standing a few yards in the rear. During the course of civilities Mr. Alves’s legal orb roved over guns and horses, claymores, and bare-legged Highlanders. He felt a chill run down his spine. Such warlike properties were painfully out of keeping with the long fields, dim in the mist, and the harvest peace and plenty.

“You ride to Edinburgh, my friend?” The Duke tapped his arm.

Mr. Alves tendered a plea of guilty.

The Duke smiled. “I understand, sir, that the Provost and Magistrates of the city are making great preparations against us, but we are resolved to pay them a visit.” He patted Mr. Alves’s cob. “If they will keep their arms in their possession, and allow us peaceably into the town, they will be civilly dealt with. If not, they must lay their account with *military execution*. Sir, is not that your Royal Highness’s pleasure?” He turned to the brown-eyed young man, who appeared to assent.

So this was the Pretender’s son? As a respectable citizen, a staunch Whig, and a servant of the law, Mr. Alves felt constrained not to look at him, much less to obey him, but as a child of Eve his natural curiosity permitted one discreet stare. Bonny enough, tall and fair, with a smile which dazzled, and an air that taught lesser men their distance, but——Mr. Alves pocketed the rest of his thoughts and went towards Edinburgh, burdened with the message.

The Provost, wrathful and incredulous, vowed that it was vastly impudent. He swore that he would not be intimidated by threats. These were the vacant words of a brave man, for the town’s position was perilous. The garrison at the Castle could not be counted on, commanded by a general in the eighties. The town guard, old and feeble men, the city volunteers, were the only other means of defence. Gardiner’s and Hamilton’s dragoons had joined forces and fled to Haddington, by way of Leith and Musselburgh. The Crown officials had

retired to neighbouring places of safety. Mr. Alves unwisely conveyed the Prince's message to the common people, who paraded the streets, impotent and frenzied. Panic possessed the town. The wildest rumours as to the strength and ferocity of the Highlanders kept pouring in. The long wynds, framing blue glimpses of the Forth, vomited terror-stricken men and women, or sheltered huddled cravens and gossipers. The Provost, with a feeble show of authority, presided over a packed meeting of citizens, and out of a thousand contrary opinions strove to extract some prudent counsel. Every one argued and advised, and whilst the clamour was at its height a letter was handed in, bearing the signature of Charles, Prince Regent, imperatively demanding the surrender of the town.

Fresh consternation followed the reading of this disagreeable document, more divided counsels, and finally several quaking bailies were dispatched to the rebel camp, to entreat time for deliberation.

And now comes my Lord Elcho, plump, debonair, four-and-twenty, with a good horse under him, a long ancestry behind him, and fifteen hundred guineas lining his pockets, to take a hand in the Jacobite game. The horse was his own, the ancestry indubitably the same, the jingling guineas the gift of his brother, who that week had married a wife, and therefore judged it more prudent to stay at home. Along the road clattered my lord, a fine, personable young gentleman, to those who did not look further than a flat back, a pair of bold eyes, and the latest mode in periwig and cravat. He was some nine months younger than the Prince, whom he had met in Paris and at Rome. The exiled king had been vastly civil to the heir of the Earl of Wemyss, now cantering gaily to prove his loyalty.

It was mid-September, the most perfect month of the twelve in Scotland. The country lay mellow and smiling, its plain lines of field draped in faint mist. Clouds of little birds flew out from the hearts of the leaning stooks, or perched chattering on the low hedgerows. Far off, against a sky dimly amethyst, the castle of Edinburgh, its smoke and spires, were lightly silhouetted. The Jacobite army had encamped south of Corstorphine, at Slateford, in the parish of Colinton. The Prince was quartered at Gray's Mill, a little stone house, with small windows sunk deeply in its solid walls, looking out over a haphazard yard, and fields sloping to the river. As Lord Elcho approached, he saw stir and excitement, tethered horses, gaunt Highlanders in busy groups, all the panoply and insignia of civil war. His heart beat fast as he dismounted before the low door of Gray's Mill, and demanded an audience of the Prince.

Secretary Murray received him, that sallow little man who already was

gaining a greater ascendancy over Charles than others liked or approved of. He and Elcho greeted as old friends, for they had been abroad together on the same business, and each knew to a nicety how deeply the other was dipped. He ran his eye up and down my lord's French elegance, and led the way. Charles was contentedly holding his court in a small, dingy cupboard, which served him for dining-room, bed-chamber, and hall of audience. The new-comer found him sitting at a table strewn with papers, his gay laughter indicating his presence before the door was opened. Some of his officers were standing about, dim figures in the shadows, for dusk was coming fast on noiseless feet. The sound of the river stole up through the one little window, and a great moth blundered in, striking against the walls.

Lord Elcho knelt, to be caught up into a tempestuous embrace and a whirlwind of French. Charles let him go, only to fling an arm round his shoulders, and drag him about, presenting him to everybody whom he did not already know. Elcho studied the Prince covertly, smiling out of narrowed eyes. Charles had not altered. The same rapid, impetuous talk, the same excitability, the old foreign gestures and speech. Now he was driving the rest pell-mell from the room, vowing that he must have his "cher Elcho" to himself. He would see nobody, no, not the Elector arriving should disturb them. There was a general laugh, in which the Prince joined, sitting on the table, balancing himself by two slim hands against the edge. His bright hair was in disorder, and his cheeks scarlet with excitement.

"Your Royal Highness has possibly forgotten"—Lord George Murray paused on the threshold—"that you sent a summons to the Magistrates of Edinburgh, demanding the capitulation of the city. Their answer should be here at any moment."

"Plague take them! So I did." Charles's face clouded. "Well, my lord, I place them in your hands. Remember, I will listen to nothing but a complete surrender of the town."

His gaiety had gone, leaving him looking older and sterner. At the moment he was very much the Prince, sure of his ground, his unassailable position. He made a regal figure in that mean little room. Elcho looked at him, standing himself within the shadows, and the first smouldering jealousy stirred in his narrow heart.

He came into the Cause partly from hereditary sympathies, partly from restless liking for the excitement it involved, partly for his own aggrandisement, but all along personal devotion to the young leader of the forlorn hope never stirred my Lord Elcho. Much of an age, both good to look on, both ambitious and unscrupulous, there existed no sympathy, rather a subtle jealousy, between him and Charles. Elcho was never prepared to follow

meekly, to sacrifice himself for, to admire and excuse, his Prince. Later, a woman came between them, and an undischarged debt rankled like a poisonous sore in the lender's heart.

"Sit down, *mon cher*." Charles flung his slim length into a chair.

Elcho took a seat on the opposite side of the table. Candles glancing in a draught threw light over the Prince's face, and left his own obscured. He saw the frown crumpling Charles's forehead, the pout of the lower lip, already over full by nature. When he laughed again, it had an irritable, ill-natured sound.

" 'Tis not a bed of roses this, by any means." Charles spoke half to himself. "You have just seen the biggest thorn in my side." His tone was rueful.

"Your Royal Highness means——?"

"My Lord George Murray." A foreign shrug emphasised the name.

"Your Royal Highness's lieutenant-general and most devoted adherent!" Elcho lounged amazed.

"I think my most devoted adherent sits opposite." The smile and the gracious little speech were very winning. "What do you know of Lord George, my Lord Elcho?"

Elcho frowned in thought. Lord George, he knew, had a Jacobite brother and a Whig brother, each of whom claimed to be Duke of Athol. He himself had been out in '15, out in '19, and here he was again out in '45. Surely a striking record of selfless devotion to the Stuart Cause! Elcho puckered puzzled brows.

"I am convinced that Lord George has joined me only to betray me." Charles leant across the table, sinking his voice. "I do not trust him, and I beg that you will not either."

His eyes slanted to the door, as if fearful of listening ears outside. The smiling, incredulous look on his new adherent's face angered him. He drew himself up, the prince masking the young man who felt himself surrounded by traitors, and was uncertain in whom to put his trust. "And what can I do for you, *mon ami*?" he asked pleasantly.

Elcho's eyes dropped. "I came to place myself at your Royal Highness's service. I beg that you will dispose of me as you incline best," he replied.

"You had better join my staff. I need another aide-de-camp. Later, we shall see about a command for you." Charles was easy, assured, smiling. "I have but the one request to make, my lord, that you are never to talk of my affairs in Lord George's presence." His suddenly stern look emphasised the prohibition.

The conversation shifted to Elcho himself, his travels, his family, his ambitions. Dusk deepened in the little room, whose silence was only broken by

the two voices, the endless song of the river, the jingling of a horse's bit, or a burst of laughter from a group of men gathered round the mill door. The Prince poured out wine for himself and his new aide-de-camp. They pledged one another and the Cause.

There were only two interruptions. Between eight and nine a servant brought in an evil-smelling lamp, which he set down at the Prince's elbow. A little later agitated voices rose in argument. Charles smiled and tiptoed to the window. "Our friends from Edinburgh, I think."

It was too dark in the star-strewn night to distinguish anything. He sat down again, turning alertly at a knock upon the door. Elcho, obedient to his gesture, went to it. "Lord George Murray, sir?" he murmured. Charles nodded impatiently.

Lord George came in coolly, ignored Elcho, bowed stiffly to the Prince. "A deputation has arrived from the municipal authority of Edinburgh, sir."

"Well?" Charles's look was wary.

"They have come to beg for delay, pending the terms of surrender."

Charles sat flushed and frowning. "Did I not give you instructions, my lord, that I would accept no terms other than a complete and immediate capitulation of the town?"

"Your Royal Highness did." The frigid tone matched the Prince's.

"*Eh bien*"—Charles shrugged his shoulders—"then why trouble me with deputations or their insolent messages?"

"They were not insolent." Lord George spoke quietly. "Will your Royal Highness consent to receive them?"

"Never!" Charles tossed aside the request. "I do not treat with subjects. Send Mr. Murray to me," he ordered.

The Secretary, slim, cat-footed, came to the summons. He had been outside, and the night-wind had flushed even his sallow face. The Prince bent his fair head over papers, drafting a letter, while Murray's pen travelled swiftly, noting down the rapid words. Lord George and Elcho watched in silence.

Charles threw the former the sealed sheet. "Take this to that damned deputation, my lord." He added with a frown: "Ask them what has become of the arms belonging to the volunteers and Edinburgh regiment."

"I understand that they have been delivered into the castle, sir."

Charles's eyes flashed and he spoke with heat. "If any of the town arms are missing, I shall know what to do." He laughed grimly. "That letter contains a sharp warning, and I have demanded an answer by two o'clock."

As Lord George retired, an odd look passed between them: obstinate dignity on Charles's part, defiance, anger; on Lord George's a half-pitying scorn for the Prince's contumacy. Charles's clenched fist struck the table as the door closed behind the two Murrays.

"There! you see, you see!" he exclaimed passionately. The lamp danced on the rocking wood.

He turned the talk again to a former subject, but his ease had gone. They heard the deputies go back into the night, their embassy unfulfilled. Outside, a trickle of voices ran on and on. Charles frowned and drank. Lord Elcho smiled, and watched the moth at last blunder against the light, and whirl crookedly away, singed and dying. Hours later steps sounded up the stair.

Lord George came in again, unheralded and unannounced. "Another deputation, sir, who beg that your Royal Highness may be prevailed upon to see them."

"It is useless, my lord. I declined before, and I decline again." The Prince's flush deepened. "How monstrous impertinent to expect such a favour!"

Lord George looked hard at the figure in the crude lamp-light. "What am I to say to them, sir?"

"Say to them? *Peste!* Get rid of them!" He turned impatiently to Elcho. "My Lord Elcho, Lord George has not spirit to put this order in execution. You must go and do it for him."

Lord Elcho, well pleased, swaggered out. Behind him he heard the Prince laugh, and then retort angrily to Lord George's quiet: "I should advise your Royal Highness to keep your head clearer than this wine will make it. Pray put that bottle away, sir." Charles disliked advice, even when kindly meant as now. He looked suspiciously at Lord George, and proceeded to finish the bottle out of bravado.

Elcho felt his way through the soft dark to where a coach made a darker blur. Candles still burned in its lamps, enough to illumine anxious faces and imploring eyes. "Get you gone!" Elcho ordered the deputies, briefly, harshly.

The lumbering coach creaked off into the night. Elcho took a grateful breath of the sweet-smelling air before he walked back to the Prince, young, insolent, assured. The little room which housed Charles's restless body reeked of brandy, and His Royal Highness, from the most charitable point of view, was scarcely sober. Elcho's lip curled.

"I am obliged to you, my lord." The Prince's smile was peculiarly gracious.

Elcho drained the replenished glass pushed carelessly towards him. "I

would not have your Royal Highness in my debt," he murmured.

"Oh, debt!" Charles flung out his arms. "A plague on money!" he ejaculated. "The want of it is a perfect curse."

"If your Royal Highness requires money——" Elcho set down his glass.

"Who doesn't?" Charles shrugged and yawned. "I rode into Perth with only a single guinea in my purse, and there I filled it full enough, but my army, my officers"—he hunched his shoulders again—"they eat it, bless them!"

"I did not come empty-handed to join your Royal Highness."

"Don't tempt me." Charles sat shaken with laughter. "I may never pay you back, child."

Elcho smiled and slid a bulky belt across the table. "I shall come to St. James's to claim it," he prophesied.

They drank to that day, and Charles, protesting gracefully, pocketed the fifteen hundred guineas.

The night went on, fraught with anxiety, plot, and counter-plot. A rumour reached the camp that Cope's transports, hastening from the north, had been sighted off Dunbar. Hence the second deputation and its petition for delay. The Prince summoned his officers, begging counsel and direction. The small room was heavy with tobacco-smoke and fumes of wine. Through the haze showed the anxious, sleepless faces—John Murray, sallow and silent, his namesake Lord George, grim, determined, decided, the Duke of Perth, grey-lipped but calm, O'Sullivan, glib of tongue and reassurance, the chiefs, Lochiel, Keppoch, and many others, haggard with strain and suspense, all centred round the pale, graceful young man whose stake was mightier than theirs.

"They are playing with me, paltering with me." Charles's utterance sounded choked and passionate. "If we linger here, wasting precious time, the city may be relieved." He stretched his long arms over the worn table. "I am in your hands, gentlemen. What do you advise?"

He looked so young and ardent, so pathetically helpless in his pleading, that some of them would have rased Edinburgh to the ground to gratify him. Lochiel's suggestion of a night-surprise was caught up eagerly. Charles approved, and asked for volunteers.

"Who knows the locality?" he asked. "Murray?" The silent Secretary nodded. "Good! O'Sullivan, you had better go, and you, Keppoch. What, Ardshiel? *Mais*, certainly." He held out a hand for each to kiss in turn. "Bring me back the keys of the city," he laughed.

The lights of the little house and the glowworms of the camp were left behind. The dark mass of men moved silently through the night. It blew cold,

and the leaders gathered their cloaks about their chins. A harvest moon got up and looked down with serene, unwinking contempt upon the march. They went by field-ways and over ditches, guided by Murray, alert and silent. They passed sufficiently near to the Castle to hear the voices of the sentries changing guard.

They carried gunpowder to blow up a gate, if necessary, but stratagem, not force, was wished for. Soundlessly they trod the way along the Pleasance and St. Mary's Wynd, until the forbidding Netherbow Port checked further progress. The men were halted, and a long, cold wait ensued. Tall houses frowned down upon them, and secretive wynds opened between, that might shelter lurking enemies. They had met no one, alarmed no one, challenged no one.

Dawn was beginning to brighten the sharp sky, and the fires of hope and expectation burned lower. Secretary Murray, never a fighter, shivered and suggested an adjournment to the comparative shelter of Salisbury Crags. From this, they could send to Gray's Mill, acquainting the Prince with their failure, and await his further orders. There was reluctant agreement, and the men were about to be massed for the retreat, when a heavy vehicle, lumbering empty down the High Street, cut the quiet.

At Gray's Mill the Prince and Lord Elcho were exchanging reminiscences of past days, when Sir Thomas Sheridan inserted a disapproving head in the aperture of the door. "Is your Royal Highness not in bed yet?" he asked reproachfully.

"As you see, Sherry." The Prince laughed and extended a hand in careless invitation.

"It's two o'clock, child." He contemplated Lord Wemyss's heir with a severe eye. "Lord Elcho, you should not keep the Prince up."

"Faith! I don't think His Royal Highness looks like sleeping." They both laughed.

Charles rose, lurched across the room, and flung his substantial weight down on the lumpy bed. Sheridan covered him with a plaid and a riding-cloak. The Prince took the other's hand and snuggled his cheek against it. "Perhaps to-morrow night I shall lie in Holyrood," he whispered. He drew the familiar face down to his own. "Oh, Sherry, how much hangs on to-night, and you bid me sleep!"

Sheridan kissed the forehead under the bright, disordered hair. "Of course you must, core of my heart. God bless you and keep you always." He turned away, his eyes misty. "Come along, my lord, and tell me all about your bad

doings in Paris,” he bade Elcho.

Some two hours later the Prince awakened to noise and clatter. Men ran up the stair, and broke into the room unceremoniously with shouting and congratulations. He sat, flushed and shining-eyed, listening to the incredible tale of the bloodless taking of Edinburgh town. The jealously-guarded gates had been thrown open for the exit of the returned deputies’ empty coach, and it was the work of a moment, coupled by quick wits and strong hands, for Lochiel to grip the porter and walk in. A guard was left at the gate, and the triumphant Camerons marched to the Cross. The town was Charles’s, without the firing of a single shot.

And now the mill hummed like a bee-hive with triumph and excitement. The Prince must make a state entry into the capital of his ancestors. He should go very fine, and to this end he clattered about, issuing contradictory orders, calling wildly for garments and help, chattering incessantly, flushed and appealing. Grave, older faces softened as he came out, with a blue sash over one slim shoulder, and a blue bonnet on the bright hair that Whig detractors maliciously called red. He was in wild spirits, kissing the miller’s buxom wife, hugging the miller’s children, wringing the leathery hand of the miller himself. When finally they had him in the saddle, he rent the peaceful heavens with a shriek. “My star! My order of St. Andrew! Oh! Oh! My lucky star! I will not go without it. Fetch it at once!”

Half a dozen willing volunteers dashed indoors, stuck on the stairs, argued and wrangled. Finally they returned empty-handed. The star was nowhere to be found. Charles sat obstinate and immovable. “I must have it, so no more words. I refuse to enter Edinburgh without it. *Absolument non!*”

Lord Elcho, with great courage, suggested that His Royal Highness might be wearing the elusive ornament. The Prince indignantly repudiated the idea, yet Elcho stuck to his guns. A deft inspection of the blue scarf revealed the treasure dangling precariously by one point from the silk. Charles, of course, was immensely surprised and indignant. “I never put it there,” he insisted calmly.

He rode off, with Elcho on his left hand, and the Duke of Perth on his right. At first he talked nonsense and asked questions, but as the city loomed closer his gaiety dropped from him. The brown eyes grew wistful, and he moved instinctively nearer Perth. His companion said something to him, and made him smile afresh.

Thus they came to the town, a haunted town for Charles, and a haunted palace to house him. A city of dead kings, and wits shrivelled by death. In its high, narrow confines, squalor and splendour jostled one another. The streets

ran filth, and the towering buildings looked down with serene indifference. The eighteenth century was Edinburgh's golden age, the ripe prime of her judges, historians, beauties, divines, and lawyers. Unluckily Charles, like Gallio, cared for none of these things. He was not intellectual, and, however much the Jacobite ladies might languish and ogle him, preferred his Highlanders.

He rode slowly, through wedges of enthusiastic, gaping, curious citizens. Edinburgh gave him a kinder reception than she afforded to his fair, frail ancestress Mary Stuart. Her it greeted with scowls, bagpipes, and haar. For Charles the haar kept at a distance, smiles and cheering replaced black looks, and he liked bagpipes very well indeed. The Whigs thought him melancholy, but the delight of the Jacobites frowned down criticism. He rode well, and looked his best on horseback. The cheers mounted to the clear sky, and his colour deepened as he realised all that this meant to him. The dreams of years, the visions of a lifetime which had brightened the dingy palace at Rome, were coming true. Holyrood threw open its doors to him, not as guest, sight-seer, or alien, but as its rightful prince and regent. He rode in through the great gateway, flanked by solid, non-committal walls that kept a thousand secrets. The inner court was sombre, a sunless square, whose grey, enclosing arms framed a space where the decaying summer's brightness and the surging crowds outside had no place. Old Hepburn of Keith stepped forward as he dismounted, knelt to him, and with drawn sword led the way, the bright figure following.

The stone stairs were steep and worn. He walked up them lightly, easily, his proud young head erect. They brought him by way of the long, low gallery where vague, dim portraits gazed from the walls, and through a smaller panelled ante-chamber, to the bedroom where the ill-starred husband of the fairest Stuart had slept. Adjoining it were little rooms, mere slits framed in mellow panelling, lighted by narrow, latticed windows. He threw off his mood and smiled.

The long day of triumph ended. The King had been proclaimed at the Market Cross. His son had received the hand-kisses and compliments of beautiful women, the loyal assurances of some of the best blood of Scotland. At an elaborate supper he sat the central figure, regal, gracious, a jewel fitly seen in the sombre setting of this stately palace. Beyond the windows at the far end of the gallery, now astir with life and lights, the tracery of the old chapel showed black against a primrose sky. Even the dead, under its weather-stained flooring, need not have grudged him his hour.

His friends escorted him to bed in triumph, and remained in the room, the younger spirits chattering like magpies. He still kept Perth and Elcho near him,

one on each of the high old chairs at either side of his canopied sleeping-couch. The rest sat about at the foot, on the floor, or clustered round the fireplace. The flames beat upon flushed, eager faces, youth and ambition in curious contrast with the dark walls, the secretive doors and little rooms, the sly, deep-set windows. The impending struggle, the battle that could not be long delayed, was in the background of all minds, but found its menace locked out of sight this night. The Prince talked and jested, during these brief hours at least a king, with pillows for a throne, and his bright hair as crown.

At midnight he sent them all away, demanding to be alone. Hours later Sheridan found him at a little window overlooking the courtyard, a ghostly form, staring out into the night. His eyes were wide and fixed. The crowd, which had lingered until late, cheering every time the fair head appeared, was dispersed. The steep, climbing wall of Salisbury Crags cut the indigo sky with a black outline. There were a few lights pricking up in the vague darkness of the town. The voices of the guard below stole up faint and thin in the eerie distance.

Sheridan put his arm round the slim, throbbing body. "Carluccio, darling, what is it? I thought you asleep hours since."

"I cannot sleep. I am afraid to sleep." He threw a fearful glance behind him at the dim, firelit room. "They are all here," he whispered, "those Stuarts who reigned and danced and sinned before I was born. Can't you see them, feel them?" He held Sheridan, and shook from head to foot. "There was blood shed in this place, and many died for them. I would not have men die for me, and yet nothing less will content me than a throne."

Sheridan coaxed him back to bed, where he lay open-eyed until the dawn.

CHAPTER V

“And so we pass along the careless road,
Heeding no warnings, thinking of no end,
Culling the grapes, piling the golden load,
Draining the life-wine that the old gods send—
Holding through reek and revel phantom state
While Death’s grim blows are thundering at the gate!”

A. M. T.

COPE’S camp-fires made red blurs, heaven’s stars golden twinkles, in the night. There was no moon, and a haar, shepherded by a moaning wind, crept in from the sea. East of Tranent ran high ground, where the Highland army lay, with a deep morass between them and Cope’s troops. Chill air rustled in the stubbles, the little whisper mingling with the steady breathing of sleeping men.

Mr. Anderson of Whitburgh was dreaming of shooting snipe. Often in reality, and now in slumber, he had forded the forbidding morass by an obliging path, leading to a deep ditch and drier ground beyond. Modesty had prevented his advancing any opinion as to the proper route to take to approach Cope’s force when the problem was discussed at a council earlier in the day. He had been sufficiently happy and honoured to sit there, gazing at the Prince, but now the thought of that path haunted him.

He turned on his side, yawned, counted imaginary snipe. Finally he sat up and woke his friend, Mr. Hepburn of Keith, snoring beside him. Mr. Hepburn at first was cross, subsequently interested, finally thrilled and convinced. “That path is of the highest importance.” He clamped his gaping jaws together. “You must advise my Lord George Murray of it immediately.”

Young Anderson picked his way in the dark to where the chiefs and commanders lay. The night, wrapped in reeking mist, was so densely black that he only discovered his quarry with difficulty. Lord George was not in a good temper, due less to anxiety than to a wordy battle with the Prince over His Royal Highness’s obstinate folly in persisting in sleeping in the open beside his army. Lord George prophesied pneumonia, rheumatism, an early dissolution. He voiced the advantage of a comfortable lodging in the village, but Charles laughed in his face. “I’ve slept in the heather before, and taken no harm,” he retorted. Off he went, flung himself down on a bundle of pease-straw, pulled his plaid round him, and in three minutes was snoring. Lord George growled and followed the royal example, but not until he had draped a white great-coat over the Prince, and received a sleepy hand to kiss by way of thanks.

He sat up, broad awake, and listened intently to young Anderson's story. "Plague take you, child! why could you not have told us at the council? 'Tis prodigious important. Come with me, and acquaint His Royal Highness." They walked carefully, passing other sleeping forms, till a sentry directed them to where the Prince lay. They halted beside the pease-straw and its slim burden. A great Highlander snored close by, and the Prince's fair, uncovered head was pillowed on the huge shoulder. He looked so young, so at peace, deep in dreams which curved his mouth happily, that Lord George hesitated at first to wake him. Stooping, he laid a light touch on the arm flung out carelessly. "Your Royal Highness!"

Charles started up. For a second his hand went to his sword-hilt. Then he recognised the face bent over him, and smiled queerly. Lord George understood the meaning of the half-fear in the sleep-clouded eyes, and a bitter look darkened his own countenance. "I regret the necessity of waking your Royal Highness," he observed stiffly.

"No matter. You would not do it without good cause." Charles's gaze strove to pierce the night-mist, and came back to the figure behind Lord George. "Ah, Mr. Anderson, how is it that you cannot sleep?" he asked.

"Mr. Anderson has a matter of vast importance to communicate to your Royal Highness." Lord George pushed the shy youth forward.

Charles sat up, clasping his knees, and listened. It takes a prince to look dignified, roused abruptly from slumber, with pease-straw entangled in his hair, but he achieved it. "We are vastly indebted to you, sir," he observed at the conclusion. "My lord, will you waken Lochiel and the rest, and summon them to an informal council at once?" He gave young Anderson a slim, grimy hand. "No, do not kiss it, I beg. 'Tis not over-clean."

Through the dark a little later came a great body of men. Three abreast, the column crept noiselessly, headed by Mr. Anderson of Whitburgh. Dawn was obscured by the mist, and the ghostly approaching Highland horde stole nearer to the morass unperceived by the English. The footpath through it, winding down from the farm of Rigganhead, was a bog from recent rains, and wet many up to the knees. Beyond, it widened into a stream, spanned by a rickety wooden bridge. Charles measured the distance with a careless eye, miscalculated it, jumped recklessly, and fell. He was less concerned over the subsequent appearance of his hands and legs than with the ill luck which he imagined might attach to the incident. "Is it a bad omen?" he whispered anxiously to Lord Nairne, who had joined him the night before.

A pink dawn was painting the sky, and the mist, like a lesser enemy,

retreated before the assault of the sun. Long fields, uneven with dusty stubbles, sloped in faint-coloured squares between the Highlanders and the foe. In the pale light neither side could distinguish the other, and so close came the Scots ranks that in the lifting mist the English mistook them for a hedge. The actual battle, so long in anticipation, preparation, and deferred hope, was over in seven or eight minutes. A few futile cannon shots from the English, and then a headlong, disintegrating rush to safety. The Scots, terrible with dirk and claymore, pursued, routed, and slaughtered. Sir John Cope, after a feeble attempt to rally his army, fled with the rest, and enriched literature by an immortal song.

It was mid-day, sun blazing on the long monotony of the stubbles, before Charles left the field. He had shown himself humane and considerate after his overwhelming victory, stopping the indiscriminate slaughter, and displaying no pleasure in the destruction of his foes. He snatched a hurried meal of meat and wine only after he had sent to Edinburgh for surgeons, and seen personally to the care of the wounded. He was unelated and sad as he rode to Pinkie House, where he purposed spending the night. Lord George Murray was in command of the small escort forming his guard. He intended to sleep at Musselburgh with the victorious Highlanders and a few wounded prisoners. He too was silent, principally from fatigue and reaction, but Charles mistook his taciturnity for disapproval.

“I hate killing!” He broke the quiet with passionate speech. “Those dead were my father’s subjects, and I could not sleep to-night unless I had done my poor best to ease the wounded.” His hand clenched on the bridle. “You say nothing, my lord. I suppose you think I am a fool?”

A sudden smile splintered the granite of Lord George’s stern face. “Has your Royal Highness never read that it is written: *Blessed are the merciful?*”

They rode on through the country peace towards Pinkie House. The gentle rise of the fields was blue and dim against the fainter blue of the sky. They passed a little garden, heavy with stocks, two white bee-hives in one corner. Death and the din of battle seemed curiously distant.

At Pinkie House the self-invited guest avoided ceremony and awkwardness by requesting to retire at once to his own rooms. Lord George, coming in, found him at a window, his forehead pressed to the pane. Questioned, he acknowledged neither hunger nor fatigue, though the young face was very drawn. “*You* must be vastly wearied and sleepy, my lord, and you have to ride to Musselburgh. I will not detain you.” They looked at one another, and the Prince took a swift step forward. “Lord George, I am very young, and this is

one of the occasions when I feel my youth and inexperience, and—and I miss the King my father sadly. As years go, you might be he. Will you not bid me good-night and bless me, as he would do if he were here?”

He held out his arms, but Lord George Murray, who disliked the Prince’s foreign ways, and still more the allusion to the fact that he was double Charles’s age, coldly evaded the proffered embrace. “Your Royal Highness does me too much honour,” he observed formally. He dropped to his knee, and kissed one of the long hands that fell limply, disappointedly. “*Beannachd leat!*” he said. He rose as stiffly as he had spoken.

Charles came back to Edinburgh next day a victor, arriving amid plaudits and cheers. Yet his young heart was heavy, the sombre palace which he entered a fit setting for his anxieties and griefs. A few accompanied him into his own apartment, where some Jacobite sympathiser had placed on the table a laurel crown. The Prince went over to the window, and stood staring out towards the grim roofs of the Canongate. Young Laurence Oliphant, an eager stripling of twenty-one, took up the green circlet, and kneeling, offered it to the Prince.

Charles turned with a smile and a sigh. “’Twill fade, child,” he said listlessly. Then, as he saw the disappointment on the boyish face, he came forward, stooping his stately young head. The lad, his hands trembling with joy and pride, laid the round of green leaves gently on the bright hair. They looked at one another with glowing eyes. Each saw the ancient walls of St. James’s receive the Prince, and the imperishable diadem of England on that victorious young brow.

September slid into October. The dry leaves rattled in the wind and fell, the sky at nights was wet gold. The laurel crown faded. The crown of England was as vague and visionary as ever. Charles was eager to press forward, to cross the Border, to march to London. His followers frowned, entreating him to consolidate his position in Scotland instead. Save for the castles of Edinburgh and Stirling, he reigned as master in the north, but he was not satisfied. “Nothing less than the three kingdoms will content me,” he would answer when urged to remain and rule over Scotland.

He spent his days in endeavouring to bring the recalcitrant castle of Edinburgh to its senses, in reviewing detachments of his army quartered at Duddingston and the adjacent villages, artfully concealing the weakness of his forces by never reviewing them as a whole, in presiding over daily councils which not infrequently degenerated into unseemly squabbles. The town, Whig

at heart, remained apathetic, slavishly afraid, half contemptuously curious. It watched with hostile eyes the long slope between the Castle, housing a sullen Hanoverian garrison, and the sunken palace where the Prince held semi-state, as Highlanders mounted guard, or Lord Elcho's life-guards clattered to and fro. Despite the increasing severity of the weather, the hardy rebel army preferred sleeping in tents to being under a comfortable roof. When Charles could escape from Holyrood, he slept amongst them, lying down in his clothes, and riding back to the city in the early morning. The townsfolk stared after the noisy pageantry of his entrance, as he galloped in at the head of his guards, the wind-tossed hair blown back from the vivid young face, but there were few cheers, scant enthusiasm. If he suffered, he did not show it. He frowned down at the hostile or indifferent looks, obviously triumphing in the keen air and the exercise, laughing and jesting with the privileged companion of the hour, chosen to ride beside him.

His life was not one of dalliance or idleness. The strain never relaxed, nor the stern necessity to strengthen his perilous position. He sent Hay of Restalrig to Glasgow to demand a toll in money and goods, and George Kelly to France with dispatches. Young Lord Ogilvy returned from the Mearns with his Angus men, long-faced, blue-eyed, six hundred strong. Gordon of Glenbucket brought four hundred Grants and Farquharsons from Banff and Aberdeen. Lord Kilmarnock's son shepherded a body of loyal gentlemen, and later his ill-fated father came out, together with the Elphinstone who shared his doom on Tower Hill. Young blood adventured for the Stuart cause, notably the Duke of Gordon's brother, rash Lord Lewis, the Master of Strathallan, plus three hundred men, and that informing narrator, Maxwell of Kirkconnel, whose vitriolic hate of Secretary Murray did not stop short at accusing him of appropriating the Jacobite funds. But Charles's most ardent enthusiasts and supporters were the pretty women who thronged his drawing-room, gushed about his good looks and French finery, and sold their jewels for his Cause. Practical politics did not enter these fair, empty heads. It was enough for them that the Prince was young, bonnie, unmarried, and possessed a nice taste in clothes and entertainments. Their foolish hearts danced to the measure of "The king shall enjoy his own again"—which king being immaterial.

Lord Elcho, out of his greater experience, noted with amusement that the Prince invariably showed ill at ease amongst these charmers. As yet no woman had stirred him, kept him wakeful o' nights. If he dreamed of black eyes, they belonged to a king's daughter, and Clementina Walkinshaw at Stirling was never so much as glanced at. The evening gaities at Holyrood—music, and the very mild dancing in which he never attempted to take part—bored him. Whenever he could, he slipped gleefully away from the revels, forsook his

ghostly bed-chamber to sleep amongst his Highlanders in their camp. The chant of the wind round his stuffy tent was more to him than flutes and viols, the soft compliments of beautiful women less than the harsh voices of the sentries changing guard, the hard earth beneath his head and plaid-wrapped body softer than all the silken coverings of his state bed. Stars and darkness, the keen, salt-laden air—far, far better these instead of the close palace, festering with jealousies, and infested with intrigues.

Sheridan, shrewd Irishman, wise in his generation, chid his Carluccio gently for his coldness. “Your Royal Highness should pay those petticoated fools more attention. A little compliment here, a morsel of tact there. It should cost you nothing, and they’ll bring in their husbands and sweethearts. Don’t pout, child. I speak for your good.”

The Prince, prone and graceful on the floor, his head against his Sheridan’s knee, the door discreetly locked, protested volubly. “They do not interest me, Sherry. They are all alike. A pair of bright eyes, raddled cheeks, powder, and yards of silk. Pooh!” He stretched his long arms above his head. “I have nothing to say to them.”

The Irishman smiled. “Let the darlings do the talking.”

“*Pour ma part, je veux bien,*” drawled the Prince. He sighed loudly. “But they all say the same things. ‘Oh, la! I hope your Royal Highness designs to give a ball?’ My Royal Highness does not. I have harder matters to think of than balls.” His young face clouded swiftly. “If—if—when, I mean”—he frowned in quick correction—“I return from St. James’s, then I may have a lighter heart to dance, but not now, Sherry, not now.”

He fell silent. Sir Thomas Sheridan stroked the bright hair, and smoothed out the little fold between the Prince’s brows. Charles caught the hand and held it against his cheek.

Abruptly his mood changed to mirth. “If it en’t dancing, it’s clothes with them. ‘Oh, la! and can your Royal Highness tell us what the ladies in Paris are wearing? Do they go monstrous fine?’ ” He laughed up into Sheridan’s face. “I told my Lady Wemyss yesterday that I never noticed what ladies wore, or whether they wore anything at all, and she went off in a prodigious flutter. She will think I am no proper company for her dear David!”

Lady Wemyss’s dear David (my Lord Elcho) meanwhile occupied his spare time with drilling his life-guards. They went very fine in blue and red, some hundred of them. My lord made one of the Prince’s council, sat at his table, observed much out of the corners of his shrewd young eyes, and years afterwards wrote malignant memoirs recording his impressions. He disliked Sheridan, and complained bitterly of Charles’s partiality for his Irish

supporters. There was some justice in the accusation, but the Prince was rapidly approaching the stage when he wondered where he was to trust. He had been bred and nurtured in an atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue, and experience had neither lessened his narrowness of mind, nor taught him to discern character and motives. The Irish had nothing at stake, the Scots everything. The former were suave, plausible, quick to forestall his wishes before he spoke them, of his own mind and religion. The Scots, their necks and their estates in jeopardy, continued blunt, outspoken, unpalatable in their advice, insatiable in their demands. Beneath outward harmony and prosperity, seethed and bubbled intrigues, jealousies, clan-feuds, fanned by craft and ambition. How was the Prince, young, inexperienced, foreign in temperament, outlook, and faith, to steer his course amid these hidden rocks and quicksands?

Mr. Secretary Murray was a vastly important personage nowadays, with an office, clerks under him, the entire control of the treasury, and of the Prince's private correspondence. He had practically made himself indispensable to Charles, and gained his ear and favour to the envy and exclusion of others, but in his own eyes this was not enough. He must rid himself of Lord George, that powerful personality, either by forcing him to resign his command, or by driving the Prince into dismissing him. To these ends he dropped a thousand subtle hints that seeded to ugly weeds in Charles's torn mind. Nothing definite, nothing open laid to Lord George's charge, only the incessant harping on that one string: possible treachery. "Charles, Prince Regent," he would murmur, contemplating the large signature at the foot of some document which he had just drawn up to perfection. "How vastly curious that my Lord George Murray should not have named any of his sons after your Royal Highness! The eldest is my namesake, John Murray. Of course you know, sir, that he holds a commission in Lord Loudon's regiment?"

The devil stood at the sallow man's elbow, not a doubt of it. Charles would flush and frown.

Lord George's gallantry at Prestonpans had very nearly proved the antidote to the poison of Murray's hints and suspicions, but unfortunately his own personal bearing towards the Prince irked Charles unspeakably. He was outspoken and blunt, at councils or private conversations giving his opinion of the Prince's policy without tact or respect. Again and again a red cheek or a bitten lip was obliged to be Charles's sole comment on his lieutenant-general's biting sallies. Their natures were alike in that both were headstrong, obstinate, and impatient of contradiction. Charles's motto was not only that the King could do no wrong, but that the Prince Regent could not either. In this he was strongly supported by the Irish, whose detestation of Lord George sank their

jealousies of one another, and united their front firmly.

Lord George had the field to himself where his own countrymen were concerned. The Duke of Perth, supposedly his colleague, was gentle, dreamy, not over strong, and out for peace at all hazards. The Duke of Athol, in bad health, and disinclined by nature to take a prominent part in affairs, was still at Blair Castle, a rheumatic Rip Van Winkle, feebly striving to force out more of the Athol men, nearly distracted by his brother's peremptory letters demanding support and the punishment of deserters. The chiefs were mainly occupied with their own grievances, clan-feuds, enmities, and private squabbles for precedence and honours. Lord George dominated everybody, a strong, aggressive personality, speaking his mind and delivering his soul unhesitatingly. He was as hardy physically as Charles, and in the performance of his military duties unsparing of himself and anyone else. Occasionally he softened, paid some court to the Prince, and wrestled with his ungovernable temper. Holyrood breathed more freely, until a fresh suspicion of Lord George's fidelity on Charles's part, or an explosion from the former over the Prince's conduct of affairs, widened the breach between them once more. All of which was singularly apposite and gratifying to Secretary Murray.

Lord Pitsligo's arrival brought a healing touch to these internal strifes and dissensions. "A little, thinn, fair man," the Secretary describes him, "a great Schollar," and, that thrawn traitor acknowledged in the barren years of leprous ostracism, one of the saints of God. He joined the Prince's standard, simply, unostentatiously, solely because he was convinced that his duty lay in so doing. When he led out his clan: "O Lord, Thou knowest that our cause is just," he prayed. Then, turning to them: "March, gentlemen!"

The Prince, for whom he was risking all, loved and revered him. He spared the old man any possible fatigue, deferred to his opinion, saw personally after his comfort. Lord George Murray, sitting with Lord Pitsligo in the latter's bedroom one windy evening, and detailing his grievances, broke off at the opening of the door. A tall, slight figure came in, wrapped in a riding-cloak. "I beg that you will not discompose yourselves, gentlemen." The Prince motioned both back to their chairs. "I merely came to see whether the servants had attended to my orders about your fire, my lord."

Lord George was indifferent to cold, Lord Pitsligo to comfort. Both turned to survey the grate in some embarrassment. "'Tis vastly thoughtful of your Royal Highness, but I think the fire is quite good," the latter said.

Charles laughed, fell upon the sulky sea-coal with a poker, and produced a merry blaze. His face became covered with smuts in the process. Like a child he went over to Lord George, handkerchief in hand, to have it cleaned. "Oh, rub harder than that," he smiled. Lord George was dabbing tentatively at one

smooth cheek. "My complexion en't the kind that comes off."

"Your Royal Highness should give our Edinburgh beauties the recipe for it," suggested Lord Pitsligo. The Prince laughed again.

"Nature's handiwork, my lord. I sup and sleep in the camp to-night, both of which I find vastly beneficial." He added gaily: "Sheridan wrings his hands, and vows that I shall catch either fleas or fever, but I pay no heed." He flung Lord George his fingers to kiss, went over and offered Lord Pitsligo the newly-cleaned cheek. "*Bon soir, mes amis!*" He whirled from the room, and a sound resembling a charge of cavalry proclaimed His Royal Highness's descent down the stairs.

On October 14th there arrived at Holyrood a very fine gentleman, Monsieur the Marquis d'Aiguilles, titular French Ambassador, curled, perfumed, laced, raising amused eyebrows at the squalors of Edinburgh, the uncouth, staring inhabitants. Charles received him very graciously, and went off with a high colour to read the letters brought by Du Boyer from the King of France.

"This is good news, monseigneur." He laughed in relief. "I may make it public?"

The Frenchman's fine eyes lowered. "The intelligence, but not the letter, sir. That is for your Royal Highness's eyes alone."

At supper that night Charles spoke carelessly, indefinitely, of a French landing. He confidently expected the Duke of York, already in Paris, to head the expedition. His army's spirits rose. Later in the month news came of the arrival of French ships on the bleak coast at Montrose and Stonehaven. They brought money, artillery, stores, and a further rabble of Irish, (including Sir Thomas Sheridan's nephew Michael,) to all of whom the Prince gave high commissions and confidence.

There were disappointments, as well as victories and new support. Lord Lovat still proved elusive, likewise MacLeod of MacLeod, and Sir Alexander MacDonald. Charles sent messages and promises to these without result, though he caused it to be given out that they and their clans were marching south to join him. Lord Nithsdale arrived in style, dined at the Prince's table, and after a night of terror, enlivened by dreams of gibbets and axes, declined to take any further part in the rebellion. He brought down the wrath of his lady, an ardent Jacobite, on his luckless head, while equally Lord Kenmure incurred the hate of Mr. Secretary Murray. His wife, with an uncommon spirit for her times, refused to allow her lord to assist in such a dangerous venture, bullied him into writing Murray a tactful letter apologising to the Prince for not

supporting him, and acknowledging gracefully Charles's wish to honour him with the command of a troop. "Some days after I received a few Lines from My Lord himself, telling me that the Situation of his affairs (he had better said his wife) would not permit him to join," writes the outraged Secretary in his memoirs. As Charles had shown Lord Kenmure "a particular Civility, both in his manner and in what he said to him," he was naturally displeased and disappointed at this deft retreat, and Mr. Secretary suffered in consequence, without for once being able to shift the blame to the scapegoat shoulders of Lord George.

Charles held his final councils at Holyrood on the sad-coloured days that closed in October. Outside, the dead leaves of autumn's litter whirled and raced in the wind. The gardens were damp and sodden, brooded over by bare trees, silhouetted against a grey sky patched with watery gold. The Prince's drawing-room, square and dark, had the sombreness, the deep, mellow colouring of an oil-painting ripened by time. Doors and a few dimmed portraits broke the dusk of its panelling. Two high slits of windows looked over the courtyard towards the town. The faces round the table were grave and intent. The Duke of Athol, newly arrived with six hundred men, Lord Pitsligo, and Lord George had the advantage of most present in rank and years. Lord Lewis Gordon, Elcho, and Ogilvy wore the flush of youth, while the sober chiefs, Lochiel, Ardschiel, Keppoch, Clanranald, Glenbucket, and Lochgarry, seemed by their grave eyes and well-considered speech and judgments to hold the balance nicely between the two. The Prince sat at the head of the table, flanked by Sheridan and the silent, indispensable Murray. He was a restless creature, constantly biting a quill or tearing up a paper, eyes and ears alert for side issues, or the faintest whisper of criticism. O'Sullivan, lolling between Glencoe and Lord Nairne, thought him looking older.

Charles spoke fast and eagerly, outlining his plans. "I have information that Marshal Wade's army yesterday reached Newcastle. No doubt he designs to march north immediately, and my purpose is to meet and welcome him. I would request the voice of those present as to the most proper course to take." The frowns and shaken heads which greeted his speech did not quell his enthusiasm. "Well, my lords? Well, gentlemen?"

It was a bold man who spoke in that council before Lord George Murray had uttered his opinion. "Your Royal Highness designs to enter England and fight Wade?"

"Assuredly, my lord. Could circumstances be more favourable?" Their looks met, measuring swords. "Marshal Wade and his troops will be weary from their march, their numbers do not greatly exceed our own——" His eyes

darted in appeal from one face to another. "Gentlemen——?"

Lord George smiled acidly. "Prestonpans has given your Royal Highness a taste for battles."

"Well, my lord, is it not better to fight Wade, fatigued and disheartened, before his men have time to recover themselves, as they will do if let to rest?" He turned to his quartermaster-general. "O'Sullivan——?"

The Irishman bowed. "I am entirely of your Royal Highness's opinion."

"Of course you are." Lord George fell upon him. "It would be monstrous agreeable to hear you disagree for once!"

"Sure, my lord, you do all the disagreeing that's necessary." O'Sullivan grinned viciously.

"Is your Royal Highness going to permit this?" The Duke of Perth, who had a headache, spoke with weary resignation.

"I have little voice in anything at my own council-table, it appears." Charles leaned his forehead on his clasped hands. "Pray give us your views, Lord George."

"Your Royal Highness's marching into England will afford your friends there a ready opportunity of joining you." Lord George's cool, slow voice contrasted curiously with the Prince's heated, irritable accents. "But I consider that you ought not to risk a battle, unless upon terms and ground of your own choice, and Mr. Wade, being the sooner on the spot, can select his own ground——"

Charles lifted his young head. "Do you hint at defeat, my lord, before we are forth of Edinburgh?"

"I do not hint, sir, but your Royal Highness must consider the possibility and the consequence. It might mean the total ruin of your affairs, as a retreat and pursuit across the Tweed, with the garrison of Berwick to oppose your army's passage, and to harass your rear——" The pause was pregnant with significance.

Lochiel interposed in his gentle way. "At this season of the year, the Tweed is seldom fordable, on account of the autumn rains, and with the wet weather we have undergone lately the road through Runsidemuir is in all likelihood impassable for cannon and other carriages." He paused and continued: "I would humbly suggest that your Royal Highness march to Carlisle, and then, if feasible, on to Newcastle——"

"Ay, and then offer battle to Mr. Wade." Keppoch's heavy, brooding face looked eager. "If he does not choose to risk it, 'twill be a vast encouragement to your Royal Highness's English supporters."

"If I march direct to Carlisle, Mr. Wade has it in his power to cross the country and oppose my passage of the Esk." Charles was still obstinate and unconvinced. "'Twill give the appearance of shunning him, besides."

The Duke of Athol, braving his brother's wrath, asked timidly: "Will your Royal Highness not await French reinforcements under Lord John Drummond?"

"No." Charles stood up with sparkling eyes. "I have determined not to remain longer in Edinburgh. This inaction is causing more men to desert than we can spare." He struck the table. "I find, gentlemen, that you are for staying in Scotland and defending your country. I am resolved to try my fate in England, though I should go alone!"

"'Twill be time enough to do so when your Royal Highness's friends in that country send for you." The sulky sotto voce was Elcho's.

The Prince flashed round upon him. "What, my lord? *Comment*, my lord? I have no hesitation in saying that I confidently expect to be received in England, nay, in London, as I have been in Edinburgh."

Lord Elcho shrugged his shoulders. "Everybody wishes it may be so, sir, and wishes too that you may soon have authority for saying so."

After a long and stormy debate, the council concluded, as it not infrequently did, with the Prince in tears in the arms of his Irish supporters, the Scots at variance with each other, and nothing definite settled. Charles at length lifted his head from Sheridan's shoulder, and spoke haughtily. "The council is ended, gentlemen. We shall meet to-morrow morning at nine of the clock, and I trust that a night's reflection will bring most of you to be of your Prince's mind." He snatched up his long gauntlets and stalked towards the door. "I shall visit the Countess of Eglintoun before dinner," he announced. "Ogilvy, come with me." Lord Ogilvy, who had planned a pleasant morning in the society of his wife, followed, wearing a lengthened countenance. "My Lord Pitsligo, we should esteem your company a favour, if it would not fatigue you too greatly to ride with us?"

Charles took counsel with himself that night, lying awake while a wind cried over and around the old palace. How long, how long since that broken, excited sleep in the creaking barn at Glenfinnan, or the brief hours of oblivion in Gray's Mill! Then water talked outside, a little song of encouragement and hope, and summer's colours embroidered the land. Now winter loomed at hand, and here, in his forebears' ghostly house, whose walls were stained and seamed with old plots, the air heavy with crime and treachery, he looked towards the future, and knew fear. Summer was behind him, criticism and

cavil on all sides. He was so young, so young, he cried, holding out appealing arms to the darkness, and on whom could he build his trust? His Highlanders loved him, but each clan loved its chief more, and would follow where he held up a finger. Murray of Broughton? He had seen the sallow face soften at his entrance, flush with pleasure over a careless word of commendation or affection, but sometimes he feared that in leaning on Murray he leaned upon a reed which should pierce his hand. His Irish adherents? They gave him the furtive comfort of a shared religion, but their facile acquiescence in his plans, their gushing support, he shrewdly surmised to be dictated by jealousy of the Scots, and the desire to ingratiate themselves with him whilst the sun shone on a temporary success. "Sheridan loves me, remembers me as a child." He tossed from side to side, pursuing his restless thoughts. "O'Sullivan is good company, and hates Lord George, and Kelly I have sent away of my own free will. The Scots? Athol and Perth love me, and Lord Pitsligo. I see it in their eyes. What forced others out? Conviction—the conviction that my House are their rightful kings, but they tremble for their necks. Caution! caution! Had I listened to advice of caution in France, I had not been here. Do I risk nothing? *Thirty thousand pounds for the person of the Pretender's eldest son, dead or alive!*"

The onrush of rain was loud in the night. The wind had dropped, leaving the creak of timbers audible through the beating, slanting water. Edinburgh! The place pressed upon him, hemming him in. He saw dour faces in plenty as he rode its grey and narrow streets. Women curtsied to him, men kissed his hand, the sullen Castle acknowledged his authority and accepted his clemency, but the town's heart remained unconquered. He was only nominally master. He had no real rule. The law courts continued closed, the Crown officials absent. Business was either suspended, or went on feared, furtively. He was a fashionable spectacle reviewing his troops, or galloping out of the gaping gates of Holyrood, yet there was no love, only a stupid curiosity, in the faces, intelligent as stone dykes, which gathered to watch. England called to him, a throne beckoned, St. James's dazzled and gleamed. His ambitions were not limited to Scotland, however much its crown and conquest might satisfy his northern adherents. Even Sheridan, who knew him more intimately than any other, and loved him passionately despite that knowledge, never fully guessed at the depths of that insatiate, corroding desire to reign. It was his predominant, devouring passion. He lay with it o' nights, and never forgot it in his waking hours. It held him, soul and body. When its object failed him, ambition, driven remorselessly inward upon itself ambition allied to great physical strength and a highly-strung, ardent temperament, soured and destroyed him. Nevertheless, at this stage, he had the sense to see that it would be highly impolitic to go against his followers' wishes, and in the small matter of the route to be taken he was willing to yield his own. What matter how he reached English soil, so

long as he wiled the Scots to follow him southward?

He was pale and grave when he came to the council next morning. They were waiting for him, his lords and chiefs, deferential, suave, but the slim figure that took its place at the head of the table, after a word to every one, a smile for the more important, was agonisingly conscious of his own impotence with these fierce, lean Scots. He spoke low, bending forward a little over the arms folded on the long board.

“I have seriously considered of your arguments of yesterday, gentlemen.” His eyes turned slowly from one line of faces to the other. “Upon reflection, I am given to think you were in the right, and I am ready to follow your advice.”

He let no sign appear of those torturing night-communings, those wakeful hours of racking doubt. He swept aside his own defeat, his charm playing like shafts of sunshine over the dazzled, delighted listeners. The matured decision to accept the general opinion that he should advance to Carlisle, and if possible avoid a battle with Wade’s troops, was made very graciously. His council bent their heads above maps and plans, while their leader watched, with smileless mouth.

At six that night he rode out of Holyrood at the head of his life-guards. The city, which had received him with sunshine and cheering, showed colourless under massed clouds. Dim haze held it down. The narrow closes, dark and furtive, were mean, slanting wedges between the houses, their distant vistas of firth and walls vague and blurred. A wind blew moaning. His heart was heavy, for all that he had set his face towards England. Edinburgh saw him not again. Holyrood had closed her gates upon him. Outside the town the wide sweep of land spread void and dark. Above it the red setting sun dipped and disappeared. He looked upon the field which had been the site of his brief victory, and shuddered in the cold.

“How late the harvest is!” He pointed out some derelict stocks, lying water-logged and ungathered.

Late hairst and heavy for Scotland that year, and for many years to come. Royal hands had sowed the seed, carelessly, lavishly, but the reaper’s name was Death.

CHAPTER VI

"So far, then, have I voyaged with success . . .
Then—God was pledged to take me by the hand;
Now—any miserable juggler bends
My pride to him. All seems alike at length:
Who knows which are the wise and which the fools?"

.
Oh, bitter! very bitter!

And more bitter,
To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin—
Plague beneath plague—the last turning the first
To light beside its darkness. Better weep
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
In tears which burn!"

Paracelsus.

THE cold had closed over the country like the grasp of an iron hand. Snow lay thick upon the fields, and wiry hedges wandered in black lines across the spread whiteness. The roads were slime and slush, chains of deep puddles crusted with frail ice, along which the Jacobite army stumbled, and the horses slipped and slid. The sky was sullen, slate-hued, with masses of blacker cloud piled against the horizon. The sleet froze as it fell.

Sometimes it was like walking in a world of ghosts. Grey, gaunt forms, grey fields, grey skeleton trees, draped with rime, grey hillsides looking down. When they had breath to spare, the screaming of the pipes cut the frozen stillness. They were hardy and tough of endurance, these Highlanders, but the slight figure at the head of the first column surpassed them. His officers shrugged their shoulders and smiled when the Prince rejected horse or vehicle, and led the clans on his own shapely feet. It would be only for a mile or two, they told one another. The first river, the earliest difficult pass, and his enthusiasm for marching would evaporate. But he kept on, day after day, seemingly taking no harm from the cold, the inclement weather, the fatigue, the reckless plunge into icy fluid when they forded deep water. At intervals he would walk back alongside the lines, laughing, jesting, encouraging stragglers, till he came to his travelling coach, lumbering in the rear, bearing Lord Pitsligo. The heavy vehicle would jolt to a standstill, and the bright face be thrust in at the window. "Have I disturbed your lordship? No, you are not asleep. I see you are reading." He would laugh aside any suggestion that he should enter and rest for a while. "*Mais, non, non.* I love the walking in this splendid air, and trying to talk to my Highlanders. Did you observe the sunset, my lord? Look! over the rim of those hills. Glorious!"

On November 8th the army had crossed the Esk and entered England. There were lengthy faces and ominous murmurs, for a portent, by no means propitious, occurred on reaching the alien soil. The clans wheeled with one accord, and a great sweep of steel flashed in the dry, bright air as they faced Scotland with drawn weapons. Lochiel's sword slipped, inflicting a sharp cut on his slim right hand. He made light of it, declaring that it was worth while to have the wound bound up by the Prince himself, in His Royal Highness's own laced handkerchief. But the omen was regarded as bad, and later the breaking of the Prince's standard at Derby confirmed the prevailing belief in the ill-luck attaching to the expedition.

Lord George Murray, a good Presbyterian, scoffed at ghosts and superstitions. His powers of endurance equalled the Prince's. On the march he resembled a typhoon, a cyclone, a thunderstorm, an earthquake, or any other devastating natural phenomenon. He was indefatigable, seeing to the feeding and quartering of the Highlanders and their officers, doing the work of three people besides his own. He kept excellent order, permitted no straggling, loitering, or plundering, dashed into cottages to drag out and drub unlucky wights suspected of these unlawful practices, lived on two meals a day, and did with less bed than anybody else. He was always accessible, whether eating, sleeping, or writing out orders. He proved one of the keenest for the taking of Carlisle, and personally proposed that the Prince should remain at Brampton, whither he had gone in anticipation of a battle with Wade, whilst the remainder of his army besieged the town.

Now was Charles's opportunity, but he evaded and misused it. He slighted Lord George by his deliberate and open preference for the Duke of Perth, to whom he entrusted delicate negotiations, and most matters of military importance. The manner in which Lord George had utilised very raw material for the blockade of Carlisle had aroused the admiration of all, including his arch-enemy of Broughton, but when the news of the town's capitulation was carried to Charles at Brampton, Lord George was practically ignored.

It was a wild night, storm and rain, with a screaming wind tearing over the country. Through the blackness and the gale rode Ker of Graden, his head bent before the tempest, his horse's mane lashed in his wet face. The Prince was entertaining several of his officers to supper in a large, rattling chamber of a gaunt north of England house. The younger lot mostly were present, though Charles did not care greatly for the society of his contemporaries and juniors, having been accustomed to older people all his life. Lord Ogilvy, Lord Elcho, Michael Sheridan, the Master of Strathallan, and young Oliphant of Cask were all satisfying hearty, healthy appetites, and consuming quantities of wine and brandy. Sir Thomas Sheridan thoroughly detested these orgies. The guests

drank too much, became noisy, frequently quarrelsome, and he noted with dismay and consternation His Royal Highness's increasing fondness for the bottle. The gathering seldom broke up before eleven, when the Prince would fling himself on his bed without undressing, sleep soundly, and be up next morning by four o'clock. Only that day Sheridan had overheard him scolding Gibb, the unfortunate steward of his household, for requiring to be rung for twice. Mr. Gibb ventured to explain nervously that his dilatoriness was due to his not being dressed when summoned. "You should do as I do," Charles told him. "Never strip at all, and then you would be ready the sooner to answer."

Well, well, youth is not minded to excuse. Sheridan's face softened as he looked at the Prince. Charles was gobbling pie, conducting two separate conversations with his neighbours on either hand, and listening interestedly to an anecdote which Lord Elcho was telling at the other end of the board.

"The fellow was quite sober." He drained his glass. "He asked monstrous gravely: 'And what is your Prince's religion?' "

The table roared. Charles leaned forward. "*Ma foi!* and how did you reply, Lord Elcho?"

Elcho looked sideways at the flushed young face. "I said that it was still to seek, sir."

Everyone laughed again, the Prince loudest of all. Sheridan, angered, was starting a remonstrance, when horse-hoofs clattered up the street. The diners sat suspended, eager. Charles sprang up, ran across the floor, and flung open the window. The wild night rushed in, howl of wind, thunder of falling water, the great beating heart of the country and the storm. The Prince leaned out, regardless of the raindrops pattering down on his hair. Ker of Graden, dismounting from his horse, saw the brilliant face framed in dripping wood and glistening ivy. "News, sir. Great news!" he called.

"What is it? What is it?" Charles leaned down eagerly. "Come up and tell us, Ker."

He ran to the door to meet the dripping figure. Ker of Graden flung aside his cloak, heavy with rain, and fell on one knee. "The garrison of Carlisle hung out a white flag at eight o'clock to-night, sir. I rode at once to inform your Royal Highness that the town capitulates."

"Carlisle surrenders!" The room took up the cry.

Charles embraced the soaked messenger, and drew him to the table. "A toast, friends!" He filled glasses, laughing, with unsteady hand. "May all England fall to us as easily!" They drank, crowding about him. "Your news is vastly welcome, Colonel Ker. I will ask you to ride back presently and bid the Duke of Perth arrange the terms of surrender with Mr. Murray."

Sheridan interposed. "Surely your Royal Highness means Lord George?"

"No, I do not." Charles's eyes flashed. "What has Lord George to say to it, pray?"

Lord George had a good deal to say to it, and Mr. Secretary Murray fanned the flame. He hated rain like a sleek cat, but he would have ridden with Colonel Ker to the infernal regions instead of to Carlisle, in order to checkmate Lord George. The two men, shrouded in heavy cloaks, went down the stair, and out to their horses' heads. Charles accompanied them, and stood in the doorway, looking along the wet street. Above, a cresset lamp tilted against the wind, sending long streaks of pale yellow slanting across the soaking stones. The sky was deep, blue-black, with the houses rising gaunt against it. A dark mist of trees tossed under a goblin moon.

Young Lord Ogilvy greeted him with tipsy reproaches when he returned to the supper-room. "Highly wr-wrong of your Royal Highness to go down to the street-door un-unescorted," he reproved him.

"Monstrous undignified to put your head out of the window, sir." This was Elcho. "What would my Lord George say if he had seen?"

"Thank God he didn't," was the Prince's pious retort. He sat down again at the table. "Open that other bottle, Sheridan, and we'll drink confusion to Lord George and all similar spoil-sports."

"Your Royal Highness has drunk quite enough already." Sheridan clung to the wine which Charles was striving to wrest from him. "No, Carluccio, you do not want it," he whispered imploringly.

"If you intend to imply that I am drunk, Sir Thomas"—Charles sat very erect—"I will prove that I am not."

In order to demonstrate this, he collected the glasses and proceeded to pile one on top of the other. This admirable imitation of the leaning tower of Pisa tilted sideways with a crash. The rest gathered up the fragments that remained, giggling convulsively, and slicing their fingers. Charles regarded them with tipsy solemnity. "Now you will all share Lochiel's bad luck," he declared.

His guests gradually departed, some to ride to the various neighbouring houses where they were quartered, some to go to bed. The Prince refused to follow their example. He would await the return of Murray of Broughton. "Nonsense, Sherry! Of course he will come back to-night." Presently he pattered into the supper-room on bare feet, his long, tawny hair hanging down over his nightgown. "Make room for me," he ordered imperiously. He scrambled up beside the Irishman, and throned his warm, vigorous young body on Sheridan's knees. "You are a fair weight, child," Sheridan told him. He passed his arm round the slim creature, feeling the eager throb of the excited

heart. "And you ought to be in bed," he added.

Charles shook back his loose hair. "No, no, I should not sleep." He got down, and walked restlessly to the window. "What a night! What a devil's wind!" he muttered.

The devil's emissary arrived some hours later, sleek and soaked. He stood by the fire, the wet steaming from his clothes, while the Prince poured him out wine, rang bells, loftily insisted on a hot supper being cooked for him, and in Sheridan's opinion paid him an unnecessary amount of deference and attention. His account of his doings was brief. He had gone to Lord George's quarters to procure a guide, but had not seen Lord George himself, which gave the latter great offence. The Duke of Perth and the Secretary had had a satisfactory interview regarding the terms of Carlisle's surrender.

"What shall you grant them, sir?" Sheridan asked. He was not apprehensive. Charles, if anything, erred on the side of mercy.

"Nothing, unless the Castle surrenders." The Prince turned round, showing a firm mouth. "I learned a lesson with Edinburgh, and all the trouble over the castle there."

"Yes, it was mighty unwise not to demand the surrender of the Castle, when the city capitulated." Murray of Broughton nodded. "Your Royal Highness made a pardonable mistake then."

"Shan't this time," retorted bonnie Prince Charlie. He looked about fifteen as he sat on the floor, kicking his feet contentedly in the firelight. "I wrote a mighty peremptory letter, declining to treat with them unless both town and castle surrendered, and threatening dreadful consequences if we had to force our way in." He laughed. "Now, I can afford to be gracious and magnanimous."

Sheridan's look was not wholly approving. "I wish your Royal Highness had seen fit to consult Lord George Murray," he began.

Charles stood up, slim and obstinate. "Sheridan, that will do. If I choose to entrust the carrying out of my dispositions to the Duke of Perth and Mr. Murray here, it is no concern of Lord George, or any other."

The Secretary cast down his eyes. "I hope your Royal Highness is sensible that I have served you faithfully all along, and that your interest is the thing I have most at heart." He stooped to kiss the extended hand. "But, to prevent all uneasiness that may arise, I beg you will be pleased to allow me to absent myself from your councils, sir."

Charles uttered a cry of consternation. "But, Murray, I cannot do without your advice. I depend upon you more than upon anyone."

“For your Royal Highness’s interests, I am willing to sacrifice my own.” During one second the Secretary glanced up. “It is still in my power to advise in a private manner,” Murray murmured.

“I am not going to be dictated to by Lord George,” thundered the Prince. He embraced the sopping Secretary. “Your advice is always welcome and valued, my dear friend.”

Sir Thomas Sheridan, with an audible sniff, remarked that it was high time His Royal Highness was in bed.

Ker of Graden, another night, rode to Brampton. He was the bearer of a letter for the Prince from Lord George Murray, a letter written in haste, and repented of at leisure. Charles had had an acceptable day. The town and castle of Carlisle had both surrendered. The mayor and corporation had come to Brampton, bringing the keys of the city in token of submission. Charles had returned them, promising the royal favour and protection, so princely and gracious that it was difficult to associate the spoilt child of yesterday with this stately young man. He felt pleasantly fatigued, and declined to entertain company to supper. Colonel Ker found him curled up in the firelight, gnawing an apple. Neither the attitude nor the occupation was particularly dignified, but Charles managed to get to his feet and dispose of a partly eaten core with astounding grace and celerity. He broke the seal of the proffered letter and read it with knit brow.

“SIR,—I cannot but observe how little my advice as a general officer has any weight with your Royal Highness, ever since I had the honour of a commission from your hands. I therefore take leave to give up my commission. But as I ever had a firm attachment to the Royal family, and in particular to the King, my master, I shall go out as a volunteer, and design to be this night in the trenches as such. Your Royal Highness will please appoint whom you think fit to command on this post, and the other parts of the blockade. Lord Elcho has the command till you please to appoint otherwise. I have the honour to be, sir, your Royal Highness’s most faithful and most humble servant,

GEORGE MURRAY.”

“Send Sir Thomas Sheridan to me, sir.” Charles crumpled up the letter.

Sheridan arrived, to find the Prince executing a *pas seul* which was a combination of an Indian war dance and a Highland fling. He stood aghast on the threshold. “Carluccio! What’s taken you, behaving in that crazy fashion?”

“I am rid of Lord George! I am rid of Lord George! I am rid of Lord

George!” chanted His Royal Highness. He tossed over the letter. “Read that, Sherry—damvably impertinent, but the devil’s own luck for me. Oh, I’ll be so good from this on! I’ll burn pounds of candles in thanksgiving! I’ll——”

“Ah, quit capering, child, and come and eat your supper.”

The dancing Prince ceased his evolutions, and sat down at the table. “The devil’s own luck,” he repeated fervently. He helped himself hungrily from the dish before him. “Here! carve for yourself, Sherry, and pour out my wine. I vow I am starving.”

“Your Royal Highness!”

“*Eh bien?*” He looked up in surprise, for ceremony was invariably laid aside when he and Sheridan were alone.

“Child, you are getting to behave like a perfect heathen.”

“Lord! I forgot.” He bent his bright head and mumbled a Latin grace. “You do keep me up to my duties, Sherry,” he grumbled. “You are as bad as any confessor.”

Sheridan frowned a little. “Well, it’s the only way, in this unchristian country. You know you have not heard Mass since we left France——”

The Prince interrupted sharply. “That is not my fault. There is no Catholic church in that damned Edinburgh. Glencairnaig was vastly anxious that I should attend public worship there, and I was willing, only Perth, who is such a bigot, dissuaded me.” He went on: “And I am most particular about other people’s religion. Look at the way I send messages in every fresh town that the services are to be held as usual, and they counter me by asking if they may pray for the Elector. I am sure he wants all the prayers he can get,” Charles laughed.

Sheridan was still unsmiling. “And God and Mr. MacDonald only know when your Royal Highness last went to Confession.”

“Saturday.” The Prince inclined his bright head to one side. “I think ’twas Saturday. No, I remember I meant to go, and then I decided to bottle up my sins for another week.” He ate and drank hungrily.

“You’ll confess to-morrow.” Sir Thomas looked sternly at him. “Now, I’ll have none of your nonsense and tempers, Carluccio, so just take that scowl off your face. I passed my word to His Majesty that I’d see you did your devotions, and I mean to keep it.” His look saddened. “Dear child, you laughed with the rest and thought it a fine jest when that impudent young fly-by-night, my Lord Elcho, told that story of his saying that your Royal Highness’s religion was yet to seek, but it would break the King’s heart if he had heard.”

“He need not hear.” Charles’s mouth was very sulky.

"Well, you'll have to mend your manners when you go back to Rome." Sir Thomas spoke briskly. "You are getting quite spoilt and thoroughly out of hand. Look at the way you are sitting now! How many times, Carluccio, have I told you to keep your elbows off the table?"

"Shoo!" retorted His Royal Highness impudently. He removed the offending elbows, and made a grab at Sheridan's wig. Sheridan jerked back, bringing his head in contact with a lighted candle. His face, and still more his efforts to repair the damage, sent Charles into peals of mirth.

"If you behave like that in Rome"—Sheridan shook a plump forefinger at his charge—"His Majesty will send you from the table mighty quickly."

"I am not going back to Rome." The young face grew suddenly old and determined. "Do you suppose, Sherry, that after *this*, I would return there, to eat humble pie, and be patronised by the Pope, and have Papa preaching at me all day that it was not the will of God that I should reign?" He began to grow excited. "Never! never! I tell you."

"Well, you en't going at present." Sir Thomas knew his spoiled child. "But you are heading that way," he warned him bluntly, "by alienating Lord George. His is not a temper to brook being superseded or neglected." He handed back the letter. "You cannot accept that resignation, Carluccio."

"Good God! Why not?" The Prince stared across at Sir Thomas.

"Whom will you put in his place?" He waved aside Charles's heated, eager suggestion of the Duke of Perth. "Bah! a miserable, semi-invalid creature, only fit to share your Royal Highness's travelling coach with my Lord Pitsligo. *He* cannot be abroad in all weathers, seeing to the troops' comfort, and arranging the details of the march as my Lord George does. I have no liking for him, but he does not spare himself."

Charles began to pout. "Well, I never thought to live to hear you praising and recommending George Murray, Sheridan."

"My darling child, have some sense." He came round the table to Charles. "You know, Carluccio, my sole ambition is to see you in St. James's, and there's only one man in this kingdom who can get you there, and that is Lord George Murray. Ah! don't, my treasure." The Prince had pushed him away, and putting his head down on the table began sobbing stormily.

Sir Thomas, who knew that His Royal Highness's outbursts were of the typhoon variety, devastating whilst they lasted, but speedily over, removed the butter from the royal hair, and very sensibly went back to his supper. Charles, finding no notice was taken, sat up and dabbed at his eyes with angry energy. "If I am to get to St. James's through my Lord George Murray I had rather never go there at all," he declared.

He was thoroughly unreasonable. During the rest of supper he brooded unhappily, and then sent for Secretary Murray. The latter read the letter, careful to exhibit no feeling. Charles looked at the impassive face, and rapped out an impatient: "Well? Well?"

Murray cleared a space on the disorderly supper-table for his writing-materials. "What does your Royal Highness wish me to reply?"

"I sent for you to tell me that." Charles stared at him with a heavy frown. "I want to accept Lord George's resignation, but——"

"What is to prevent your Royal Highness from doing so?"

The Prince answered like a child: "Sheridan says I cannot."

The Secretary's shrugged shoulders were eloquent comment on the value of Sir Thomas Sheridan's opinion.

"Well, write what I say," Charles ordered harshly. He dictated a curt letter, as blunt as Lord George himself. When it was done, the Prince carried it to Sheridan, who read it with a grim mouth.

"BRAMPTON, Nov. ye 14th 1745.

"I think yr advice ever since you join'd me at Perth has had another guess weight with me than what any General Officer cou'd claim as such. I am therefore extremely surprised you shou'd throw up yr commission for a reason which I beleeve was never heard of before. I am glad of yr particular attachment to the King, but I am very sure he will never take anything as a proof of it but yr deference to me. I accept of your demission as Lieutenant-General and yr future services as a Volunteer.

CHARLES, P.R."

"And your Royal Highness designs sending this to Lord George?" Sheridan gave the letter back.

"Yes. Why not?" The Prince glanced up at him in sharp annoyance. "Do you advise otherwise, Sherry?"

"My dear child, I en't going to advise you at all." Sheridan shrugged his shoulders. "You are nearly five-and-twenty, and competent to manage your own affairs. His Majesty gave you a power of regency, and you must just do as you incline and think best." He added gravely: "I do not approve, but that is quite another thing."

Charles pouted. He hated and resented advice, but what he preferred was to be guided gently along the path of his own inclinations. Secretary Murray usually accomplished this to perfection. He went back to him now, and within ten minutes a messenger had been dispatched to Lord George's quarters,

bearing the letter.

This gracious and charming epistle brought Lord George to Brampton next day. He interviewed Sir Thomas Sheridan, and the two came nearer to liking one another than they had ever been before. Lord George regretted the haste and spleen with which he had written to the Prince. He knew that he had given Charles the opportunity of ridding himself of one whom he suspected and disliked, and that both had gratified the private spite of Secretary Murray. He was frankly puzzled, in addition to being deeply hurt.

“I cannot comprehend His Royal Highness’s attitude, Sir Thomas. I am not sensible of having failed in my duty to him in the smallest particular, and yet you have seen how he has written to me.” He held out the obnoxious letter. “I conclude that he takes it amiss my having in my letter expressed my attachment to the King, without mentioning His Royal Highness.” His look was irritable and bewildered. “I thought it needless to be more particular, for surely, next to the King, I would serve none on earth before His Royal Highness.”

“His Royal Highness has behaved most unwisely.” The Irishman spoke quietly. “I dared not interfere, for you know for yourself, my lord, that the Prince likes his own way.”

Lord George was fast lashing himself into a fury. “I am of no account, it seems. I have ventured my all—life, family, fortune—for the Cause, and though I do not expect gratitude, I am at least entitled to demand courtesy. Am I ever consulted or considered?” he stormed. “I desired to know, as near as could be, the terms His Royal Highness would accept of from Carlisle, and though I did not desire any power to conclude, yet it would have been a great saving of time if I had been trusted with His Royal Highness’s intentions, as surely by all rules I ought to have been.” He paused, breathless.

Sir Thomas nodded silently. The other resumed with growing passion:

“When he could not come to any fixed resolution before I came away, I begged His Royal Highness would send his intentions and instructions after me, that I might conduct myself by them, but his secretary told me plainly he took that matter to be his province. He seems indeed to take everything upon him, both as to civil and military.”

Sheridan, smiling a little, looked at Lord George across the space between. “His Royal Highness’s secretary, my lord, fancies himself monstrous important, but has the army no voice in matters? I would risk a small wager that they will not remain satisfied under the Duke of Perth.”

Lord George, for all his honest anger, was just. “I have nothing against the Duke, sir, excepting his unfortunate delicacy of habit and constitution. He has

excellent natural parts——”

“So had Naaman, and many advantages, but he countered them all by being a leper.” The astonishing reply made Lord George gasp. “Do you read my parable, my lord? The Duke, unluckily, is a Roman Catholic. In a Protestant country that will be reckoned his Naaman’s leprosy. Well, I can only suggest that you should leave matters as they are at present.”

Joy cometh in the morning. It was conspicuously absent in the Prince Regent’s camp, when the affair of His Royal Highness and my Lord George Murray became public property. The army shared Sheridan’s opinion as to the Duke of Perth’s capacity. The sum total of their conferences was a petition presented to Charles as soon as he came to Carlisle. He read it, tore at the bell till the rope broke, and was writhing on the floor by the time of Sheridan’s leisurely entrance. The Prince thrust the paper at him, his face convulsed.

“Get up, Carluccio, and take a drink of brandy,” recommended the unperturbed Irishman. He perused the writing with aggravating slowness. “Dear! dear! My! my! ‘Humbly beg that your Royal Highness will forthwith discharge all Roman Catholics from your council, as it may be a handle for your enemies to use against you, as lately done in the newspapers.’ Think o’ that, now. (Carluccio, if you don’t get up this minute, I’ll come and shake you.) ‘Where they said all your Royal Highness’s councils were directed by Roman Catholics, and compared Sir Thomas Sheridan to Father Petre, your Royal Highness’s grandfather’s confidant.’ Well, well, God rest his soul, they might compare me to a worse. ‘They likewise beg that when there is any question of signing capitulations wherein mention is made of securing the liberties of the Church of England, that Protestants might be employed to do it preferable to Roman Catholics, and they conclude by desiring that Lord George should be requested to take back his commission.’ My dear child!”

“Did you ever read more damned impertinence?” Charles stood up, his face flaming. “So I am to grovel to Lord George, and beg him to take back his commission, am I? Never! never! I’d sooner die.” He pitched forward heavily into Sheridan’s arms. “Oh, Sherry, what am I to do?” he wailed.

“You’ll have to do as they want.” Sheridan helped him to a chair, where he huddled, white-lipped and shaking. “I knew that this would happen when you were so set on getting rid of Lord George, but I might spare myself the trouble of arguing with you.” He added bluntly: “And another thing, Carluccio. The Duke of Perth won’t be too pleased, and you’ll have to show yourself mighty civil to *him*.”

“I will not agree to any of the other demands.” The hoarse voice broke.

“Well, well, just ignore them.” Sheridan was very gentle with him. “I am

sorry for you, my poor child, but you were monstrous foolish and impolitic, taking Lord George at his word, and you must ask him to oblige you by resuming his commission." He brought over writing materials. "Now, just a few lines. You can do it perfectly."

Charles looked mutinous. "Oh, call in Murray to write it. I am not going to afford Lord George the opportunity of sneering at my spelling."

Sheridan sighed as he contemplated him. There he sat, flushed, obstinate, immovable, ready to wreck the whole Cause for his own private irritations and dislikes. The moody young face recalled vividly the Charles of earlier days, the sullen child who refused to learn his pot-hooks, the high-spirited boy constantly rebelling against the atmosphere of the gloomy old palace, resenting discipline, authority, subjection, finding himself in continual disgrace. But always, always, after tempers, rudeness, sulks, the nameless, indescribable charm would transform him, and he would sway and recapture all hearts.

Sheridan came to him and laid his hand on the bright hair. "Carluccio, listen to me," he urged.

After an infinity of argument, refusals, tears, and finally capitulation, the letter to Lord George was written. At the third draft it passed the censor. Sheridan dispatched it by an aide-de-camp, before the Prince had time to change his mind, and returning, dispatched His Royal Highness to bed.

The ill-assorted army was rotten with private dissensions. As Sheridan had shrewdly prophesied, the Duke of Perth was the next to take umbrage. He loftily resigned his position and authority in favour of Lord George, who disliked him ever afterwards, a sentiment heartily reciprocated by His Grace, being a good Catholic. The Prince and Lord George had a frigid interview, engineered by the Duke of Athol. "I understand that your Royal Highness acquainted my brother that you desired to see me," was Lord George's opening volley. "No, I have nothing particular to say to you," retorted the Prince carelessly. (Charles could be odious when he chose.) "I am perfectly willing, as I stated in my letter, to serve in a private station, in the first rank of the Athol men." "You may do so," cordially rejoined His Royal Highness. Lord George left the presence, wondering if there were any known instance in history of a nobleman who slapped a king's son. If there were not, he was minded to establish a record by being the first person to box Prince Charles Edward's ears.

Charles was unhappy and perplexed. Private disagreements vied with public difficulties. Carlisle had received him as coldly as it dared, and the city, which later saw the last agonies of so many of his followers, remained as unconquered at heart as Edinburgh. That Laodicean amongst capitals had gone

back to Hanoverian rule and favour. The unpalatable intelligence reached Charles before he left Carlisle. His one wish was to leave it behind, to push further south, regardless of the dangers of Wade's army at Newcastle, and a still larger Government force already as far north as Staffordshire. London was his aim and goal. He asked advice at a council, fiercely rejecting the hinted suggestion of a return to Scotland, and November 21st saw him again at the head of his haphazard forces.

The cold saturated everything. A wind, singing down the high pass between Shap and Penrith, cut like a whip. Snow deadened the landscape. The Highland army, with bent heads, trudged, stumbled, covering the icy miles without complaint. They seemed the only live things in the desert of stark country. Far down the pass a swollen river brawled, its voice loud between the high white walls of framing mountains. Scotland and the heather-slopes, smoke curling from a shieling, the lapping of water in a blue loch, Wade's lang roads down which the cattle clattered in heavy-breathing droves—far, oh very far, these things, and farther yet that shadowy crown.

The cold had silenced even the Prince. His feet were two lumps of ice, his face aching with the wind's slaps, his splendid body no longer taut and erect. Half-blind from want of sleep, he was tottering doggedly alongside of some of the Mearns men. A tall Angus lad, habituated to cold by the blasts which blow down from the Grampians in windy spring, put his shoulder under the Prince's arm. He clung with numbed fingers to the shoulder-belt, and stumbled forward for a mile or so. The Ogilvy, burdened with his own equipment, cheerfully endured the Prince's eleven stone odd depending on him, and grumbled encouragement in broad Scots. "It'll be no sae far. Tak' a guid grip, an' A'll no let ye cowp. Ye could be daein' wi' a bannock an' a bowl o' brose, A jalouse?"

Charles smiled, as well as the muscles of his mouth, stiff with cold, permitted. Faces, memories, little incidents from the past weeks crowded before his vision. One was of the cross-eyed woman who had shaken her fist and cursed him as he rode out of Carlisle. He remembered a lame cur that barked at him in the street at Kelso, and the yellow hair of a little child whom he had stopped the whole army in order to pick up and kiss. Ragged asters growing in a tiny cottage-garden, sunset behind a broken wall, and, most vivid of all, the flat moor where he had reluctantly caused his counter-reward for the capture of the Elector to be publicly proclaimed. It stretched away into the dusk, guarded by dim, bending mountains. Between the heather wandered a little trodden path, purple in the faint light. . . .

Hours afterwards he found himself thawing gradually beside the generous fire in a mean inn, watched by a circle of anxious faces. Sheridan was feeding

him with spoonfuls of an egg beaten up in brandy. His hands were too numb to let him feed himself. He laughed shakily when O'Sullivan knelt to remove his soaked shoes. "No, no, leave them, *mon cher*. If I once get them off, they will never go on again."

Lancaster, Preston, Wigan, Manchester—the towns were left behind. The ugly country, so small to Scottish eyes, so bleak and unfriendly to the Prince's eager gaze, was everywhere hostile and indifferent. The ragged Highlanders, with their uncouth dress and unintelligible speech, created panic and dislike, while their young leader realised his friendlessness, the futility of his Cause, with every southward mile. From his cradle Charles had been trained to look upon the Hanoverian kings as usurpers of his family's rightful throne, taught to believe that England groaned under their tyranny, impotent and wretched, that they would rise as one people to receive and reinstate a Stuart prince. The bitter realities of scowls, contemptuous or curious faces, reluctant capitulations such as Carlisle's, brought home to him the unsubstantiality and evanescence of his life's dream. He read his increasing failure at every turn. It showed in Lord Elcho's openly scornful smile, in the extravagant gratitude displayed to the few miserable recruits who joined his standard at Preston, in the repeated and insistent questions put to him by his officers as to what he anticipated in the way of French and English aid. He knew that they were pitying him, pitying their Prince. He drank gall daily, supped on wormwood. The miseries of the march, the savage cold, the spiteful winds, the daily tramp through ice, mud, slush, or rain, failed to harm his sturdy body, but the open indifference shown to him in England, an indifference worse than hostility or dislike, stabbed his spirit broad awake. Yet with it all, he could not bring himself to believe that failure stared at him, retreat menaced him.

At Manchester a little gleam of sunshine warmed the unhappy force. Some three hundred English Jacobites joined them, the sole ones to throw in their lot with the Prince. Any kindness or encouragement usually sent Charles's spirits soaring. The Manchester bell-ringing and bonfires in his honour so delighted him that he gave a supper-party, and talked everyone dizzy. The fatigues and disappointments of the past weeks were forgotten. London gleamed in the near future. He started an eager discussion as to the manner in which he should enter the capital, whether on foot or on horseback, and wearing either Highland or Lowland dress. "My own inclinations would be to ride. Your horse is so beautiful, Perth, and I have an amethyst velvet suit purchased in Paris which I have never worn. I think I shall ride, and wear that." He fell into a happy muse, blind to the pitying looks exchanged between his officers. Already they were quietly discussing amongst themselves the necessity of a retreat. Lord George Murray eventually compromised by suggesting that the army should endeavour

to push as far south as Derby, and if there were no further encouragement by then—— He left his sentence incomplete.

Derby was a network of tortuous streets under a broken sky. All day heavy rain had fallen. The gutters ran with water. The uneven pavements were soaking slopes. The houses huddled, dark and secretive, beamed and old. At intervals the Highland army dribbled in, Lord Elcho clattering at the head of his life-guards, other officers on horseback, the bagpipes screaming lustily, the banners defying the rain. Feeble illuminations, whose fire was not quenched, glanced yellow and uncertain. Up and down paced the town crier, his voice hoarse and husky, as he proclaimed King James the Third.

The Prince came to the fateful town on foot at dusk, to find tentative preparations made for him at Lord Exeter's house, and a request from his lieutenant-general for an immediate audience. The army had divided into two columns on leaving Macclesfield, where they had received the unwelcome intelligence that the Duke of Cumberland, appointed to command in Ligonier's stead, was at Lichfield, and his troops quartered in adjacent towns. At a hurried council it was agreed to push on and intervene between the Duke and London. To mislead the enemy into thinking that the entire rebel force was united and coming towards Lichfield, Lord George Murray marched his column to Congleton. The Duke of Kingston with his regiment of horse hurriedly retreated, leaving Lord George to eat the dinner prepared for His Grace, to capture a notable spy, and to execute a dexterous movement to the left, which eventually brought him, by way of Leek and Ashbourne, to Derby, where the Prince joined him on December 4th.

The house, a comfortable, unpretentious English mansion, stood back from the street, its Elizabethan gables and chimneys blocking a rainy sky. Although not far from a main thoroughfare, it was peaceful and noiseless, fronted by a small, triangular, paved court framed in a sloping garden. Inside, the staircase ran up from the hall to a square, oak-panelled drawing-room, with empty, ghostly bed-chambers on either side. Lord George found the Prince in the former apartment, where a sulky fire sent out puffs of smoke and a modicum of heat.

Charles came to meet him, embraced him, and held the tall figure for a few seconds in his strong young arms. "I am glad to see you here in safety, my lord. You have had a strenuous time, and will have much to relate to me." He dropped his tired young head for a moment against George Murray's shoulder. "You spoke of a matter of importance. Could it remain until to-morrow? I am——very weary."

"I thought your Royal Highness boasted that you did not know the meaning of fatigue." The slight scorn in the tone sent the Prince starting away from his companion.

He stiffened and braced himself. "Come to the fire, my lord, such as it is. I will hear you now."

"What a fire!" Lord George poked and rattled amongst the damp coals with angry energy. "I left stringent orders for your Royal Highness's comfort——"

"It does not matter. I shall do very well." He sat down, holding his hands near the pale flame. "I trust that my poor Highlanders are as well housed, but I know your lordship looks to that, if Colonel O'Sullivan does not." He began to laugh. "Have you seen my bedroom? Oh, but you must, before you take leave of me. 'Tis a monstrous great place, all beams and cupboards, fit to accommodate half the Elector's army at a pinch, and I am sure full of ghosts. I shall make Sheridan sleep with me to-night."

"Your Royal Highness must have a sentry at the door, and a guard outside this house." Lord George spoke decisively, looking at the mutinous young face. "And both your valets should be accommodated near you, as I gave orders."

Charles interrupted, his mirth turned to ruefulness. "Oh, how cross Morison is!" He stretched his long arms above his head in a gesture of weariness. "He says if he had known what England was like, he would never have accompanied me."

"If we had known what England was like, we had none of us come," muttered Lord George. Aloud he added: "Oh, the fellow your Royal Highness engaged in Edinburgh. Why did you bring him, sir?"

"Because I could hardly be expected to dress my own hair, and"—haughtiness gave place again to frank good humour—"Morison makes it look three times the quantity it truthfully is." He turned his shapely head to show Lord George the elaborately-curled mass. "But enough of these domestic details. *Dites*, my lord!"

"I have had the good fortune to capture a notorious spy, a fellow named Weir." Lord George sat down in the chair the Prince indicated. "I took from him a list of the Duke's army, which your Royal Highness had better peruse." He handed a folded paper across.

Charles's face lengthened as he ran his eye down the formidable catalogue of cavalry and foot. "This is vastly important," he said listlessly.

"It is, sir. It alters our whole position." Lord George rose. "I will not detain your Royal Highness further now, but may I request that you will be pleased to call a council early to-morrow morning?"

“Certainly, my lord.” He extended his hand without rising. The other kissed it, and was going towards the door when the Prince’s voice recalled him. “Lord George, what of the spy, this Weir?”

Lord George showed a grim face. “Making his peace with his Maker, I trust, sir. He will be shot or hanged at dawn.”

The Prince sprang from his chair, pale, determined. “I cannot permit that, my lord. Why, ’tis cold-blooded murder!”

“Tush! Nonsense! The fortune of war, sir. The fellow has been dogging our army, and your Royal Highness in particular, since Edinburgh. He boasts of it.” Lord George struck his hands together. “ ’Tis misplaced sentiment to pity such.”

Charles, fatigue forgotten, stood tall and stately in the middle of the floor. “Your lordship spoke to me once of the advisability of showing mercy.”

“I did, sir, to fallen enemies, not to traitors taken red-handed.” His look was very angry. “ ’Twill be misplaced clemency if this creature does not die.”

“Do you command, Lord George Murray, or do I?” There was no trace of the spoiled child about Charles now. He looked the prince every inch, cool, dignified, royal. Lord George bowed frigidly.

“Without question your Royal Highness does.” The admission was reluctant.

“Then I say that he shall neither hang nor be shot.” Charles walked back to his chair.

Lord George so far forgot the respect due to royalty as to slam the door. “I trust that your Royal Highness may never live to regret such foolish leniency,” he snapped.

Armed with a poker and a claymore, he made an extensive search of His Royal Highness’s bedroom, discovering nothing more intimidating than mice. Returning to report, he found the Prince fallen asleep from sheer weariness, the fair head hanging over the side of his chair. Lying thus, the mantle of royalty, the halo of leadership, cast away, he looked a tired boy, lines of fatigue about his mouth, shadows under the brown eyes. Lord George’s stern face softened.

Morison, a tall, fair-haired Scot, was kneeling by the Prince, taking off the soaked, mud-encrusted boots. “You had better get your master to bed. He seems worn out,” Lord George observed curtly.

Morison sighed acquiescence. He led a hard life, for Charles was extremely exacting, and only that he looked so bonny when released from Morison’s skilful hands, the valet would long since have forsaken the royal service. But a gracious word, dropped carelessly, or one of the Prince’s smiles with which he

made slaves of men, more than discounted His Royal Highness's scoldings, abuse, ingratitude, the toilet articles he hurled indiscriminately at the unlucky Morison, and the long hours the poor wretch was kept nodding until Charles chose to go to bed.

Sheridan, coming in after Lord George had gone, found the Prince still sound asleep by a dead fire. Charles stirred and smiled, murmuring: "We are within a hundred miles of London." Without waking him, Sheridan stooped and lifted the long body into a more comfortable position. A drowsy whisper thanked him.

Outside, the rain splashed down, and clouds drifted, wind-driven, across the tattered face of the sky. Sheridan covered the Prince with a plaid, and watched his helpless sleep, his own heart heavy. "Better for him, perhaps, if he never woke. God help him, and he talking of entering London in a week!"

The Prince's council met next morning in the high-ceilinged drawing-room which served for presence-chamber, with its carved mantelpiece and oak wainscoting. They were all early, and waited with veiled and ill-concealed impatience for the chair at the head of the table to be filled. Where is he? ran from lip to lip. Some of his officers who were staying in the house had seen His Royal Highness go out earlier with Sir Thomas Sheridan. "He is probably exploring the beauties of Derby, or having a talk with your spy, Lord George," explained Lochiel pleasantly.

Lord Elcho, hearing the word spy, loudly voiced his chagrin at missing a military execution. "I have only once seen one, and that was abroad. How vastly selfish of His Royal Highness to disappoint us all of the spectacle!"

"Hold your tongue, Lord Elcho, and don't criticise His Royal Highness's action." Lord George looked sternly at the discontented young nobleman.

As he spoke there arose a great commotion on the stairs, the Prince's high voice issuing orders, and the door was dashed open. All rose expectantly as His Royal Highness swept in, his trim, buoyant head erect, his face flushed with the wind, gay, bonnie, and eager. He was in no hurry to attend to the business for which they were all gathered together. He made the round of the table, holding Lord Pitsligo's wrinkled hands in his slender ones as he inquired anxiously whether he were comfortably lodged, chaffing Lochiel about his good-looking hostess, rallying Lord Elcho, who listened with a sulky lip, on being disappointed of seeing a fellow-creature shot. "You are too bloodthirsty at twenty-four, my dear." Finally he went across to the Duke of Perth, who hung over the fire, his forehead pressed to the mantelpiece. "Perth, the room is quite cold enough without your acting as fire-screen. Pray come and sit down."

He flung himself into his own chair with a thump. The tall carved back behind the fair, stately head gave him the appearance of being seated on a throne, the illusion heightened by the chair's build lifting him above the rest. "Sheridan and I bought some gingerbread." He pulled out a crushed, warm slab, and set his splendid teeth in it. "Oo-oh, monstrous good! Now I have made my fingers all sticky. Has any a spare handkerchief?"

"Will your Royal Highness be pleased to attend to the business for which this council has been summoned?" Lord George rapped irritably on the table.

"It was you requested the council, my lord." Charles collected crumbs with his fingers, and then licked each calmly in turn. "I know of no business requiring one."

He leaned back in his chair, his attitude easy. Lord George considered it and the Prince's indifference insolent. "It is high time to discuss what we are to do," he snapped. Last night's defeat rankled.

The Prince stared. "What do you mean, my lord? I thought it was resolved to march on." He played nervously with the laces round his throat.

The murmur of approval, the subdued applause that he expected, did not come. "We are all of a different opinion to-day, sir," Lord George told him. "Now that we have learned the numbers of the forces arrayed against us, which comprise the Duke of Cumberland's, Marshal Wade's, and an army already mustered on Finchley Common, which would effectually rout us did we succeed in slipping the other two, and marching the length of London, to press on seems madness."

Charles sat erect, his eyes flashing in a face grown suddenly white. "As I passed along the street, my lord, the Highlanders were waiting their turns round every cutler's shop, for each man to have his weapons sharpened in preparation for an immediate battle. Is such a temper as that to be disappointed?"

Lord George shrugged his shoulders. "It is the opinion of everyone present, sir, that the clans have now done everything that could be expected of them. They have marched into the heart of England, ready to join any party that would declare for your Royal Highness, and none has done so." He leaned forward, his hands locked on the table, his strong face working. "In all the counties through which we have passed, sir, the people have seemed more the Stuarts' enemies than their friends, and if there is any party in England for your Royal Highness, 'tis vastly strange that they have sent neither money, intelligence, nor advice how further to proceed."

Lochiel ended a painful silence. "If your Royal Highness can produce any letter from any person of distinction, inviting your army to go to London, or to

any other part of England, I may say that they would be ready to go.”

The stricken young face grew, if possible, whiter than ever. A dumb headshake answered the suggestion. Lord George took up his parable again, this time averting his eyes from the Prince. To watch him was like watching one strapped to the stake as the flames mounted upward.

“The three armies mustered against us, sir, amount collectively to a probable thirty thousand men.” His tones were measured. “Our own forces do not exceed five thousand, possibly less. What would be the consequences of risking an engagement with a quarter of our enemies? Their horse would surround us on all hands, the militia would, upon our defeat, possess all the roads, the whole world would blame us as being rash and foolish to venture a thing that could not succeed; and think, sir, of the danger to your Royal Highness’s person!” His even voice wavered suddenly. “Should you escape being killed in the battle, you must inevitably fall into the enemy’s hands.”

Charles flung back his head. “My own danger, my lord? When have I considered that?” His colour returned, his eyes sparkled. “I would entreat you all to press forward. I could not think of retreating after coming so far.” He marshalled eager, pitiful arguments. “I do not doubt that the justice of my Cause will prevail. I am hopeful that there may be defections in the Duke’s army, and that many will declare for us.” His young voice was high, appealing. “I will risk it, my lord, and I know that my Highlanders are willing to follow me. Are my friends more backward?”

Lord George sat rigid in his chair. “Suppose the army marches on, and defeats the Duke of Cumberland’s forces, sir? We should inevitably lose many of our own, and after that we should have the army of seven thousand at the gates of London to be faced and fought.” He halted and continued: “Again, suppose we slip the Elector’s and the Duke’s forces, our success on entering London would depend entirely on the mob’s declaring for or against your Royal Highness.” He ended slowly, with the cruel-to-be-kind motive of dispatching a thing already wounded to death: “If the mob had been much inclined to your Cause, sir, be very sure that since our march into England your Royal Highness’s friends in London would have fallen upon some method to have let you have known it.”

The Prince’s head had drooped forward on his arms. He raised it, gazing defiantly at the unruffled speaker. “Pray finish, my lord.”

“The Scots army have done their part.” Lord George’s answering look was fierce and aggressive. Would this obstinate child never see reason? “They came into England at your Royal Highness’s request, to join your English friends, and by their appearance to give these courage to take arms and declare

for you publicly. A mere handful has done so. No French have landed in England to assist them. There are only the eight hundred lately come to Scotland with Lord John Drummond and Brigadier Stapleton.” His accents shook. “My sole advice, my earnest advice, to your Royal Highness, is to go back to Scotland, and unite your friends and forces there.”

“Rather than go back”—the Prince’s voice was cracked and shrill—“I could wish to be twenty feet underground.”

Lord Elcho’s disagreeable laugh broke the strained silence. “If your Royal Highness goes forward you will certainly find yourself in Newgate in a fortnight,” he sneered.

Stuart pride, royal blood long-descended, flamed to meet the need, to answer the taunt. “At least allow me the Tower, my lord,” the Prince said quietly.

He turned from one to another, reading his fate in those stern faces, but still obstinate and hopeful. “I would desire the rest of the gentlemen present to speak their sentiments.” His eyes pleaded though his lips did not. “Ogilvy? My Lord Nairne? Keppoch?”

There was no halting between two opinions. They all sided with Lord George, except the Duke of Perth and Sir William Gordon. The Duke, joining in the discussion for the first time, uttered a tentative suggestion of marching into Wales and seeing whether assistance were to be found there. It was argued that Wade’s army would follow, and a battle inevitably result. Retreat to Scotland! The slogan sounded from all lips. They had tasted England, and the bread was bitter.

Charles listened with manifest impatience, his fingers drumming on the table, his colour working, his eyes blazing with anger one minute, the next clouded by tears. His passionate temper finally broke from leash, chiefly after the veiled impertinences of Lord Elcho. “Your Royal Highness knows nothing about the country, and does not seem to have the smallest idea of the magnitude of the forces against you, nor of how we are situated.” His lip curled. “You have always believed that you would enter St. James’s as easily as you have done Holyrood, and your ignorant Irish favourites buoy you up in these monstrous absurd notions. I demand that we retreat before it is too late.”

“My Lord Elcho, that is no way to speak to His Royal Highness.” The gentle rebuke came from Lord Pitsligo. “He is graciously pleased to request our opinions on this deeply urgent occasion, but it is no excuse for insulting him at his own council-table.”

“You are all of a mind to betray me.” The Prince’s face flamed. “Oh, you Scots, with your caution and your prudence and your eternal talk of the safest

measures! What is ever accomplished without risk?" He glared round him at the impassive faces. "By retreating you would undo everything we have gained hitherto, and you prate of my danger, my hazard, my capture, when all the time you have in your own minds your safety, your estates, your posterity. Can you blame me for asking and taking the advice of my few faithful Irish friends, who at least are willing to follow a leader that would sooner die than sneak back before the damned English!"

The violent young voice stopped abruptly. He flung a glance of appeal at the watching, unmoved faces, and resumed:

"If we retreat, our danger is greater than if we press forward. The moment he learns of our movements, the Duke of Cumberland will pursue us hotly. Marshal Wade will interpose his force between ours and Carlisle, cutting off our communication with Scotland." His voice rose. "We shall be placed between two fires, caught in a net, a trap——"

He sank his face into his hands, listening with mounting bitterness to the answering arguments. The hardy, unencumbered Highlanders would easily gain the start of the Duke's army, and were capable of travelling twenty miles in a day. What greater reason was there now for fearing Wade's force than when the Highlanders first entered England? A battle with him might mean a victory which would console the Scots, enabling them to re-enter their own country triumphant. The harsh voices talked on, and bewigged heads nodded in agreement.

The unexpected entrance of Mr. Secretary Murray broke the tension. He drew back when he saw the council sitting, after a rapid look that took in everything. "Your Royal Highness must pardon my intrusion. I had no idea ——" He sidled stealthily towards the door.

"*Non, non, non*, come in, come in." Charles sprang up, went forward, caught at the clammy hands. "Murray, you will scarce credit it, but they are pressing me to go back to Scotland," he gasped.

"As Mr. Murray has probably been out by the keyhole for the last ten minutes, he cannot be in ignorance of our discussions." Lord George and the Secretary openly hated one another since the rupture at Carlisle. Murray had kept his self-dictated whim of abstaining from all councils, but his influence over the Prince and his private advice militated against any good thereby obtained.

He darted a fiery glance at the speaker. "Only that I have no desire for a brawl in the presence of His Royal Highness, I should demand satisfaction for that remark, my lord."

"I shall be delighted to oblige you, sir, at any time. Lochiel, will you stop

kicking me under the table?”

Charles laughed shrilly. “If we fall to fighting amongst ourselves, our enemies will find their task easier. My lord, you should not make such a rash accusation to a gentleman who is my friend, and bound up in our Cause; and Mr. Murray, I cannot lose my secretary through a duel over a slighting speech. Lord Elcho, I have nothing to say to you, because my Lord Pitsligo has already said it for me, but my own tongue runs away with me at times, so I would not chide you for the looseness of yours. Mr. Murray, will you oblige us with your opinion upon this monstrous suggestion of a retreat?”

Murray’s eyes shifted. His own course inclined to the prudent one of returning to Scotland, but he foresaw that the majority favoured it, against the Prince, and would certainly insist upon its being carried out. He sided artfully with Charles, mingling pity for him with contempt for the contumacy of the rest, and skilfully piling the burden of the blame on Lord George’s broad shoulders. “Of course”—he lifted his own lean ones—“if my Lord George Murray considers retreat the only prudent course, then I cannot see that your Royal Highness has any alternative but to agree——”

Charles thrust back his chair and rose. “I will consider of this matter further, and let you have my decision to-night.” He stumbled towards the door, walking as if he were blind. Murray held it open for him, and followed him outside. In the passage they met Sir Thomas Sheridan, who, with the other Irish, had been excluded from the fatal council. “Oh, Sherry, Sherry,” the Prince moaned.

Sheridan put his arms round the half-fainting figure. “What have they done to you, my darling?”

“They want me to retreat.” He stared at Sheridan with sightless, anguished gaze. “Take me away,” he whispered. “I will see no one. Do not let a soul come near me.”

For hours Charles sat sunk in a stupor of misery and bewilderment, answering mechanically when Sheridan addressed him, refusing food, uttering no word of any kind to the faithful old friend who guarded his self-chosen solitude. The short December day closed in. At last he dragged himself up, drank some wine, and, taking his bonnet, went out. The haggard young face had aged unspeakably. He kept shivering as with physical cold. Until late in the evening he moved amongst his officers, begging, cajoling, arguing, employing all his arts and charm, to no purpose. Every rag of dignity was cast aside. He trampled his pride in the mud, recking nothing save that he must soften this stubborn humour of his followers. Thus had he pleaded with the

iron Scots at his first landing in their unfriendly country, but now there was no young, ardent MacDonald to unite with him, and turn the scale in his favour. From each and all he met with rejection, disappointment, a calm refusal to consider anything but the retreat across the Border. He crept back to the house like a dead thing. Sheridan, venturing in, found an image of despair, with clay-cold hands and eyes which were hardly sane in their fierce glare. "The council awaits your Royal Highness," he said gently.

"Please help me, Sherry. Everything is going round so." He groped for Sheridan's arm, and, leaning heavily upon it, reached the scene of his defeat. "I had rather you did not come in," he whispered.

The high, candle-lit room, full of draughts and swinging shadows, seemed endless. He was vaguely conscious of walking up it, past innumerable chairs, watched by the eyes of those who had abandoned him in his great enterprise. He flung up his head in a last splendid defiance. Facing the foes of his own household down the table, he told them coldly that he consented to go back to Scotland.

"At the same time, as it is against my wish and inclinations, for the future I will have no more councils." His drawn young face was ghastly in the candle-light, his voice a mere thread. "I will neither ask nor take your advice, gentlemen, for I am accountable to nobody for my actions but to God and the King my father." He turned stiffly to Lord George. "Will you be so good as to arrange the details of this shameful retreat, my lord? But I beg that it may be kept secret from the troops until to-morrow."

He went back to his own room, where the faithful Sheridan stayed sentinel for hours outside the door. He heard the Prince's footsteps pacing endlessly, the sharp tearing of papers, the alternate moaning and weeping of a creature whose heart was out of him at last. He vented his suspense and anger on Lord George, when the latter came up, haggard and tired, to demand an audience of the Prince. He must see him immediately on a matter of importance.

"And that you just will not, my lord." The Irishman set his back to the door. "Between the lot of you, you've broke his heart, and I'll let none of you in to look at your work."

"Sir Thomas, I beg of you to be reasonable." Lord George made a gesture of irritated resignation. "If we retreat, we must retreat in order, and it is imperative that I have His Royal Highness's——"

The door opened. Charles stood on the threshold, leaning against the lintel. The dark wood framed him, a miserable young figure, a riding-cloak flung carelessly round him. He had laid aside his wig, and his unpowdered hair was rough and disordered. "Come in, my lord." His voice sounded lifeless. "Yes,

Sherry, I know I gave you orders to admit no one, but I am aware that from this on I am in Lord George's hands, and must do as he directs." He laughed wildly. "Come in, pray."

Lord George followed him into a scene of disorder and confusion which matched the Prince's own personal dishevelment. He strode angrily about, picking up papers, folding far-flung garments, piling together Charles's scattered possessions. "If your Royal Highness is in any condition to listen to me"—the whiplash of scorn straightened the bowed shoulders momentarily—"I should be glad of your decision as to the person to have charge of the baggage to-morrow. I have undertaken to guard the rear, but I cannot be harassed with it."

Charles sat holding his aching head between his hands. "Surely that is Colonel O'Sullivan's duty, my lord?"

"Then I should be vastly obliged to your Royal Highness to send him an order bidding him attend to it." Lord George bit his lip. "I visited him at his quarters just now, and he was drinking mountain malaga with young Sheridan, so that affairs to-morrow are likely to be vastly confused."

A thrill of pipe-music broke the silence. Charles dragged himself up and went to a window. The Highlanders were passing to the march-music of their own land, the gallant song of hearts cradled amongst reeds and heather. A misty moon surveyed the scene, tilted on her back in a cloud-veiled sky of dull blue. Straight-limbed, heads erect, the men swung round a corner, the skirling notes coming faintly on the wind long after they were out of sight. Poor deluded souls, gleefully anticipating battle and victory, when before them instead loomed the long, toilsome return to their native land, ending for so many in the Calvary of Culloden.

The Prince dropped the curtain, and came back into the room. Lord George looked away. He had never yet seen such naked despair as was written on the young face of his king's son.

"God knows I would have spared your Royal Highness this, had it been possible." His strong voice was suddenly gentle. "It is not kind in you, sir, to let me see that you consider I have acted without any regard for your feelings or your disappointment——"

Charles interrupted savagely. "*Mon Dieu!* You call the loss of a throne a *disappointment!*"

"It is not lost, sir. Your Royal Highness should not say or think it." The retort came with sharp rebuke.

"It is lost." The words were even and dreary. "If I turn back now, I may delay defeat and disaster for a little time, but I shall have failed with all that I

set out from France in hopes to accomplish.” He came nearer in his haggard beauty, his thwarted, ambitious youth. “My lord, I never thought to kneel to any man save my father, but on my knees to you I beg, I conjure you to alter your mind, so set on retreat.” He was kneeling as he spoke, a half-distraught thing, clutching Lord George’s hands and dress.

The other, horrified, struggled to raise him. The clinging and the cry angered him, fortified his tottering defences. “Get up, sir. It is not right or fitting that your Royal Highness should kneel to your servant.” He stood aside, his face dark and disgusted, while Charles crawled to his feet, and then stumbled towards a chair. “Will you be good enough to write Colonel O’Sullivan orders about the baggage, sir?”

Sheridan feared for the Prince’s reason during the hours which followed. He went to him directly Lord George had gone, and was thankful at first when a burst of weeping broke up that frozen calm. Passive from exhaustion, the Prince at last allowed Sheridan to call in Morison and put him to bed. He lay down silently, turning his face to the wall. He had not addressed a word to either, and Sheridan was surprised when he moaned out: “You must not leave me, Sherry. Promise me you will not go away.”

“Not for a moment, my darling.” He chafed the ice-cold hands. “There, try to sleep.”

After hours of raving, self-torment, and laying bare his innermost misery, Charles sobbed himself into a semi-stupor. Sheridan sat beside him, fiercely denying any access to him. About midnight Lord George returned, bearing fresh documents requiring the royal signature. He came into the gaunt, dim-lit room, with its glancing shadows and ghostly corners. Charles, apprised of his presence, sat up feebly, and endeavoured to draw the remnants of his dignity about him.

“You wish these signed, my lord?” He handled the papers with cold, uncertain fingers. “Yes, of course. I—I——Will you ask someone for my standish and a quill? Sheridan!” he called feebly.

The Irishman came out of the shadows. “I am here, sir.”

“Help me, please.” He raised himself in bed with Sheridan’s aid, and took the quill shakily. “What are these?” he asked Lord George vaguely.

“One is the order for the charge of the baggage, sir, and the other refers to the hour and route arranged for to-morrow.” Lord George glanced with pity at the sunken young face and half-extinguished eyes. “I regret having to intrude upon your Royal Highness’s privacy so late.”

Charles shook his head feebly. Sheridan guided his hand, and the quill trailed across the page in a shaky, uncertain signature, very different from the dashing Charles, P.R., of ordinary times. Lord George carried the documents to the dim fire to dry the ink. Charles clutched Sheridan's arm, and whispered fearfully:

"What were they, Sherry? I—I could not read them. What have I signed? I have not given up my power of regency?"

"No, no, my darling." He soothed the trembling creature with touch and voice. "Do you imagine I should let you?"

Lord George came back to the bedside, folded away the papers, and took his leave. The Prince yielded, but did not offer him, a hand so chill in its touch that it might have belonged to the dead. Lord George shuddered as he kissed it.

Outside, he accosted Morison, sentinel, weary-eyed. "How long is it since His Royal Highness had any food?" he demanded sharply.

"His Royal Highness refuses to eat anything, my lord."

"Well, heat some milk at least, and take it in, and Sir Thomas Sheridan may persuade him to drink it." He walked angrily away.

Charles smiled wanly when the valet came noiselessly to the bedside with the draught. "Why, I do not want that," he protested.

"Ah, try to take it, darling." Sheridan supported his head, and held the rim of the cup to the reluctant mouth. "You have eaten nothing since breakfast, save that gingerbread we bought."

A shudder ran over the long, prone body. "Was that only this morning? It seems a lifetime since. We—we were so happy. I feel as if I had died and wakened in another world." He stared sombrely. "I wish I had," he moaned.

The Highland army set out for Scotland next morning. A red dawn and a stormy sunrise preceded a dark, ominous day of heavy cloud and loud winds. They caught the sobbing of the pipes, and carried notes of heartbreak far across the empty country. The retreating pageant had the grimness and solemnity of a funeral procession, a carrying in state of the hope slain in the wet, mean streets of Derby town. Something more than that hope had died also. The little seed of greatness in Charles Edward, which might have lifted him above his fellows, had withered to death in the night-watch following the decision to go back. Last of the long train, behind the ragged columns, behind the baggage-waggon, behind the jolting coach and mounted men, he rode, a drooping figure that, gallant and erect, had led the clans on foot southward. Huddled in a dark cloak, with bitten lips and sleepless eyes, Charles found himself forced to

get on horseback, for he was so ill with emotion and nervous exhaustion as to be scarcely able to stand. His heart was more dead than the winter landscape. He no longer wanted to defy these implacable Scots, to cry to the clans to follow their leader. "I shall never reign now." He savoured the bitter bread of this galling fact, and shuddered from the future. "I, who was born to lead men, must obey the orders of these little souls who prate of safety. I, of the seed of kings, shall never sit in St. James's, nor see my children princes in the land."

PART II

DARK LANTERNS

“The Prince, who lived in the castle of the Chevalier Paterson a league’s distance from Stirling, made the acquaintance of Miss Walkinshaw. . . .”—*MS. Journal of Lord Elcho*.

CHAPTER VII

“Where shall I find a white rose blowing?
Out in the garden where all sweets be,
But out in my garden the snow was snowing,
And never a white rose opened for me.
Nought but snow and a wind were blowing
And snowing.”

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

AND now the stage is set for the second act, this time at Stirling. Enter the heroine to play her part, she who heretofore has only walked across the boards. His Royal Highness did not remember her, but you may: Clementina Walkinshaw, Sir Hugh Paterson’s black-browed niece. Witch, she-devil, stuff of street-walkers, harlot, or honest woman? Call her what you will, the gods gave her her opportunity at Bannockburn House in January 1746.

The Prince who came again into her life was not the ardent, gallant young adventurer who passed by Bruce’s field of blood on his way to Edinburgh in the month of stocks. During the dreary weeks of winter, and the headlong flight northward again, he had tasted bitter waters. Like a Greater, he came unto his own, and his own received him not. It was small satisfaction to realise that the triumph of the return march with so little loss of men and baggage had been Lord George Murray’s. Charles had given way upon the main issue, but over every lesser point he countered Lord George with autocratic obstinacy. He who on the entry into England had been gay, self-reliant, the first up o’ mornings, on foot daily at the head of his army, now rode in the rear, silent, dejected, moody. He rose late, and as the army could not start without him, caused indescribable confusion and annoyance to his officers. Manchester, formerly friendly, received him with open hostility, and his own inclination to halt there in defiance was only overborne by the dangerous nearness of Wade’s force. At Lancaster he grumbled over the supper-table at the disgrace of flying before a usurper’s son, and to pacify him they halted for a day. He spent a night at Shap, sleepless and shivering in the draughty room of an unclean inn, and fought a north-country virago unsuccessfully over her outrageous bill. Near Clifton occurred a skirmish between the rear-guard and some of Cumberland’s troops, in which Lord George scored a signal triumph, and, unscathed, rejoined Charles at Penrith, who loved him none the better for having disobeyed him. At Carlisle the Prince once again showed stiff-necked and obstinate. Although the folly of it was strongly represented to him, he insisted on leaving a garrison of four hundred men. “I will have a town in England,” he declared childishly. “I am sure the Duke can get no cannon to

take it.”

The officers present shrugged their shoulders. Was it great stoutness or contradiction that made the Prince and his Irish favourites for stopping in every town? Lord Elcho whispered scornfully. The Duke of Perth, with a side-glance at Charles, asked Lord George why so many of his Athol men were not desired to stay? “I am very unwilling to leave any of my own men,” he bleated firmly.

“If His Royal Highness will order me, I will stay with the Athol Brigade, my lord Duke, though I know my fate.” Lord George was muddy but unbowed. “I am sure the town is not tenable.”

Charles was sure that it was, and ignoring argument, reason, and the manifest unwillingness of the martyrs, left the little garrison and Colonel Strickland. The latter escaped by death. The rest became the first victims of Butcher Cumberland. The Highland army crossed the Esk and touched Scottish soil again on the Prince’s twenty-fifth birthday. He divided his forces into two columns, and with one went westward by Annan and Dumfries to Glasgow.

The Clyde city proved no more friendly than the capital. Charles dressed elaborately, entertained, showed himself constantly in public, and retired to weep in private over the dislike displayed on all sides for him and his Cause. The news of the surrender of Carlisle to the Duke of Cumberland, the fate of his hapless garrison, and the death of Colonel Strickland, all saddened him yet further. He was glad to leave the hostile city behind, after fitting out his ragged army at its cost, and to move to Stirling at the beginning of January.

Some few faint beams of success had shone upon him, but his outlook mainly was warped and bitter. Grimly he reckoned up friends and furtherance of his tangled affairs. In the north Lord Lewis Gordon had defeated and driven back the turncoat MacLeod across the Spey, thus securing the country between the river and Aberdeen for the Prince. The Frasers were at last marching south under the Master of Lovat, whose crafty old father had just distinguished himself by an ingenious escape from the custody of Lord Loudon. Young Æneas MacDonald, who had remained in Scotland, gathering reinforcements, rejoined Charles, and other clans drifted south. Young Lord MacLeod, the Earl of Cromarty’s eldest son, came to pay his respects to his Prince, whom he found at supper. Lord George Murray, sitting by, presented the boy, who had the honour of kissing Charles’s hand, and holding some private conversation with him afterwards. He told His Royal Highness something of the situation of his affairs in the north, reluctantly admitting the defection of the Earl of Seaforth. Charles showed some distress. “*Hé! mon Dieu, et Seaforth est aussi contre moi,*” he sighed.

He came to Bannockburn House the first time in sunshine, and on his second visit arrived in a snowstorm. Three miles off the castle of Stirling sat defiantly outlined against a grey, woolly-looking sky. Charles surveyed it with a face of hate, and mentally resolved to bring its garrison to their knees. He swung down from the saddle with stiff limbs, and entered the galleried hall, which he scarcely remembered. Sir Hugh had discreetly disappeared, leaving his wife to make his excuses and entertain the royalty. Charles gave Lady Jean to understand very plainly that he was not this time an honoured guest. "I shall purchase my own provisions, and any damage my officers may do shall be repaired at my cost." His high voice was sharp with fatigue and the suppressed chagrin of weeks. He shivered over a large fire, and went early to his room.

To his own annoyance next morning he awoke feeling ill. It was nothing more serious than a common cold, aggravated by the hardships and disappointments he had recently undergone, but Charles felt considerable alarm. He subsided under a mound of plaids and blankets in the huge bed with its red-stained posts and comforting curtains, demanded a blaze sufficient to roast an ox, and grumbled exceedingly. He was not an attractive or grateful patient, so much so that his attendants took turns in going into the room to ascertain his wants. He dozed for the greater part of the day, and towards evening awoke, cross and thirsty.

He jerked at the bell-rope, with no immediate result. After a long interval steps approached, and knuckles knocked on the door. Charles bade the new-comer enter, and, parting the bed-curtains, sat up in considerable surprise at the apparition of two ladies. Lady Jean peered at the Prince behind her spectacles, and inquired if he had been ringing his bell. Her companion, a shadowy figure in the winter dusk veiling the room, remained by the door.

"No." Charles spoke irritably. "I was tolling it. I thought everyone must be dead."

"Your Royal Highness's apartments are at some distance from the rest of the house." Lady Jean contemplated the flushed young man with calm disdain. "Is it anything I can do, sir, or shall I send a servant?"

"Well"—the Prince pouted—"I should like the curtains drawn, to shut off that da——hideous look-out, and candles, and a posset. I could not touch any solid food," he announced.

"Very well, sir." Lady Jean curtsied stiffly. "My niece can attend to the curtains and candles, and I will send you up a posset." She withdrew.

Charles lay and watched the silent figure moving to and fro. Miss Walkinshaw was tall, of a graceful carriage, her fine head decorated with silky black curls. She closed out the winter landscape, and added logs to the glowing

mass of scarlet cinders in the grate, all without uttering a word. As she lighted two candles and came forward to place them by the bed, the twin flames shone upon her face. It was close-lipped, inscrutable, certainly not beautiful, yet the Prince's cheeks flushed suddenly.

"Why, I remember you now," he stammered. He put out a hot hand to take the candlestick from her.

"Indeed, sir?" replied Clementina stiffly. She was five years younger than Charles, but she felt infinitely older, centuries wiser, as she gazed at him so calmly.

"Of course I do." He lay back, contemplating her. "Maria Clementina Walkinshaw." He spoke the syllables softly.

The room, square, with a high ceiling, felt very hot. Outside, snowflakes danced faster and faster, whirled by a rising wind. These two, the man and woman, were curiously shut away from the rest of the world in this little warm space of panelling on which the flames' shadows glanced. The bed-curtains, of a vivid scarlet, framed the white background of pillows, with the tired, flushed young face set against them. The very dark woman stood in the curtains' shelter, motionless, immobile. . . .

A knock at the door stirred her. She moved slowly to it, opened it, took in something, and shut the door again. A wind moaned in the passage for the little time between her turning and relinquishing of the handle. She came back to the bedside, a bowl in her hand.

"Is that my posset?" The Prince sat up lazily. "I trust my lady, your aunt, did not fatigue herself to bring it?"

"My aunt sent a servant." The firelight shone in Clementina's black eyes. "She would hardly come into the room again to-night after your Royal Highness's rudeness."

Charles flushed as easily as a woman. "Was I rude?" he demanded.

"Very." Miss Walkinshaw stood stirring the steaming brew. "You complained of lack of attendance and hospitality, so naturally her feelings are hurt."

Before her rebuke, her calm glance, he felt suddenly humbled and ashamed. "Lady Jean must forgive me. I am not well, and—and"—he blinked miserably at her—"most unhappy."

She smiled slightly, still stirring the bowl's contents. "I should recommend your Royal Highness to drink this and endeavour to sleep. Doubtless you will feel better in the morning." She paused before adding with emphasis: "And happier." Her air was detached, dispassionate.

"I am never happy." He was driven to a mood of confidence. Her very indifference, her stony acquiescence in his inconsequent remarks, forced him on. "Always, always I seem to be striving for something, clutching at something, a little further away, and it eludes me every time." He grew bitter. "How can I be happy?" he cried. "Everywhere people hate me." His hands clenched on the coverlet. "Oh, those stony English faces, and those smug Glasgow citizens, and here—here, I am alone and neglected for hours. Even Sheridan does not come near me." He stared forlornly.

The woman was still motionless. He struggled up in bed, and stretched out feverish arms to her. The gesture was an impersonal appeal. He did not care whether she were Clementina Walkinshaw or a French princess, great lady or ragged slut, handsome or ugly. He only knew that she was a woman, and he craved the comfort of a woman's arms, a woman's breast and tenderness.

She stood to her height and fronted him. Then her face quivered and melted. She knelt down, and let him drag her into a hot, strangling embrace. He bent his mouth to her neck, long and cool, half-hidden under fine lace. She did not touch him. Her hands were locked in front of her, her body's attitude as rigid as if she knelt at a prie-dieu. After a long silence he released her.

"What have I done?" He stared at her in a species of horror. "*Eh, mon Dieu! qu'est-ce que j'ai fait?*"

They looked at one another. He laughed, and her face flamed. She curtsied with rigid limbs, and went from the room. He lay motionless a long time, biting the sheet in strong teeth. . . .

Lady Jean, panting upstairs on the arm of Sir Thomas Sheridan, shook her head over burnt-down candles, a sickly fire, the untouched posset. "And what a colour your Royal Highness has!" she finished reproachfully.

Sheridan glanced sharply at her. "Sure, ma'am. I hope your ladyship does not mean to imply that it en't healthy?"

"Lud! no, Sir Thomas. I was only thinking 'tis a monstrous great shame that such a complexion should be wasted on a young gentleman, even though he be a prince. Many a female would give her year's pin-money for yon bonnie red and white. My poor niece, for instance." She waved aside the Irishman's graceful assurances that Miss Walkinshaw's face was beyond improvement. "Indeed, sir, it could do with a dab of red. The girl's prodigious sallow." She accepted without embarrassment Charles's laughing invitation to test with her lips the genuineness or otherwise of the colouring she admired. "It does not come off, but your Royal Highness's cheek is much too hot," she commented.

Miss Walkinshaw reappeared next evening, bringing the Prince some cunning cookery of her own devising. She showed as calm of glance, as

imperturbable as ever. That fevered scene between them felt like a dream. He was still in bed, and far from well. "You have not come near me all day," he complained.

She stooped to stir the fire. "Your Royal Highness did not send for me that I am aware, sir."

He looked at her with a wry mouth. "I do not send for people, mademoiselle. I expect them to wait upon me," he told her.

She stood erect, smiling a little. "Yet when they come in, sir, your Royal Highness accuses them of disturbing you, and if they stay away you complain of neglect."

He flushed, puzzling whether she had forgotten the incidents of the previous night. "Well, stay with me now," he bade her. Clementina compromised. If she might fetch her work——

"*Morbleu!* you are as bad as my Lord George Murray." He scowled at her with drawn brows. "He is perpetually occupied, cannot even sit through a meal without leaving the table to look after some detail of his military duties. Thank God he is at Falkirk, and I need not see his sour face daily!"

She sewed, and let him talk. The pent-up, accumulated bitterness of weeks overflowed. He detailed grievances, insults, disappointments, little miserable incidents which festered like hidden wounds, suspicions, crouching fears. She took her hour, rejoicing in it. Clear-eyed, she saw that as a woman he recked nought of her. She was the receptacle for his outpourings, a silent, tactful hearer, to whom he could open his grief unstintedly, but she told herself afterwards, with a bitter mouth, that he asked nothing of her save to listen.

If you are weary of being in attendance on royalty with a cold in its head, come down to the hall and play propriety for a lady and my Lord Elcho. Outside, dour rain fell, soaking, thickening to sleet, but within there was the cheer of a great fire and no stint of candles. My lord, weatherbound, invited Miss Walkinshaw to a game of piquet. The lady, with a lift of very black eyebrows, consented. Lady Jean played chaperon from a distance, and indulged in a mild flirtation with Sir Thomas Sheridan. La! these mad Irishmen! Her eye, still bright and bold, languished at him over the top of her small hand-screen.

Lord Elcho was a chatterbox, therefore he liked a woman to be of the silent persuasion. Miss Walkinshaw fulfilled this ideal to admiration. Her calm intrigued him. Her repose of manner more than made up for her plainness. Before the game was ended, he was regarding her, not with the eye of lust, but with the appraising ogle of one who very seriously contemplates his future

countess. Miss Walkinshaw, her black gaze bent upon the cards, her long hands holding them up between her face and my lord's rolling orbs, cast not a thought matrimonial in his direction. In spirit she was upstairs, listening to a hoarse, angered young voice, fast breaking down her defences. She had been conscious of a wild throb of gratitude towards the Secretary, whose noiseless appearance sent her, outwardly cool and a little bored, back to her niece's duties downstairs.

On the card-playing with its interesting possibilities intruded my Lord George Murray. He stiffly saluted her ladyship and the company, slung off his dripping riding-cloak, stalked to the fire, and holding one high-booted leg over the blaze, demanded an audience of His Royal Highness. His Royal Highness was in bed. Very well, then, my lord would go upstairs to him. No, he need not trouble my lady or Sir Thomas Sheridan to inquire whether the Prince would receive him. His Royal Highness's aide-de-camp had young legs. It was the first sign he had shown of noticing Lord Elcho's presence. The latter, torn from his game and his lady, marched off with an ill grace.

Lord George stood scowling into the grate. "Your lordship has had a long, wet ride, I fear," Lady Jean told him.

"Weather never affects me, ma'am, and it en't far." He shrugged his shoulders in contempt for her feminine dislike of discomfort.

"Could I procure you anything, my lord?" Miss Walkinshaw's glance, raised suddenly from the spilled cards, sought her aunt's permission.

"Mighty obliged, miss, but I design to return and sup at Falkirk, after I have seen His Royal Highness." He spoke curtly, without looking at her.

His coming interview with the Prince weighed upon his mind. Since that last bitter scene following the council at Derby, there had been no intimacy, only the barest formalities, between them. He had never afterwards seen Charles alone. Upon matters of the gravest importance he was openly ignored. At first everyone had imagined that the Prince's threat to hold no more councils was an empty one, dictated by heat and excitement, but as the weeks went on Charles stubbornly kept his word. If he consulted anybody, it was Sir Thomas Sheridan, Secretary Murray, or his jackal, Hay of Restalrig. If he needed advice, he sought it privately from these three. The chiefs were fast losing patience and temper. At a private council of their own it was concerted to draw up a memorial remonstrating with the Prince, and Lord George's errand to Bannockburn House solely concerned this unpalatable document.

Lord Elcho returned, very much at his leisure, to announce that His Royal Highness would receive Lord George. Miss Walkinshaw volunteered to show him upstairs, and led the way, a tall candle in her hand. He walked behind her,

as silent as she. He was far from sharing Lord Elcho's admiration for her, and occupied himself with piecing together her history, so far as he knew it. A Papist, one of the many daughters of John Walkinshaw of Barrowfield, who had married Sir Hugh Paterson's sister Catherine, she came of an old West of Scotland stock, deeply dipped in Jacobite plots, and no doubt was as enthusiastic for the Cause as her relatives. She pointed out the Prince's door, silently. She had not uttered one word, and the worried soldier was grateful to her for her reticence.

As he raised his arm to knock, he looked round and saw her waiting a few yards off. He observed that her mouth worked, and the candle danced in her hand from cold or agitation. His own dropped to his side, and he moved to face her. They were alone in the dark corridor of this high, ghostly house, the narrow panelled walls framing their figures, the face of each a mystery to the other despite the pygmy light she carried, and that polished door, which barred both for the moment from one who represented so much to either, fronting them. The wind screamed past, and in the sudden silence that followed its pause they heard the Prince coughing.

Clementina's look quivered and fell. "You are going to him. You will tire him, make him unhappy." The uncertain flame of the guttering candle showed Lord George the agitated appeal of her face. "Ah, be gentle with him," she pleaded. "He is so young, and—and——"

He looked at her, his brows meeting, an idea, distasteful, incredible, invading his reluctant mind. There was dislike, finality, in the gesture as he answered and evaded her by turning to knock on the door. The Prince's voice, husky, irritable, bade him enter. He heard her furtive silks moving away as he went in.

Charles had that day sent a summons to the town of Stirling to surrender, and grimly anticipated a scolding from Lord George for not having consulted his lieutenant-general on the matter. The room, stifling, untidy, smelt of brandy, and was fetidly warm, but Mr. Secretary Murray, writing letters to the invalid's husky dictation, apparently did not find it so. He sidled out at the door as Lord George appeared, requesting him in passing not to fatigue the Prince. His Royal Highness had practically lost his voice.

"What a blessing!" mentally ejaculated Lord George. He added audibly: "Good God! the room's like an oven!" and advanced to the bed. Charles extended a languid hand, contemplating him from heavy eyes. He was half sitting up, with pillows at his back, and a miscellany of papers strewing the coverlet.

"You are very hot, sir." Lord George gave back the hand after kissing it.

He was far from approving of the colour which had evoked Lady Jean's admiration.

"I am not well, and I turn so feverish towards evening." He lay sideways, plucking at the sheet. "What has brought you over, my lord?" he asked peevishly. "*Peste!* What a night!" The rattle of sleet against the windows made him grimace.

Lord George was silent as he stood beside the bed. He looked enormous in the dark blue-green of the Murray tartan, a fine, formidable personality, towering over the slight creature whose body, framed in a plain nightgown, was curved half outside the bedclothes. Charles instinctively withdrew further from his adversary. Lord George now always stood to him for the figure symbolising his ruined hopes and balked ambitions. The sight of him never failed to bring back the grotesque misery of that grim, desperate retreat northward, a pageant of despair and heartbreak. He saw again the long, sleet-sodden lines, with aching jaws and chilblained feet, tramping through slush along slimy roads, heads bowed before the spiteful east wind and the wind-driven rain, wheels stuck fast and horse-hoofs sliding in glassy mud, breasting a landscape framed in grey murk, across a world drear with winter and empty of hope. The wet, dismal houses of Derby, the soaked streets, the mean roofs and dripping fronts. . . . With distasteful fingers he took the sealed paper offered to him.

"What is this?" His tone was fretful. "I am really not well enough to be troubled with any business to-night. If the matter is urgent, take it to Mr. Murray, or Sir Thomas Sheridan. They have my confidence, and——"

Lord George broke in without ceremony. His uncontrollable temper had blazed up at the indifference of his reception, (Charles had not even told him to sit down,) the hint that he could carry private communications to the Prince's secretaries, the admission that these enjoyed the royal ear, to his own exclusion. His voice vibrated with rage.

"Your Royal Highness will be good enough to read that memorial yourself. It bears my signature, but has been written with the consent and approval of the principal leaders of the army." He bit his lip. "I am very fully aware that all affairs are now settled between your Royal Highness and your favourites, but this is a matter beyond the jurisdiction of either Mr. Murray or Sir Thomas Sheridan."

Charles quailed before this storm of anger. He took up the paper, opened it, and asked for a candle. Lord George lit one by thrusting it into the red heart of the fire, and held it in an iron hand over the bent, silky head. Charles's eyes sped rapidly down the words. At the conclusion he crumpled up the sheet, and

turned to Lord George in a fury which equalled the other's passion of a few minutes earlier.

"And you have the effrontery to bring this to me?" His hoarse voice quivered. "It passes belief." He groped for the crushed ball, spread it out, and painfully gasped extracts from its candid contents. "'It is proposed'—who proposed it? You, of course, Lord George—'that His Royal Highness should from time to time call a Council of War to consist of all those who command Battalions or Squadrons.' I told my officers at Derby, that after they forced retreat upon me I should cease to hold any councils, and I shall keep my word. 'But as severals of those may be on partys, and often absent, a Committee should be chosen by those Commanders, to consist of five or seven, and that all Operations for the carrying on the War should be agreed on, by the Majority of those in His Royal Highness's presence'—I am glad you had the grace to include me in your debates—'and once that a Measure is taken, it is not to be changed except by the advice of those, or most of them, who were present when it was agreed on.'"

The spent voice stopped. Lord George made no comment. There was a long silence, only broken by the snapping of logs, and the singing of the wind in the old chimney. Charles snatched up the sheet again and resumed.

"'Had not a Council determined the Retreat from Derby, what a Catastrophy must have followed in two or three days.'" He looked incredulously at Lord George. "Had it not, my lord, I might have been in London ere this. 'Had a Council of War been held when the army came to Lancaster, a Day (which at that time was so precious) had not been lost.'" Their eyes met in exceeding bitterness. "I stayed indeed a day at Lancaster, without calling a council, yet yourself proposed to stay another." He read on vehemently: "'Had a Council of War been consulted as to the leaving a Garrison at Carlisle it would never have been agreed to, the place not being tenable, and so many brave men would not have been sacrificed, besides the reputation of His Royal Highness's arms.'" His hand went to his long throat. "I wonder much to see myself reproached with the loss of Carlisle. After all, did not you yourself, instead of proposing to abandon it, offer to stay with the Athol Brigade to defend it?"

Lord George shrugged massive shoulders. "Your Royal Highness's arguments are—pardon me, sir—lamentably weak. When I offered to remain behind at Carlisle, I knew the fate that I should meet."

The Prince's face darkened. "Every one knew before he engaged in the Cause, what he was to expect in case it miscarried, and should have stayed at home if he could not face death in any shape." His voice shook. "Can I myself hope for better usage? At least I am the only person upon whose head a price

has been already set, and therefore I cannot threaten at every word to throw down my arms and make my peace with the Government.”

“That is not the point, sir.” Lord George indicated the paper in the nerveless fingers. “The point is, will your Royal Highness consent to what is suggested there: the appointment of a standing committee of chiefs and officers? Pray recollect,” he went on quietly, “that this army is an army of volunteers, not mercenaries, and many of them are resolved not to continue in it once affairs are settled. Those who risk all in the Cause surely are entitled to a trifle more consideration than is shown them by your Royal Highness acting without authority or advice on most occasions.”

Charles sat erect with flashing eyes. “I think I show every day that I do not pretend to act without taking advice, yours, my lord, oftener than anybody else’s, and you know that upon more occasions than one I have given up my own opinion to that of others.” He had grown ghastly, save for a feverish spot over each sharpened cheek-bone. “My authority may be taken from me by violence, but I shall never resign it like an idiot.” His hands clenched. “When I came into Scotland I knew well enough what I was to expect from my enemies, but I little foresaw what I should meet with from my friends.” His husky words became more rapid and unintelligible. “I came vested with all the authority the King could give me, one chief part of which is the command of his armies, and now I am required to give this up to fifteen or sixteen persons, by the majority of whom all things are to be determined, and nothing left to me but the honour of being present at their debates.”

The faint, furious voice ceased. He fell over sideways against his pillows, struggling with an attack of coughing. Lord George found and administered brandy, noting in some alarm the ease with which the Prince gulped down the raw spirit. He put a plaid round the heaving shoulders, and icily requested leave to withdraw. “We shall all expect an answer in writing, at your Royal Highness’s convenience,” he reminded Charles coldly.

The door shut after him. The Prince, spent with anger, bowed with humiliation, lay tearing the hateful memorial into strips. But though he might destroy it, nothing could efface the scars left by the interview, or the shameful realisation of the value he possessed as a leader in the eyes of his followers.

The woman Clementina Walkinshaw heard it all, sitting silently by the fire later in the night. Her eyes were full of a brooding pity—pity for his hot-headed obstinacy, his reckless stupidity, his disappointments, mortification, and anger. When the husky, exhausted voice stopped, she came over to him, and took the weary head in her arms. It was burning and throbbing. She

stroked back the tangled hair, and when he looked up at her, met the wild, miserable gaze with a smile.

“Fate is cruel to me.” He wept difficult tears. “They said a new star shone at my birth, but it was a star of ill omen. Do you believe in me or in my Cause, Mademoiselle?”

He lay back, withdrawing himself from her, his look reckless and despairing. She avoided a direct reply. “If you lose all of earth, sir, better to have so much of heaven as one star.”

He leaned forward, clutching at her with burning hands. “Why, I do not crave heaven. What is it? a far-off country that priests prate of.” He laughed harshly. “I know where it is written that the meek shall inherit the earth—earth, and the things of earth, would satisfy me—but I—am not meek, and earth, for me, would be to sit in St. James’s.” He ground his teeth. “Ah, but if I cannot win a crown and kingdom, or master these stubborn Scots who seek to rule me, I will have one woman.” He looked into her eyes. “Give me yourself this night,” he whispered.

A quiver rippled across her rigid calm. “You are not yourself, sir, or you would not ask that.”

He laughed again, mirthlessly. “Bah! why be so nice? You know that you love me.”

Her black eyes, very softened, shone. “Aye, I love you, love you, love you.” She joyed to say aloud the little song which had bubbled in her heart all these months. “From the very first moment that you entered this house and my life. You carried your head so high, and I was nothing to you, a plain woman, but you kissed me, and from the greatest general in your army to the meanest camp-follower, none had died for you more willingly.”

He was leaning back, holding her hands. “I ask men to fight for me, but I ask more from you. Will you deny me?”

“Yes.” She spoke steadily. “Because I love you, I will not have you lose your soul for me. ’Tis mortal sin—what you ask.”

She was suddenly withdrawn from him. Her bodily shape still stood by his bed, her hands lingered in his own, but the woman herself eluded and evaded him. Turning away, he covered his face.

CHAPTER VIII

AUDLEY: Here comes his highnes.

DUDLEY: Befall my soueraigne all my soueraignes wish!

KING: Ah, that thou wert a Witch to make it so!

The Raigne of King Edward the Third.

THE Prince recovered his health, sent to the chiefs a frigid letter refusing, with some temper, their requests, and reiterating the arguments he had used to Lord George Murray. The town of Stirling surrendered, the castle, under General Blakeney, remained obdurate. Contrary to sense, reason, and the opinions of wiser heads than his own, Charles commenced a siege, resolved to bring the belligerents to their knees.

He was still at Bannockburn House, companioned by some of his officers, and Lochiel's Camerons as a guard. The Government was sending troops from Edinburgh to the relief of Stirling. Every day brought intelligence of their approach under the command of General Hawley, so that a battle seemed imminent. In the Highland army were dissensions, desertions, thinning ranks, distracted commanders. The days were grey and cold, the country bound in the iron grip of winter. The Prince's relations with Miss Walkinshaw were the talk of the camp, but he went on his way unheeding. He was eager to grasp at the ease and forgetfulness lent by a woman's lips. She was glad to comfort him for a fleeting time in his distress and gathering disasters. He needed her, not as an individual, another human soul, but as the eternal comfort given by a woman's breast.

The talk round the fire had turned on likenesses. The Duke of Cumberland's name came up, and Lochgarry, not remarkable for tact, asked the Prince if there was any family resemblance between him and his Hanoverian cousin. Charles replied shortly that he had never seen the Duke. "From his portraits, my dear Lochgarry, he is fair and stout. I am darker in colouring, and"—he looked down at his slim, erect body, the straight, clean line of his limbs—"I leave you to say whether I am stout."

Lochgarry laughed and the rest joined in, deriding the idea. Lord Elcho interposed maliciously. He hated the Prince now, and the dark-eyed woman behind the embroidery-frame had begun to foresee danger.

"Not yet." He laid a vicious emphasis on the second word. "But your Royal Highness ought to be careful what you eat and drink, or in ten years' time you will be as stout as any Hanoverian."

Charles looked haughtily at the speaker. "Indeed, my lord? I am vastly obliged for your opinion. On what grounds do you base it?"

“Well”—Lord Elcho contemplated the royal profile, his head cocked to one side—“I have noticed indications, only very slight so far, just now and again when seated beside your Royal Highness at dinner or cards——” He paused malevolently.

“Indications of what, my lord?” snapped Charles. He had small humour, and sensed ridicule.

“A double chin, sir,” replied my Lord Elcho.

With a shriek that might have been heard at Linlithgow, His Royal Highness tore out of the room, in search of the nearest mirror. He returned some seconds later, wearing a countenance of such tragedy that the watching faces all dissolved in laughter.

“It is.” His voice was anguished. “You are perfectly right, Elcho. Oh! oh! oh! What a calamity!” He fell into a chair and rocked to and fro. “You cruel, unsympathetic, lean wretches,” he groaned. “’Tis all very well for you. I cannot understand it. Our family are all thin. Papa and Henry——”

“I believe His Majesty fasts a good deal.” The Duke of Athol came over, laughing, to the dismayed Charles. “And ten years is a long time, sir. I should not trouble myself about what may happen so far ahead.”

A shadow fell across the group. They looked at their Prince, for whom so many were risking their all, and each pondered what might not befall him in so short a time as ten days. Charles took his hands from his face and sat up.

“There is only one remedy for it”—he spoke determinedly—“exercise—severe exercise.” He rose to his slim height. “I am going for a walk—a very long walk, and you will all come too, whether you like it or not. That will teach you to laugh at your Prince’s afflictions.”

A general groan arose. These forced marches or Charles’s were dreaded, for, utterly tireless himself he had no mercy on his weaker brethren. A few days previously he had nearly killed the Duke of Perth by dragging him miles across the country, up hill and down dale, returning in the evening bright-eyed and rejuvenated, with the unfortunate Duke in a moribund condition, only fit to stagger to bed. Charles laughed in the dismayed faces.

“I shall not let one of you off.” He flung a caressing arm round Lochiel’s shoulders. “Athol! Lord George! Perth! Lochgarry! Elcho! (Double chin, indeed!) Æneas, my dear! Be ready now in five minutes. *Vite! Vite! Vite!*”

He swept off, slamming doors, calling for his valet, running light-footed through the gloomy passages. His victims looked at one another, and sighingly began to search for their bonnets. Lord George sat down at a table with an air of determination.

"I shall not come. I have something better to do than be in attendance on His Royal Highness's daft ploys." He added firmly: "Besides, I do not care to be absent so long. News of importance might arrive."

"Lord George, you must come." Lochiel's voice was desperate. "You are the only one of us who can attempt to keep His Royal Highness in order."

Lord George laughed, and reluctantly yielded to the general clamour. He passed through the hall on his way, where his disinclination for the Prince's programme was heightened by the scene of ease and comfort which met his affronted gaze. Sir Thomas Sheridan and Lady Jean were *vis-à-vis* over a blazing fire, he holding her wool, whilst she wound it on taper fingers. Miss Walkinshaw was at the spinet, singing old-fashioned airs for the benefit of Lord Pitsligo, who thought her a very charming miss. Any scandal never occurred to the good old man. They all looked leisured and pleasantly occupied. Outside, a bitter wind blew, and the ground was iron. The Prince, swinging his bonnet, came in by one door as Lord George went out by another.

"I am going for a walk," he announced. His bright gaze roved over the group. "Any volunteers to accompany us? What, Lady Jean, too old? Nonsense, I protest. My Lord Pitsligo, it tears my heart to separate you from your charming companion, but she *must* come. With eight gentlemen there can be no harm in her being of the party, eh, my lady?"

Lady Jean wound wool calmly. "Although you are the Prince Regent, sir, you are a most unmannerly young gentleman at times." Charles swooped down upon her with outspread arms. "No, you are not to kiss me. My head is dressed, and you will disarrange it. Pray take him away, Sir Thomas."

"Where are you going, sir?" Sheridan asked. Charles, flushed and laughing, came over to him, after kissing the protesting Lady Jean.

"There and back again." He circled round them. "No use in inviting you, Sherry. You are too comfortable here. I vow 'tis high time Sir Hugh was home, the way you and my lady are behaving." Lady Jean laid down her wool. "Your Royal Highness is right. I think indeed 'tis high time Sir Hugh was home," she said blandly. Her gaze travelled deliberately from the Prince to her niece. Charles, like his mother when as Princess Clementine she was shown the portrait of her rival, "flushed vermilion."

"Well, I am going. Where is everybody?" He went towards the door. "*Mort de ma vie*, how chill it strikes!"

Lord Pitsligo followed him outside. "Is your Royal Highness wrapped up? You are hardly cured of your cold yet, I doubt." He draped the folds of the plaid closer about the stately young form. "You must take greater care of yourself, sir. You are a very precious person, you know."

The Prince turned impulsively and laid a flushed cheek against the kind, wrinkled old face. "Ah, if they were all like you, cared like you——" he murmured.

"The whole army loves your Royal Highness. Now, come back in safety, and do not play any tricks." Charles showed him a face brimful of wickedness as he moved away. "And—my Prince will forgive me?—it would be tactful if your Royal Highness allowed Lord George Murray the honour of walking with you."

"You dear old saint, 'twill spoil my whole afternoon, but if it pleases you, *certainement*." He took the old man's arm, and marched him back into the warmth. "Mademoiselle, I leave Lord Pitsligo in your charge, as it is too much for him to accompany us. Take care of him, for he is what he has just called me, a very precious person." He kissed his finger-tips to her, and walked over to his hostess. "My lady, I shall return with a prodigious appetite. May we have minced collops for supper, and dance reels afterwards?"

He was promised both, and went off happily. A silent group of martyrs awaited him at the door, their faces settling into longer lines of gloom as Prince Charles's laugh (which Lord George had once angrily declared to be audible from one end of the camp to the other) was heard, heralding His Royal Highness's approach. He swept out, ruthlessly hustling everybody, declared that it was impossible to collect them, that they were keeping him waiting, serenely ignoring the fact that they had shivered there for a good ten minutes, and marched off with his arm through that of Lord George. The arrangement suited neither, as Lord George and the Prince had not an idea in common beyond the Cause, and over that invariably disagreed.

The air was raw and full of coming snow. It blew from a sky iron, indifferent, a long, slate-grey sweep above the horizon. The country was unbeautiful, flat, woodless, or stretches of blank, ploughed fields, with frost-powdering along their dark ridges. The road wound a rutty track, marked by cattle-hoofs frozen into semi-circles of hard mud, framed between bleak, wiry hedges. The long ascent climbed leisurely skyward, the distant town, as the walkers looked back upon it, a huddle of roofs, with the Castle over against it. Water gleamed grey and sullen, and a great bird, perched on a broken fence, croaked at the group, to Charles's superstitious annoyance.

"His Royal Highness has no tact." Lord George, released from his *tête-à-tête* with the Prince, thankfully joined his brother. "He might have known that I wished to walk with you, Athol, instead of carrying me off in that high-handed way. There are several matters I am anxious to consult you about."

"I thought it very gracious the manner in which he selected you for a

companion,” the Duke murmured nervously. He looked after the slim figure ahead with Lochiel. “What a charming walk he has, and——”

“Oh, I have no doubt he had some motive in choosing me.” Lord George swelled with indignation. “I do not trust him a yard. Those Papists are all tricky. Now, my dear brother, we had better decide this question of which of us is to ask leave to go to Blair Castle. It is a scandal the way the Athol men are deserting, and you or I must go north and force them out.”

“Certainly——certainly.” The Duke agreed anxiously. “It had better be you, I think. I am practically a stranger to them after so many years, and——”

“I cannot leave affairs here. Perth is such a fool.” He nodded towards the young Duke, chattering French with Lord Elcho. “On the other hand, I should extremely like to visit Tullibardine, were it but for a moment, and see Amelia.” Amelia was Lord George’s lady, then in an interesting situation.

They came to the top of a steep brae, and stood looking over broken country. The sun, a fiery ball, was dropping behind the pale undulations of low hills. Bare fields sloped, painted in the sad tones of winter, and against the skyline a battered cottage crouched in a ragged patch of garden. The dry air was very still, and their voices carried far.

Charles called a halt, ranged his companions in a row along the top of a decaying wall, and sampled several pairs of knees, eventually deciding on the Duke of Athol’s as the softest. He curled round on the wind-bitten turf at His Grace’s feet, and laid his head against the bright tartan. The Duke looked down at him, remembering the sleeping figure on the deck of the *Doutelle*. He frowned as he realised how worn and old the Prince’s face showed now, compared with its unclouded youth a bare six months before.

Charles took his hand and guided it along the line of jaw. “Do you feel any indications of a double chin?” he asked anxiously.

“How your Royal Highness keeps a thing up!” grumbled Elcho. He was furious at being dragged for miles through this ugly, winterly country at Prince Charles’s whim.

“I did not address you, my Lord Elcho. I asked the Duke of Athol.” He moved his head, reiterating: “Do you, Athol?”

The Duke smiled and drew his fingers down the wind-flushed cheek. “On the contrary, sir, I regret to find that your Royal Highness’s face is thinner.”

Charles heaved a sigh of huge satisfaction. “What a relief! Now I can go to sleep with an easy mind.” He took off his bonnet, and settled himself against the Duke’s knees. “Pray do not move, Athol. I am monstrous comfortable.”

“Well, it is more than I am, sir.” The unfortunate nobleman shifted

uneasily. "I am sitting on a thistle."

Charles's delighted laugh was echoed by six unsympathetic listeners. He shut his eyes, and peace descended on the group. Lord George bent forward to examine the unconscious face.

"Is he asleep? Yes. For Heaven's sake, Athol, thistle or no thistle, sit still, otherwise he will wake up and start that infernal chatter—Ow!"

The sentence ended in a yelp as Charles's hand shot out and inflicted a neat pinch on Lord George's leg. He unerringly selected the fleshy part between the stocking and the kilt, and his fingers nipped viciously.

"There!" He sat up with dignity. "That is what you get, Lord George, for telling your Prince that he talks too much."

"I did not tell your Royal Highness you talked too much. I said so, thinking you were asleep." He met the dancing eyes, and was obliged to laugh.

"*Hélas, les misérables!*" sighed Charles. He relapsed into his former position. "I consider it a duty to be cheerful and talkative, my friends. At home Papa says: 'Dearest Carluccio is so bright. He keeps us all alive.' So I did, being the only young thing. They must be mighty dull without me," he rattled on. "Henry does not count. He was born fifty years old. Oh, your pardon, Lord George. Fifty is a very nice age, I have no doubt, but poor little Henry never was anything else. And if by any chance I am quiet, Papa looks worried, and says, 'That child's ill.' " He stopped chattering, and fell asleep as suddenly as a puppy.

They talked in low voices, not to disturb him. Once he smiled in his dreams, and the watching faces softened still more. A wind came down the bleak fields, crying winter's frozen wares.

"*Peste!* I am thirsty!" Charles woke and sat up. "Lord George, I see a cottage at the top of the road. Do you think, if I went and asked very nicely, I should get anything there?"

"Smallpox probably, sir." Lord George looked very grim, but his lips twitched. The fell disease had scourged his home five years before, taking his youngest child.

"Now, no more cottages." The Duke of Perth uplifted a thin forefinger. "I have not yet recovered from the alarm your Royal Highness caused me by disappearing into that one the day I had the honour of accompanying you."

"Poor Perth!" Charles sat bright-eyed and laughing. "It was a vastly nice cottage, and I went in for two minutes because I saw a baby, but Perth thought the ground had swallowed me up, I believe."

"The cottage was filthy." The Duke stuck to his guns. "There were three

most disreputable children, and I do not feel certain that the mother was even married.” They all laughed. “And your Royal Highness kissed each of the dirty little brats, and gave the woman money.”

“Yes, and I’ll do it again.” He laughed and yawned. “But I must have a drink, or I shall never reach Bannockburn House on my feet. Elcho, have you had smallpox?”

The Prince’s aide-de-camp, it appeared, had suffered from this fashionable complaint.

“Very well, then. So have I. *Enfin*, we can both risk it.” He pointed imperiously to the cottage. “Go up there, and ask for a bowl of milk for me.”

Lord Elcho looked anything but willing. “The cottage may not be open, sir,” he objected.

“Elcho, it is open. Go and get me that milk.” He sat back, very lithe and determined. “Do you wish me to perish of thirst, or to have to carry me the length of Bannockburn? I warn you I weigh eleven stone.”

They watched Elcho’s back, temper in every line, recede up the hill. He hated dirty cottages, and he hated running the Prince’s errands. The warmth and cheer of the hall at Bannockburn House, a dark woman singing to a spinet’s tinkle, appealed far more to him than this windy climb, and the eternal talk of civil war. The cottage, a one-eyed, humped building, peered down at him, with slates askew on a crazy roof, and round at one side a mean door, inhospitably shut.

“I hope he will have to go without his milk, damn him,” ran Lord Elcho’s disloyal reflections. He was minded to turn away and tell the Prince that he had found nobody in the place, but remembered in time Charles’s smiling obstinacy over trifles. If Elcho returned without the desired draught, the Prince was perfectly capable of sitting by the wall until a drove of cattle chanced to pass, and then coolly expecting his aide-de-camp to select and milk one.

“Well, you did not hurry yourself.” Charles sat up and greeted him with this on his return. “Have you brought anything? Good!”

The bowl was old and cracked, the milk, a white loch, rocking inside. Charles put it to his mouth and drank thirstily. Lord Elcho stood looking down upon him, a sneer curving his lips. “Who was in the cottage?” the Prince asked.

“A woman, sir, and some children.” Elcho held out his hand for the bowl.

“No, no, I will take it back myself.” Charles nodded a bright, imperious head. “I had better offer to pay, though this is such a monstrous hospitable

country that one hesitates for fear of offending people.” He added with a laugh: “Has anyone any money?”

Various coins were produced. He dropped them into the empty bowl, and set off up the hill. No, no, no, he would go alone. He waved aside eager offers of an escort. He should be in sight all the time. There was no danger. His buoyant, rapid steps carried him out of earshot.

“What kept you, Lord Elcho?” Lochgarry asked. He made room for him on the wall.

“I was having my fortune told.” Elcho smirked. “It was vastly interesting. The woman has the Sight, and she says that I shall reside much abroad, and a Frenchwoman will exercise great influence over my destiny. What amuses you, Glengarry? Oh, and she looked at the Duke of Perth from the window, and he is to die at sea.”

“How monstrous unpleasant!” The Duke crossed himself hastily. “I—I do not understand. I have no design to leave Scotland.”

“A pack of nonsense!” Lord George looked thoroughly annoyed. “You should have mentioned this, Lord Elcho, and not allowed His Royal Highness to go near the place. The woman may tell him a string of lies, and he is so superstitious that he will believe her to a certainty.”

Charles’s face, on his return, confirmed the words. He was white and strained, walking with dragging footsteps. They gathered round him, wisely asking no questions, but without a word he motioned them back to their places on the wall. He took up his old position at Athol’s feet, his head against the Duke’s knees. His hand, clenched over something, opened suddenly. The borrowed coins rolled in all directions.

“No, leave them.” He checked Lochiel’s stooping movement to recover the money. “She would not take it.” He spoke like a child repeating a hard lesson. “She would not let me come inside the door. She said—she said that my very shadow brought ill to all whom it crossed, and she was not willing to let me step over her threshold.” He looked ghastly. “She—she threw down the bowl and broke it, because my lips had drunk from it.”

Lord George Murray rose. “Some of you come with me, and I shall burn the damned hag’s roof over her head. How dare she so insult your Royal Highness!”

“She did not know who I was,” Charles faltered. He caught at the other’s arm. “No, no, my lord, I will not have her harmed. She only spoke what was in her heart, and I cannot blame her, but—but she even pulled the child away lest I touched it.” His voice broke. “A little child, that I would not harm for the world.”

Lochiel, watching the working of the young face, asked gently: "Did she say more, sir?"

"Yes." He rose painfully, and stood shaking from head to foot. "She said: 'I see yon group of men, and your shadow is over a', and you will bring each one dule.' " His eyes went miserably from one to another. "Oh, *mon Dieu!* if it is true——"

"If it were true a thousand times, sir, I, and all of us, would ask no better than to die in your Royal Highness's Cause." The Duke of Athol fell upon his knees, and kissed the trembling hands.

Charles smiled and raised him, his lips quivering. "I know, I know, *mon cher*, but there are worse things than death, and I may bring them to you, though God avert it."

He looked at them with wild eyes. The Duke of Athol, doomed to escape the headsman's axe only by a death in the Tower, a fitting end in its loneliness to a very lonely life; Lord George, fated to ruin and dreary exile; Lochiel, his house to be made a desolation, and his own exit, not long delayed, on foreign soil; Elcho, soured, relentless, barred for ever from returning to see his native country; Æneas MacDonald, round whom the shroud of doom, rapidly rising, was already breast-high, for he was not to know another moon; death, and a lonely burial at sea, for the Duke of Perth; and for himself, their Prince, ruin of body and soul. He stood as if gazing into the dim web of futurity, seeing the long years of bitter disappointments, cheap, theatrical concealments, growing estrangements from heart-broken adherents, empty pomp, deepening loneliness—all ending in the dark road which marks the close of earth's ambitions, and where the wandering feet are still.

"The rest of you go home." He spoke tonelessly, like one in a daze. "Lochiel, stay with me."

When they were out of sight, he made the Cameron chief sit down, and huddled beside him, his arms stretched over Lochiel's knees, and his face bowed upon his arms.

CHAPTER IX

“Do I say ‘Forget’?
I say ‘Remember!’ When you’ve staked all, all,
Upon your one throw—when you’ve lost—remember!
And done the evillest thing you would not do,
Self-forced to the vile wrong you would not do,
Me in that hour remember!

For we are bound
Closer than love or chains or marriage binds:
We went by night and each in other’s heart
Sowed tares, sowed tears.”

CLEMENCE DANE.

HE told Miss Walkinshaw of the incident a day later, and listened with furrowed brows to her dry comments. She played with the bright hair as he lay supine beside her chair, his head in her lap, but her black eyes were tender. “Why, you do not believe it, my Prince? You do not fear that what she said may befall?”

“I do. I do.” He caught her hand up, pressing it against his hot cheek. “I must see her again, ask her more, and you shall help me.”

The woman cried out in horror as he outlined his plan. Was he mad? The two of them to go together, at night, disguised, and ask the weird creature who held the Sight to read their fates and futures! She could not, would not, consent to such risk. Charles shrugged his shoulders as she came to an end of speaking. “*Eh bien*, then, I shall go alone.”

She wrung her hands. Sooner than that she would accompany him, but——

“What are you so nice of?” He rose to his feet in one swift movement. “Your reputation? Mine? Your safety? Which alarms you, my dear?”

“Your safety and your reputation.” She looked at him with level gaze. “There is a price upon your head, and—and a prince is not as other men.” She turned her face aside. “They talk of you and me already,” she told him. “For myself I do not care, nay, I am proud, but for you—ah, my dear, my dear!”

He took her into his arms. “If you love me, do what I ask. There must be ways, a hidden door or a secret stair, that you know of, for this house is not of yesterday. Be kind, beloved.”

She trembled, held against him. When he coaxed, few men resisted him, and no woman. She was not made of feeble stuff, and she did not yield without a struggle, but his charm beat her down. “There is a way”—she turned her face from his eager gaze—“it leads through my room, and——”

“Where is the door?” He cut her short, sharply, peremptorily.

“Behind a panel in the press in your Royal Highness’s. There is a little stair. I can be waiting for you at the foot.” Her voice was dreary.

They planned their madness for that night. She stayed from sight, and he went early upstairs. Lord Ogilvy, commanded to accompany him, obeyed with some surprise. The Prince did not take him fully into his confidence, but the young nobleman put his own construction on the brief orders Charles issued.

“I want to be absent from my room for some time.” He did not look at Ogilvy as he spoke. “You will remain on duty outside, Lord Ogilvy, and admit no one. Do you understand?”

“Perfectly, sir.” Their eyes met, and Charles flushed violently.

He shut the door, and began his preparations. It was characteristic of him that he retained all his rings and orders, whilst going to the precaution of wrapping himself in a dark cloak, and dragging a hat down over his brows. The panel went back easily to his touch. He had shut the cupboard door behind him, and the dark was heavy. He groped down a worn, circular stair, cobwebs brushing his fingers as he fumbled along the rough, enclosing wall, and the shut-in smell of the place reminding him of a tomb. The descent seemed endless, and finally brought him up against blank wood. He rapped imperiously, and a panel widened with caution. It framed Miss Walkinshaw’s face, pale and anxious, her eyes black, alert, in the glimmer of a candle. He grasped her hand, and stepped through the aperture into a small room.

“You might have come to meet me.” He contemplated his filthy hands with a grimace. “I thought that damned stair would never end.”

“Were you afraid?” She surveyed him coolly, pulling the hood of her cloak further over her face.

“Terrified,” replied His Royal Highness. They both laughed. “Is this the way out? H’m!”

After various alarms and vicissitudes the harebrained couple found themselves in the garden. Wind disturbed the trees. Behind them the black bulk of the house seemed to frown disapproval. Her hand clung to his. She was very woman and afraid. Against the outer wall towered a gnarled tree, easy of ascent, and the wall itself was not high. Charles proposed to climb the tree, descend the wall, and help her over. Thus they would obviate passing the guard at the gate. “I suppose you can climb?” he hazarded doubtfully.

She smiled in the dark. She had often climbed that tree, though not to meet a lover. He caught her smile in a sudden blink of moonlight, and returned it.

She watched his lithe figure move from branch to branch, then level with

the wall drop one leg over it, sit astride, and——

“Damnation!” With this most unprincely exclamation he drew back, climbed down again, and rejoined his anxious Clementina. In some alarm she asked what was the matter.

“Matter!” He gasped, a hand at his throat. “Athol and Lord George! They are talking just under the wall. I all but dropped down on both of them. Oh, what an escape!”

Miss Walkinshaw grew very pale. “We had better go back,” she murmured.

“I shall not go back.” His voice was loud in the windy garden. “I shall simply wait till they are gone. I consider it most deceitful and underhand of Lord George,” he raved, “coming over from Falkirk in this sly manner without my cognisance. He should have come at once to pay his respects to me, and he and Athol obviously do not want to be overheard, or they would not remain out in this frost.” He added determinedly: “I am just going up that tree again to listen to everything they say. I feel certain they are discussing Papa. I heard the name James quite distinctly.”

Papa’s dutiful son went off before Miss Walkinshaw could stop him, and sat for a considerable time perched on a branch with all the airs of heaven blowing round him. The James under discussion turned out to be Lord George’s second hopeful, and Prince Charles had the pleasure of hearing himself and his family totally ignored, whilst the two brothers earnestly argued whether the boy should be sent to school, or remain for another year with his mother. Charles rejoined Miss Walkinshaw, chilled and cross.

“I believe they design to stop there all night,” he grumbled. He drew his cloak closer. “And all I got for my pains was a solemn treatise on education, and a discussion whether Lord George’s whelp should enjoy the benefit of it at home or at school.” He laughed angrily.

“It serves your Royal Highness right for eavesdropping,” Clementina was cold also.

“Why should I not eavesdrop—in self-defence? I might have learned something of importance.” He looked at her with a haughty brow. “Really, you are positively disagreeable to-night.” His eyes grew mocking. “I believe you are afraid,” he jeered. “Afraid of what our sibyl may tell us. Imagine if she told you that you would never be married. Such a hurtful thing to inform any female of!”

Miss Walkinshaw stiffened. “Your Royal Highness is vastly unkind.”

“Why, I was only in jest. If you want a husband, I can pick you one to-morrow.” He misinterpreted her gesture of distaste. “Come, what do you say to

Elcho?"

Miss Walkinshaw, it appeared, had nothing to say to Lord Elcho. She began to sob, and all His Royal Highness could get from her was the futile objection that Lord Elcho's hair was red.

"Well, mine is red too, and you do not appear to dislike it." He laughed, tossing back his head. "I wish to Heaven you would marry Lord George Murray, and take him out of my road."

"It is not red. It is a beautiful rich brown, gold at the tips." Miss Walkinshaw wept stormily. "And how abominable of your Royal Highness to insinuate that I would lend myself to an intrigue with a married gentleman, even to further your Cause!"

"Good heavens! I never intended any such thing." Charles clutched at his brow. "Besides, Lord George may be a widower. He has never mentioned his wife to me. I asked him once was he married, and he said yes. Just like that, so short and gruff—yes. Anyone else would have replied: 'I hope some day to have the honour of presenting my lady to your Royal Highness,' or something graceful and appropriate, but Lord George has no tact." Prince Charles Edward was himself singularly lacking in this supposedly royal attribute, but was naturally the last person to recognise the fact.

"Lord George's lady is expecting a child." Miss Walkinshaw turned her face away. "I doubt he is anxious about her."

Charles looked rueful. "I suppose anxiety makes him so irritable. I wish now I had let him go to Blair Castle instead of Athol, when one of them asked leave, but if I had chosen Lord George he would only have said I wanted to get rid of him." He mused. "So that was why there was no appearance of his lady the time I dined at Tullibardine. His daughter acted as hostess. He did not allude to any Lady George, and I thought she was either dead or a Whig, so did not like to ask about her. I wonder which the baby will be? I love babies," concluded the Prince enthusiastically.

A hissing whisper stole across the garden. "Your Royal Highness?"

"*Peste!*" Charles thrust Miss Walkinshaw back under the deeper shadow of the great tree, and walked forward. "Is that you, Ogilvy?"

"Yes, sir." Lord Ogilvy advanced grinning. "Lord George Murray has arrived from Falkirk, and I heard him asking Sir Thomas Sheridan for an audience of your Royal Highness. I slipped out to look for you on the chance that you might be in the garden."

"Good God! what am I to do?" Charles stood irresolute. "If he thinks I have been out, I shall never hear the end of it." He added sharply: "And I told you to stop outside my door and warn off anybody, Ogilvy."

“Lord George would be quite capable of breaking down the door, sir.” Lord Ogilvy grinned again. “Besides, I am afraid of him, and it is no use telling him lies. Your Royal Highness had better walk in boldly, say that you could not sleep, and commanded my escort for a stroll. You are fully dressed, and——”

With an anguished gesture in the direction of Miss Walkinshaw, Charles reluctantly complied. If she tired of waiting she could return to her own room. It all depended on how long that damnable Lord George kept him. He pondered how much Lord Ogilvy suspected, decided that he must know everything, and hated him for it. They dawdled past a couple of gaping sentries by the door, entered the hall, and came face to face with the Duke and his brother.

“One must, of course, make allowances.” Lord George was speaking. “He is only twenty-five, practically a foreigner, and has had a most unfortunate upbringing—Oh! *Dhia gleidh sinn!* (God save us!) Your Royal Highness! Sir Thomas Sheridan told me you had retired to bed hours since.”

The Prince planted himself in front of Lord George with blazing eyes. “Who is twenty-five, and has had a most unfortunate upbringing, and is practically a foreigner?” he demanded.

His brother wilted, but Lord George, without moving a muscle of his countenance, replied stiffly: “The Duke of Cumberland, sir.” This rather nonplussed Charles, as the Duke was twenty-five, and had the other undesirable qualities above enumerated, also enjoyed by Prince Charles Edward. Disappointed of the opportunity of picking a quarrel, he turned in a fury to his companion, who had collapsed incontinently on top of the Duke of Athol.

“What is the matter with you, Ogilvy? When you have pulled yourself together, be good enough to attend me in my room.” Lord Ogilvy, gurgling into the Duke’s plaid, made an inaudible rejoinder. “If you wish to speak to me, Lord George, we had better retire upstairs.”

He walked off, muttering maledictions in Italian, fortunately untranslatable. Sounds of an acrimonious and vindictive wrangle between him and his lieutenant-general were wafted back to the other pair. “I have told your Royal Highness repeatedly how unwise it is in you, sir, to take walks without proper escort. It is past eleven o’clock, and you were outside the house with no more dependable companion than my Lord Ogilvy. I fear, too, he had been drinking. If you would be pleased to remember that thirty thousand pounds is a vast sum——”

“It is.” Charles shrugged his shoulders impertinently. “Has my Lord

George Murray ambitions in the direction of earning it?"

"If your Royal Highness designs to insult me——" The two pairs of angry eyes met in the candle-light.

Their owners went into the Prince's room, where for an hour Charles endured Purgatory. Lord George had come from Falkirk with intelligence of the advance of the Government troops. Instead of awaiting the enemy, he was eager that they should march to meet him. He produced elaborate plans, striking them with an impressive forefinger, and waved aside Charles's weary protestations that such matters concerned Colonel O'Sullivan more than himself. In the middle of a geographical exposition of the hill of Falkirk, the Prince leaped up, thrust his head out at the door, and returned with scarlet cheeks to his seat a few seconds later.

"I—I thought I heard someone listening outside," he stammered. He was miserably confused under his companion's eagle gaze. "Sit down again, Lord George. You were saying——"

"I was saying, sir, (though I do not think your Royal Highness has done me the honour to listen to a single word,) that your position here"—he pointed with a long finger—"would enable you to execute a flank movement, cutting off the enemy's left, whereas this"—another determined dab—"is elevated ground, difficult of access for cannon——" He continued to expound until Charles's head swam.

With reluctance the Prince dragged his thoughts from Miss Walkinshaw, keeping windy vigil in the garden, unless Lord Ogilvy delivered the hissed message Charles had just given him through the door, requesting her to return to her room. He was also exceedingly sleepy, having eaten an enormous supper and been out for hours in the fresh air. He scowled at the map, hating it. "Yes, I see," he lied wearily. "But what does this big H stand for, my lord? Oh, Hawley, I suppose, or Hanoverians. But are they not rather a distance from our forces? I think we ought to——"

With one of those efforts of which only a really great nature is capable, Lord George Murray succeeded in keeping his hands—both hands—out of the Prince's hair.

"That is not an H, sir. It is a C, and represents Callander House, as I explained to your Royal Highness five minutes ago." His tone was bitter with suppressed exasperation. "We had better go over the ground again, beginning from here."

Charles got the whole thing: Hanoverian troops, Highland strength, the number to be left besieging Stirling Castle. ("A most unwise proceeding on your Royal Highness's part, but of course *I* was not consulted. I never am. Oh,

I do not complain, sir, but I must say that if you would leave things more in my hands, trust more to my judgment, my experience, and less to Colonel O'Sullivan and your Irish advisers, your affairs would be in a more prosperous situation.") And so on unendingly.

"Oh," prayed Charles fervently in his heart, "O God, do let an express come to say that Lady George has had twins, or triplets, or a miscarriage, or anything that will make him go back to Falkirk."

"If you were my son"—thus ran Lord George's reflections as he watched the bright head bent above the plan—"I should have something to say to you about stooping." "Do not poke over it, sir," he advised aloud. "It would be a great pity if your Royal Highness were to develop a stoop. Are you short-sighted?"

"No," snapped Charles. He added spitefully: "Your lines are so faint. I wish you had brought me this in the daytime."

It was midnight before Lord George put away his plans, and asked permission to return to Falkirk. "I shall probably join your Royal Highness here to-morrow, when we can go more fully into matters," was his parting threat.

The door had barely closed behind him before Charles was through the cupboard-panel, down the dark stair, and rapping imperiously outside Miss Walkinshaw's room. The lady admitted him frigidly, after a suitable interval.

"I vow 'tis not my fault." He was gay and impenitent. "Lord George kept me for hours, with his confounded plans and schemes and ideas. I see Ogilvy had the sense to tell you to return and await me here."

"Lord Ogilvy gave me your Royal Highness's message." Her lips were stiff. "But I did not expect you to come down again to-night."

"Did not expect me?" Charles's voice was shrill. "*Comment?* Why, we are going together—Too late? Nonsense!"

Her face hardened. "It is midnight—and madness. Pray return to your own room, sir."

He came nearer and took her wrists. "Either you come with me, as we planned, or—I do not return to my room to-night. You can choose."

She saw his meaning, realised her own helplessness. She had roused his fatal spirit of obstinacy, and she dared not rouse what was worse, the fierce temper towards women which lurked in all the Stuarts. She drew her cloak about her, and moved towards the door.

"Come, then." Her voice was bitter, acquiescent. "God grant that neither you nor I repent this night's folly."

There was a slant of moon left visible by ragged clouds as they breasted the last yards of the climbing road to the cottage. It made a dark blot in the formless dark of the fields on either hand. They stumbled through the rough slip of garden, and listened outside the crazy shut door. There was neither sound nor light within. A rank smell of decaying vegetation hung on the frosty air. Miss Walkinshaw caught at the Prince's arm.

"You see! You see! They are all abed. Oh, come home, come home!" Her words were urgent and hysterical.

The door creaked slowly inwards. A very old woman stood on the threshold, a fit habitant in her rags and wrinkles for this squalid abode. She beckoned with a bony forefinger, hooked like the talon of a bird of prey.

"Come awa'," she told Charles. She showed toothless gums in an ancient grin. "It's late, but ye can come."

A very lively curiosity impelled the Prince forward, while the substantial weight of Miss Walkinshaw, clinging to his cloak, detained him in the rear.

"Let me go." He freed the folds irritably. "Stay outside, if you are afraid."

The old woman stepped back, holding the door wide. "Aye, leave her oot-by. She'll be in yer life eneuch for ye no tae mind leavin' her ben the cauld this aince."

They left her, a prey to terror, the plaything of the wind and the night. Charles followed his queer hostess into the single room of the cottage. It was a filthy place, a grate choked with dead ashes, the remains of food on a stained table, scant, broken furniture, and cracked glass in a cobwebbed window. He grinned at the thought of the fastidious Elcho's disgust. The old woman lit a candle lurching over the neck of a bottle, which shed feeble illumination upon dirt and disorder. The Prince had thrown back his cloak. In the squalid room his brilliant face and rich figure showed like a jewel on a dust-heap. She peered at him with rheumy eyes.

"Weel, my fine Prince?" She thrust a broken chair towards him with her foot.

He started a little. "Ah! you know me?"

Her scorn grew. "Is there anither in a' Scotland wi' yer bonny face, my lad, or yer bearin'? Would anither come blazin' wi' gewgaws an' diamonds tae a place the like o' this? Oh, aye, Charles Stuart, I ken fine wha ye are."

He looked about him, his nose wrinkled in disdain. "What a den for human beings to exist in!" he muttered.

"Ye'll be glad o' a waur yersel'." She spoke calmly, rooting with a yard of

bent iron amongst the ash of the fire. “When ye lig oot on the heather, wi’ foes a’ round, an’ nae roof owre yer heid but the sky, nae bed save wet earth, then yer pride’ll be brocht laigh, an’ ye may mind this puir bit hoosie ye despised.”

He took a quick step nearer. “What do you mean?”

She stared at him unblinking. “I mean what is written. The hunted head between the four seas, an’ the Judas-price that nae hand in Scotland shall be found tae grasp, an’ the caves an’ corries tae shelter ye—ye, that thocht tae walk in Geordie’s shoon.”

He broke in, seizing her fiercely. “Shall I ever reign? Speak! Speak!”

She drew his hands down from her shoulders and stared into the smooth palms. “I canna see sae far. I see heids fallin’ for ye, an’ women weepin for ye, an’ then ’tis dark—dark.” She fell to muttering to herself of snow, snow that was streaked with blood, and her gaze grew fearful. “I have naught mair tae tell ye”—she dropped the hands, shapely and white, with their glitter of gems—“but this ane thing: *beware Drummossie Muir.*”

The Prince shook his fair head. “Drummossie Moor? Where is that? I never heard of it.”

“It lies far north, waitin’ ye.” Her voice was like the wailing of great wind. “Noo gang, an’ tak’ yon woman wi’ ye. She has bonny shouthers,” the weird voice droned on, “but they’ll be black with the bruises o’ yer hands, some day, some day.”

He offered her money, but she shook her head. “Gin I wanted, I could call my sons tae tak’ yer fine rings an’ braw claes, an’ get the bonny English gold that’s the price o’ ye, but ye cam’ tae me, trustin’ me, at nicht, wi’ nane but a woman, an’ though ye were a fool, ’tis trust shall buy ye loyalty frae ivery he’rt yet.” Her gaze grew vague again.

He stood very still. “I came before, and another woman told me I should bring disaster by my shadow’s touch. Is that true? Do you see that also?”

“Yon was my dochter. She has the Sight too.” The grey head inclined slowly. “Aye, she spoke richt, for the very sicht o’ yer bonny face spells deith an’ deith an’ waur nor deith tae mony, but nae prince was born wha shall win mair love.” She nodded towards the window. “Yon woman. Ye’ll bring her tae ruin, for yer shadow’s owre her too; but when ye’ve ta’en her he’rt an’ soul, what use tae deny ye her body?”

He went out, shaken, spell-bound. She saw his face, caught at his hands with a cry. “Oh, you are safe, safe! Thank God! I have stood here fearing I know not what. Come home!”

They were together on the dark hillside, clinging to each other like

children. He poured out in a fierce torrent all that he had heard, bewildered, speculating. "What did she mean? The hunted head, and the nights lying shelterless, and Drum Mossie Moor? Oh, that name will haunt me! And you—and you——" He turned to her. "She saw that I should strike you. Oh, my God, strike a woman, and that woman *you!*" He bowed his face.

She put her arms about him, straining him to her. "What do I care? Use me as you will, for I am all yours." She lifted her gaze to the torn night-sky. "You do not need me now," she said clearly, "but you may hereafter. Wherever you are, my Prince, in any strait, or whatsoever the state of your fortunes, send for me, and I will come."

He laughed a little. "To St. James's? Ah, but she would not say if she saw a crown for me. It may not be St. James's, my dear."

"If it were the gutters of Edinburgh, or the stews of Paris, I would come." She looked deep into his eyes.

He had wearied of her intense mood. "*Mon Dieu!* but you are cheerful. At least, if I do not reign, I trust to have a roof to offer you." He pushed her lightly from him. "Perhaps we have been fools. How can an ignorant, filthy old woman foresee the future?" He talked carelessly, striving to lay his ghosts. "It must be near morning. I wish I had thought to ask our Witch of Endor whether Lord George is treacherous!"

After that silence held them, enwrapped them, gathered about them whilst they took their homeward road. They gained the house as they had come, through a little-known door half-hidden in ivy. Alone in her small room, prim, virginal, her look evaded his, her eyes, brighter than a sword, glanced aside. He stared with a careless curiosity at the mystery of a woman's fripperies, the hundred and one evidences of a woman's silken chains spun by use and custom. A pale gown gleamed across the bed. A shoe, high-heeled, brocaded, thrust its innocent coquetry from beneath a chair-flounce. The woman herself, straight and wind-blown, stood taut and tense, seeking no mirror to repair her dishevelment. A great weariness and a great longing came upon him. She was here, his for the taking, by the mere exercise of his man's brute strength. She was defenceless, afraid to soil her honour by crying for aid that would bring stranger eyes, hostile, criticising, to break into their hour. His arms could bear her down, but a sword divided them. The sword's point at his breast held him off. She hummed a snatch of a little French song, and his brow grew troubled.

"Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n'ai plus de feu:
Ouvre-moi la porte,
Pour l'amour de Dieu!"

“No, no.” His lifted hands silenced her. “Why do you choose to sing that? Thus—thus am I.” His eyes sought hers, found them, held them, his gaze miserably defiant and appealing. “That is how I see myself before the door of life.” His breath caught. “*Hé, hé*, my fire very low, and my hands nursing a dead candle. Oh, *mon Dieu, mon Dieu!*”

She went to him at that, vivid and warm. His hands held her shoulders. His hot mouth bruised and burned her own. He looked deep into her eyes—eyes blacker than a king’s daughter’s, which he loved to toast. She threw back her head.

“You—need to knock at no door.” Her low voice thrilled. “For you, the candles shine bright, and great fires are lighted.” Her words rang out triumphantly in the silent house. “For you—everything, my king, my king!”

Still thwarted, he mounted the dusty darkness of the crooked stair. A crooked way for feet set in crooked windings. Outside the blank panel that offered access to his own room, he halted and looked at the candle she had given him. It had flickered and gone out—why? A stray puff of draught through some hidden crevice? His own agitated breath? Dead candles for a hand which should hold no sceptre, for a proud head no crown save one of faded laurel, long dust at Holyrood. He hummed the last notes of her little song:—

“Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n’ai plus de feu:
Ouvre-moi la porte,
Pour l’amour de Dieu!”

CHAPTER X

"O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin born with the day,
O wind with the young sun waking, and winged for the same wide way,
Give not up the house of thy kin to the host thou hast marshalled northward for prey.

.
For a four-fold host upon earth and in heaven is arrayed for the fight,
Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encountering as clouds in the night."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

THE Master of Lovat, three hundred Frasers at his back, came to Bannockburn to kiss Charles Edward's hand. He was a tall stripling, with a yellow head, a sulky mouth, and the eyes of a visionary. Lochiel brought him in to the Prince, who looked him up and down and laughed. "Why, 'tis only a babe. Pray, child, how old are you?"

The boy straightened his slim back. "Nineteen, sir, and if I am young, I have the longer years to serve your Royal Highness."

Charles laughed again and pinched the smooth cheek. "What! do they turn 'em out courtiers at nineteen from St. Andrews University, Lochiel?"

He saw young Lovat flush with distress, so changed his tune deftly. He bade the boy take him to see his clan, praised their appearance, and probed lightly the delicate topic of Lord Lovat's personal evasion of duty. The son blushed and stammered. His father was old and infirm. He desired to serve His Royal Highness, but——

"We must have him, child," spoke Charles decidedly. He reminded the boy of the letter written from Glasgow by Lochiel, Murray of Broughton, and Cluny MacPherson, a letter signed with the Prince's own hand, entreating Lord Lovat to join the Jacobite army. "I promised him a position second to none, and as for fatigue, he could share my travelling coach with Lord Pitsligo, (I make no use of it myself,) and I am sure he would not find my lord's company disagreeable."

The boy looked down at the ground, seeing the rude hall of his home, and the crafty face of the old chief his father. His cheek burned at the memory of the scene between them, when he at last realised the use that had been made of his youth and ignorance. He had been held up to the eyes of Duncan Forbes and the neighbouring lairds as an obstinate, stiff-necked, undutiful son, who persisted in joining the young Pretender against his father's will. "Eh, sirs, what can an auld, dune man dae wi' a young, upstart cockerel the like o' yon?" On his son's slim shoulders Lord Lovat bound the blame of the secret drilling and arming of his clan, the purchase of tents and equipment, the sporting of

white cockades. The boy, in a passion of resentment at his rôle of dupe, had flung his own into the fire, vowing that he would no longer be made a fool of and a tool. Those were the days when parents *were* parents. Bewildered and miserable, he found himself forced out at the head of some small quantity of Frasers, and here was the Prince whom he had been trying to teach himself to hate. He looked at Charles, the brilliant eyes, the swift, graceful body, the head whose poise, so carelessly triumphant, proclaimed him of a race of kings. He was like a tiger, young Simon Fraser thought shyly, supple, lithe, and tawny. No, no. Tigers were cruel, and this Prince's clemency was known far and wide. Well, then, a chrysanthemum, a tall gold and bronze bloom, such as he had seen somewhere in a hothouse. The boy's heart was won directly he kissed that beautiful hand. Charles took the devotion of this new adherent quite coolly. The extravagant attachment of most of his followers merely bored him. If the foolish child chose to worship him, so much the better. He was more malleable material than that old fox his father, and could be used and moulded till the fox were coaxed from his earth. The fox's cub, graciously dismissed, went off in a dream of bliss to compare notes with his contemporary and particular intimate, Lord MacLeod.

"Lord George Murray takes a good deal upon himself, sir."

The speaker was O'Sullivan. He and Charles were riding slowly towards the hill of Falkirk, which, according to the officious Lord George, could easily be reached by the Highlanders before the enemy got there. It was mid-day, with a rising wind, and sodden, leafless woods tall against a sky blackening for rain. Charles, who had approved of Lord George's projects, now began to waver.

"But I do not see——" he murmured.

"Surely your Royal Highness sees how dangerous and inadvisable it is to let your army pass the water in full view of the enemy?" O'Sullivan smiled, and talked the Prince over, as he always could.

The army, led by the energetic and indefatigable Lord George, had gone about half a mile, when up galloped Colonel O'Sullivan. Lord George, with admirable calm, continued the march, scowling down the Irishman's arguments. "So His Royal Highness has been advised not to let the army pass the water in daylight in view of the enemy, and it is best delaying it till night? Your advice, of course, Colonel O'Sullivan? Vastly interesting. Well, you can go back and tell His Royal Highness that if there is the least stop, the enemy will gain the ground I incline for, and if we don't pass the water in daylight, most of the men will take shelter in all the houses and villages in the

neighbourhood, and it will be mid-day next day before they can be got together. March!" he thundered.

A clatter of hoofs broke upon his meditations a short time afterwards. Lord George turned round leisurely, to encounter the Prince, accompanied by Brigadier Stapleton. He braced himself for a tussle. Charles icily demanded why his orders had not been obeyed, and got for his pains exactly what Lord George had just told O'Sullivan, plus that as the enemy were encamped, they would march next day at break of day and attack the Highlanders before the half of them could assemble, and that there was nothing for it but marching on as quick as possible, to gain the rising ground above the town of Falkirk, and then they would have great advantage if the enemy came up that hill, once they had possession of it, and if they did not, but stayed in their camp, His Royal Highness would have a full view of them, and could then deliberate upon what was next to be done——

"Yes." The march had not ceased, and Charles was reluctantly obliged to walk his horse alongside of Lord George, who shouted his arguments, emphasised by ferocious scowls, up at the Prince without once taking his attention off the long column at his back.

"I am of opinion that we should either march forward, or return to our quarters." Lord George's manner was "Take it or leave it," and Charles, basely deserted by Brigadier Stapleton, who agreed with Lord George, was obliged to acquiesce.

The battle of Falkirk was fought—and won—on that dark January afternoon, amid wild weather. A great storm of rain fell, with wind blowing in the faces of the enemy. Here were primitive things, man grappling with man, smoke of gunpowder striving against nature's mist, man shedding his brother's blood, and dirk and claymore wet with more than rain. Once again, as at Prestonpans, the weakness of the Highlanders' numbers was compensated by the ferocity and certainty of their charge. The English fled in disorder, and Hawley's defeat was bracketed with Cope's.

The Highland leaders gathered on the hill to discuss their victory and its sequel. It was a night fit for a witches' Sabbath, trees tossed and screaming in the gale, blackness of beating rain, and great wind. There was considerable confusion and uncertainty, some doubting whether the enemy were routed, others seeking clan or friend with dread for torch. Lord George, fierce, dishevelled, the one whom the Prince should have delighted to honour, but who, as usual, obtained none of the glory; O'Sullivan refuting angrily the accusation that he had failed to bring up men from the second, or the defence

line, to strengthen the first at a critical juncture; Ker of Graden, flushed and talkative; amongst them was argument, dispute, exchange of anecdote, exultation, and triumph. The routed army of the English had fled to Falkirk. Hawley had left orders for the destruction of his vacated camp. The struggling flares of the wet tents, as the smoke of their burning went up, made orange pyres in the mist and darkness. The Master of Strathallan and young Oliphant of Gask, disguised as peasants, were gone off to spy out the land.

Lord George was not content. "We must follow the English to Falkirk. If we cut them to pieces, nothing stands in His Royal Highness's way. He can retake Edinburgh——"

"But where is the Prince?" The group turned to one another with blank faces.

MacLeod, one of Charles's aides-de-camp, joined them, wet and enthusiastic. His Royal Highness? Early in the action the Prince had dispatched him with an order, but on returning, bearing the answer, Charles was nowhere to be found. He had searched in vain. The Prince's life-guards, under Lord Elcho, were stolidly guarding a cottage with the fond impression that their charge was inside. "Here is Lord Elcho," the aide-de-camp added.

Elcho, soaked and cross, having endured the maximum of discomfort with the minimum of glory, cantered up. "I know nothing about His Royal Highness," he declared loftily. "You should guard your charge better, MacLeod."

There was a great clatter of hoofs, a gay "Talk of the deil!" and the Prince came up to them. He swung down from the saddle as easily as a bird alighting on a bough, and embraced the group indiscriminately. Rain-drops jewelled his bright, clotted hair. He had eager eyes, and looked once more the young leader of earlier, happier days. "Oh, my Highlanders, my Highlanders! is there any can stand against you?" He gave Lord George both slim, glowing hands. "You are not hurt, *mon cher*? Good! good! And what is the next move, gentlemen?"

"To attack the town, sir." The Prince's eyes sparkled approval. "I will either lie this night in Falkirk or in Paradise," Lord George declared.

"Not Paradise, my lord. We cannot spare you." A look passed between them, warm, confident, blotting out past bitternesses and cavil. "I shall accompany you, and——"

The other shook his head. "It would be monstrous unwise, sir. A stray shot or a spy in the dark—I could not permit your Royal Highness so to imperil your person. May I recommend that you remain in some house on the face of the hill, until I have the honour of bringing you word of further success?"

Charles shrugged his shoulders. "'Tis vastly trying to be so valuable. I am

only permitted to look on, never to take part.” He turned with a laugh to Sir Thomas Sheridan. “In spite of all your expostulations, Sherry, I and my piquets went to the relief of the left wing, and you see I took no harm.”

There was a little cottage on the top of the hill, set against a small birch wood. The Prince went into it from the rain and darkness, accompanied by Sheridan and O’Sullivan. They quickened a sullen fire, and he sat over it in a muse. This triumph had done much to restore his self-respect, give him back poise and strength of purpose, rekindle the flames of hope, of late nearly extinguished in the young heart. What motive other than excitement and impetuosity had inspired that wild dash through the storm to rally the broken left wing? Did he greatly care if he fell? His thoughts kept time to the beat of rain outside, and the wind’s rising scream. Out of the dark a woman’s face smiled at him, lured, beckoned. Should he follow up his victory, regain Edinburgh, teach the turncoat capital a lesson, or should he linger here, the taking of Stirling Castle his ostensible objective, and devote himself to the siege of Clementina Walkinshaw’s dark heart?

Was he in love with her? He could not honestly answer the question. She puzzled, piqued, intrigued him, showed him her soul one second, and an offended shoulder the next. Did she lead him on merely in order to throw him off? At times she yielded to his lips, only to wear a face wet with tears directly afterwards. What did he want of her, supposing that he won her? He could not marry her. He did her the justice of acknowledging that she in all probability never considered the idea. “I can subdue my enemies, and play with men’s hearts as a woman turns over her jewels, but this one woman is a rock to my entreaties. I will master her.”

He sat in a reverie, deaf to the low-voiced talk of the two Irishmen on either side of him. They glanced at him and smiled. He looked so young and eager, the fire burning the cheek leaning towards it, the bright hair uncovered and wind-tossed. Trees crashed in the storm. Through it came men’s voices, and the light thud of horse-hoofs on the carpet of wet earth. Lord George and others had come to fetch their Prince.

They escorted him into Falkirk through a black evening of rain and howling wind. He was soaked, happy, chattering incessantly, when he alighted from his horse before the small house prepared for his reception. The storm raged on all night, and lasted until late next day. He dreamed of Bannockburn House and a black-eyed woman, the while the weather kept him prisoner and the dead were buried. His officers visited him, bringing congratulations and compliment, but Lord George Murray was not satisfied with the way in which the fleeting victory had been obtained. He had the honour of supping with the Prince the evening following the battle, in company with O’Sullivan, Lord

John Drummond, young Lord MacLeod, and others. Between them the conversation rapidly developed into a heady and unpleasant wrangle.

He fought the battle over again, his brow dogged, his voice defiant. "Had there been any officer on the left, to have ordered two or three battalions from the second line, or reserve, to have faced those of the enemy that outflanked them, we should have had a complete victory." His look hardened. "Had our forces on the right rallied when the left was attacked, and been reinforced by the second line, the whole sweeping forward simultaneously, we could most probably have cut the entire forces of the enemy in pieces, or taken a prodigious number prisoner."

The Prince began to drum on the table. "Whose was the blame, my lord, regarding the failure of the second line to reinforce the first?"

Lord George looked straight into the Prince's eyes. "Your Royal Highness chiefly trusted Colonel O'Sullivan with the disposition. Nothing was more easy than for him to have brought up men from the second line, or the corps de reserve, to have extended the first, but"—he shrugged his shoulders—"I never saw him in action the whole time, and——"

The infuriated Irishman clapped a hand to his sword-hilt. "Do you dare to call me a coward, my lord? By ——, it's not the first occasion."

Lord George's uplifted hand silenced him. "I had the honour of speaking to His Royal Highness, sir, not to you." He turned to Charles again. "Early in the morning I gave your Royal Highness a scroll of the line of battle. It agreed with others only in this: the regulars and piquets were to be disposed of by being half upon the right on the second line, and half upon the left, to be brought up, in case of being flanked with horse, but they were kept in the reserve." He halted and continued: "When I gave in that scroll, sir, I desired that your Royal Highness would appoint the officers that were to command, and where, but I never heard that there was any appointment made that day."

Lord Elcho broke in with a giggle and a malicious question. "Why were you not on horseback, my lord? In battles 'tis a general's part to command, not to fight on foot."

Lord George controlled himself magnificently, but the veins on his forehead swelled from reined-in passion. "His Royal Highness, my Lord Elcho, agreed to my marching on foot at the head of the army, as there was no other lieutenant-general there, but I never received an order or message from him after I passed the water at Dunipace, till the battle was over."

Lord John Drummond looked up from his piled plate. "Cannot we rest satisfied? We have gained possession of the enemy's camp, baggage, and artillery, obtained a signal victory ending in his total rout, the moral effect of

which will be excellent for our Cause——”

“We should have cut them to pieces. We might have done so.” Lord George’s lips were close-shut and bitter. He uncorked the vials of his wrath still further, and poured the contents over Lord John. “Had your lordship been at your post at the commencement of the action, the left wing——”

“Damn the left wing!” The Duke of Perth’s brother had none of His Grace’s shrinking from the fiery lieutenant-general. “Pray, what of your MacDonalds, Lord George? If you had rallied them when——”

Charles’s clear laugh prevented a serious quarrel. “Come, come, my friends. I am satisfied, and blame no one. Let us at least have harmony within, as the weather seems determined to be disagreeable without.” He glanced round. “Was that a knock?”

The opening of the door revealed a soaked MacDonald. Clutching his dripping bonnet in one moist hand, he stared with round eyes upon the gay company. The Prince, slim and regal, at the head of the table, his officers, stern-faced, tall men, the wine and smoking food and air of feasting. Charles beckoned to him kindly. “You have a message for me, my friend? Lord George, will you act as interpreter? My Gaelic is limited, and I doubt, as you would say, he has no English.”

“The chief’s son . . .” Lord George translated the halting words.

“My little Æneas. Well?” Charles lay back in his chair, waiting.

The rough voice spoke and ceased. All present knew Gaelic, excepting O’Sullivan and the Prince. A shocked murmur ran round the table amongst them. The Prince’s eyes went from one face to another, resting finally on the clansman’s. “Tell me,” he urged gently.

Lord George turned to him, softened and anxious. “Young Glengarry, sir. This man tells that he has been wounded—shot——”

The Prince cried out: “An assassination?”

“An accident, they think. He was standing in the street, and one of Clanranald’s MacDonalds accidentally discharged his piece——”

Charles waited to hear no more. He got to his feet, swaying a little, flung a cloak over his finery, signalled back his guests. “You will excuse me, gentlemen? Oh, this is terrible!” He went across to the Highlander, watching with eyes of misery. “Take me to him,” he said.

The man’s face lit up. He knelt and kissed the hem of the cloak. The Prince went before him down the stair and out into the soaked street. The rest followed, alert concerning his safety, but he had eyes and ears for none. The rain was ceasing, and a few stars had begun to look at their reflections in the

uneven puddles. The sky was dark and deep, patched with great masses of wind-riven clouds, parting slowly to lay bare its indigo. The cold was keen as a sword-blade. Down a side-street of little flat-faced houses there stood one where lights yellowed a narrow window. The guide halted before the door.

The Glengarry MacDonalds had brought their young leader here to die. It was far, very far, from the still waters surrounding Invergarry, the castle perched upon the crag, under a wild sky, the speech of home. The surgeons had done their best—or worst. He lay in the arms of his clansmen, white-lipped, smiling as one upon the rack might smile. The house was small and dark, with a narrow stair running up to a low-ceiled room. A light step sounded, ascending, and there was a quick, impetuous rush. The MacDonalds, bending sour looks upon the Prince as he came in, parted to let him pass between their ranks. The boy strove to raise himself, but weakness chained him to his pillows. Through the mist of waning consciousness he felt strong arms under him, a cheek wet with tears and rain pressed against his own, a broken voice speaking in his ear. “My dear! my dear! What have they done to you? Oh, Æneas, why you, why you?”

The boy smiled. “They should not have told your Royal Highness. It is so late, and I wanted you to sleep the night in peace.” He added faintly: “I did not think my Prince would come to me—here. It is—too much honour.”

Charles bowed his face to the bed. “Should I not come, when you are going so far, where I cannot follow?” He held the cold young hands. “Have you everything, dear child? Is there aught *I* can do?”

The eyes asked “Stay,” but the lips spoke nothing. The Prince moved mechanically to a chair which someone brought, and sat by the bedside, anguished, silent. The room was full of men. They pressed up to the bed, tears furrowing their dark, stern faces, calling the young lad, their chief’s son, endearing names in Gaelic, listening with bent heads to his broken words. Candles had been lighted. They flared over the little, pinched, dying face, the humble appointments of the room, the Prince’s incongruous figure, the jewels at his breast, the rich attire, the bright hair pushed back carelessly from his furrowed young brow. He sensed hate in the atmosphere. Another life sacrificed to his ambition, another head fallen in his Cause. Useless to blame the accident of ignorant carelessness. “For my sake, to fight for me, he came here. Fate knew the moment, chose the hand, but I, the instrument, am solely to blame. Oh, Æneas, Æneas!”

The night went on, jewelled with stars, quick only by a little gentle rain. He felt the fingers lying in his own take on a greater chill. The eyes were wide

open, agonised. He bent down, striving to make out the movement of those parched, parted lips. "The MacDonald . . . no harm designed . . . an accident _____"

He slipped to his knees, and stayed there, his brow against the boy's hand. "If it rested with me, a thousand times yes. It was pure accident, but you know these Highlanders better than I, child. They may demand blood for blood."

Fate jested with Charles Edward. She gave him a victory, carelessly, with one hand, and dealt him a buffet with the other. To Lord George's wrath, instead of following up his defeat of Hawley by an endeavour to re-take Edinburgh, the Prince was obstinately bent upon the fall of Stirling Castle. He returned to Bannockburn with the Lowland troops, leaving Lord George at Falkirk with the clans. The futile siege dragged on under the imbecile operations of a French engineer whom everyone despised. Young Æneas MacDonald lingered three days, collected and unafraid, losing strength, but mercifully suffering little. Lord George mounted the narrow stair as often as he had time, and sat, a grim sentinel, by the bedside. To him fell the taking of last messages and directions, the staying-up of the young soul on its final journey. His thoughts were many as he watched. They strayed from the Prince at Bannockburn, tangled in that dark creature's web, to his wife, ailing and anxious at Tullibardine, to his future, hers, his children's, all hanging on the fine-spun thread of the Prince's failure or success. "And yet—and yet, how little these things are, face to face with death. What is a day, a year, ten years, in comparison of eternity?"

They were both silent, as the minutes, soft-footed, stole away. The boy lay lapped in weakness, but the clear eyes held consciousness and resignation. They brightened suddenly at the clatter of horse-hoofs down the street, and a high, imperious voice.

"Good God, come in gently!" muttered Lord George. He went to meet the Prince, who was running up the stair in his usual whirlwind fashion. "This is good of your Royal Highness," he said quietly. "Can you stay, sir? I doubt it will not be long."

The Prince flung off his cloak and nodded. "Sheridan! Sheridan!" His voice echoed through the small house. "I shall remain here the night." He bit his lip, fought for self-control, and went over to the bedside. "How do you find yourself, core of my heart?" he asked tenderly.

"Quite easy and quite happy, only I shall not remain so unless your Royal Highness smiles." Æneas looked up wonderingly into the wet eyes. "Why do you grieve for me?"

The night crawled on. They were a queer quartette, waiting the fifth with the veiled face which should make them three. Lord George, conscious of the hidden antagonism between them, sat on one side of the narrow bed, with the Prince across from him on the other. The room was thick with the clansmen who passed in and out, all to look their last upon the young face against the Prince's shoulder. Charles was worse than useless in a sick-room, being large, noisy, and tactless, but even the collective glares of the Glengarry MacDonalds failed to turn him out. Some halted in the shadows, their very silence a reproach. A little wind pattered in the quiet of the street.

At midnight Lord George got up and sat by the fire with Sir Thomas Sheridan. He glanced at the Prince, his eyes rigid in a face that seemed a frozen mask of grief, his arms, supporting their light burden, tireless. Lord George feared for him, and voiced his fears to the Irishman.

"He'll make a fine hullabaloo when it's over." Sheridan nodded cheerfully. "I know him, my lord. And next week he'll pick out another young one—there's the Master of Lovat, he'll do very nicely—and this poor child will be forgotten like yesterday's dinner."

"Oh, I know he is grossly selfish." Lord George nodded grimly. "But I give him credit for some affection."

"Oh, do you? That's mighty generous of you." Sheridan smiled. "But I should be puzzled to name any one person he really loves. The King?" He shrugged his shoulders. "He has only written to him once or twice since Prestonpans. The Duke of York? If he disappointed his plans, or thwarted his ambitions, the Prince would put him out of his life as completely as if he had never existed. Myself?" The soft brogue droned on. "He has a kind of clinging to me now, because he feels himself so alien at times, but he will not stir a finger to please me, unless it marches with his own inclinations."

"And yet for all that you love him?" Lord George's lip curled.

"Aye, I love him, my lord. To me he is always the little child I taught and played with and watched grow up." His face worked. "I am not the only fool. He wins hearts by a smile, and tramples on them with another." His voice dropped. "That poor boy. He is in Paradise before he dies because the Prince is there, shedding tears for him, and that woman at Bannockburn——"

"You mean Miss Walkinshaw? What of her?"

"Nothing, except that she has said No, I thank you, to the chance of being Countess of Wemyss. My Lord Elcho proposed to her the other day." He grinned into Lord George's amazed face. "Over the spinet. They thought I was asleep, or deaf, as all young people regard their elders in these modern times." He checked a chuckle. "You and I managed such things better in our day, my

lord, but if it was a first offer of marriage, the manner did my Lord Elcho great credit.”

He sat back with another smothered chuckle. Lord George scowled heavily, sunk in thought. The flames were on his stern countenance and set mouth. So the Walkinshaw flew at higher game than a future earl, did she? Was it a greater stake in her eyes to be a prince’s mistress? They had exchanged no word, he and she, since that moment in the dark corridor of Bannockburn House, outside the Prince’s door. The fear Lord George had known then—a fear lest a woman’s eyes should turn Charles’s from his Cause—had been predestined, justified. His thoughts of her since were harsh, uncharitable, but now he saw her suddenly in another light. He remembered her face, and shining out of it, ardent, fervent, triumphant, the shrined flame of an unashamed, unselfish love. “God help her,” reflected George Murray. “She loves the Prince, and he——The woman who is fool enough to love a Stuart loses her fame in this world, and mayhap her soul in the next.”

The end came with the dawn. His clansmen were round him, their wailing in his ears, but his last look was for the Prince, his last words a pleading that the one who had unwittingly struck him down might be spared. At the last the Sight came upon him, and he reared upright, crying with outflung arms that he saw bloody claymores, and snow blown in the faces of the fleeing clansmen. “And there is one, mounted on a grey gelding, who rides faster than them all. *Tearlach! Tearlach! Turn back!*”

An hour later Sir Thomas Sheridan ventured into the room, and held the Prince in his arms whilst he wept.

CHAPTER XI

"I have spoken more than once of the broken nights which the Emperor's health, the magnitude of his last adventure, and an uncalculating anxiety which had not left him since he had crossed the borders of Lithuania, imposed upon him as he lay there in Moscow unachieving; trapped!

The nights were no longer of repose, but of foreboding; some, of tortured doubt. The night of Friday, the 2nd of October, was the last of these. It was a night of bowed decision.

He had passed the greater part of it in angry scenes, or, at the best, fruitless arguments. Upon the morning of the Saturday he summoned his Marshals and told them that he had determined upon a policy.

Henceforward he was to follow that road which we all follow under one name or another, and which ends in the supreme adventure of the soul at death."

—HILAIRE BELLOC.

CHARLES took the death more hardly than Sheridan had prophesied. Two deaths, it might be said, for the life was barely out of young Glengarry's body before his clansmen flocked to the Prince's feet, demanding vengeance. Vainly he pleaded mercy, quoting the last desires spoken by those new-sealed lips. He looked round with wild eyes, only to find himself face to face with young Clanranald, come to beg his clansman's life. The Prince was powerless. His royalty, his authority, his charm, were as needles stuck in the granite of clan custom, agelong blood feuds, and the clan slogan of a life for a life. Death for death, rang the MacDonalds' clamour. He dared not spare their victim, lest they should desert his standard in a body. He wavered, wept, turned away. They dragged the boy (he was as young as the slain Æneas) outside the town, and emptied a volley into him. Vengeance satisfied, they stole off in vast numbers, making their stealthy way homewards, burdened with spoil, a new verse added to their clan-songs of how their chief's son was fallen, but had not gone down to death unaccompanied.

Clanranald acquiesced bitterly in the summary execution, not daring by a refusal to risk his clan becoming embroiled with the Glengarry MacDonalds. Afterwards, he looked upon the Prince with eyes emptied of friendliness. The whole army was shrouded in gloom. Charles sent for his confessor, and demanded wildly if he were guilty. The priest, himself a MacDonald of Clanranald's clan, looked coldly upon him. "So far as these two lives have been sacrificed to your Royal Highness's inordinate ambition, their blood is on your hands," he told him sternly. That night Charles wept, his brow against a woman's breast. "Oh, if I had never come, if I had never been! So much blood spilt, so many deaths, and 'tis too late to draw back. Do you too hate me for it?"

The incident darkened the plot, complicated the issue. The two sieges went on, the futile one of Stirling Castle, the equally abortive one of Clementina Walkinshaw. Men died daily in the trenches dug round that contemptuous, unassailable fortress. The Prince exerted all his charm, all his allurements, to break down the woman's resolution. Neither would yield to him, and he, stubbornly set upon the fall of both, lingered at Bannockburn, deaf to the voice of reason, the pleadings of commonsense.

The weather aided him where one capitulation was concerned. Snow fell out of a scowling sky, keeping him a willing prisoner indoors, chained to a woman's skirts. He pleaded a cold caught during the recent battle, and wrote airy excuses to Lord George for his failure to ride to Falkirk and review his waning army. "I was just ready to get on horseback in order to make you a visit, but have been overpersuaded to let it alone by people who are continually teasing me with my cold," one letter ran. "But this would not have done, had I not considered that it wou'd not be possible to draw out any Troops on such a day as this, and I intended to have seen Glengarry's Regiment, of which I intend always to take a particular care. In ye mean time I have sent you two of my Aide de Camps, either of which you may send back upon any emergency, but by very good intelligence I received last night from Edinburgh, there is no appearance of the enemy's moving this way." Several similar missives from his assured friend, Charles, P.R., stirred Lord George to wrath and action. He ordered a horse, and rode to Bannockburn House.

You could not quarrel with Sir Thomas Sheridan any more than you could quarrel with a feather-bed. A feather-bed can be danced on, ripped with a dirk, rolled up and put out of the way, but it counters its enemy's thrusts every time by declining to hit back. O'Sullivan, fiery Irishman, would retort violently to Lord George's sarcasms, provoke a quarrel where none was intended, match the other's Highland pride and cold disdain with his Hibernian hot blood and hasty temper; but not so his compatriot. To all Lord George's angry abuse of the Prince, fierce denunciations of Charles's folly, blunt declaration that His Royal Highness was outraging the laws of decency and hospitality by his behaviour with Miss Walkinshaw, Sheridan merely responded with shrugged shoulders, raised eyebrows, murmured "Dear, dears," "My, mys," or effective silence. He and Lord George walked up and down outside the high, many-windowed house set in its stiff garden. Both were tired, Sheridan from the labour of drawing up elaborate and exaggerated accounts of the recent victory to be dispatched to the King of France, in hopes that that indifferent monarch might bestir himself and send men and money; Lord George with incessant work and worry. A post-horse, he declared, led an easy life compared with his.

“His Royal Highness is mad with pride and obstinacy.” His voice shook. “He gained a victory that might have turned the tide for him, if only he had followed up his success, pushed his way to re-take Edinburgh.” He flung out his hands. “Instead, he lingers here, wasting priceless time, valuable lives, in a mad endeavour to subdue a fortress of no practical use, and making himself a byword with that woman.”

“Dear! dear!” Sheridan’s tongue clicked disapprovingly.

“He refuses to come to Falkirk and see for himself how matters stand.” The angry soldier stormed on. “The men are sick of inaction, and deserting daily. Money is becoming scarce, and we shall need all our strength when pitted against the Duke of Cumberland.” He added proudly: “I never thought to be reduced to asking favours, Sir Thomas, but you have influence with His Royal Highness. For God’s sake, use it.”

“I have little or none, my lord.”

“I decline to credit that. You have known him far longer than any of us _____”

Sheridan nodded quietly. “Twenty odd years, and he has altered mighty little. Were I to cross him, he would send me back to France to-morrow. He has always been accustomed to his own way. He got out of the hands of his governors at thirteen, after learning as much as he liked, which was mighty little, and as to doing what I told him——” The pause and lifted eyebrows were eloquent. “Either he sulked, or he coaxed, giving me no peace till I asked the King’s leave for the pair of us to go out, instead of being at his studies. It was the only chance to have any comfort: give him what he wanted.”

“I am surprised to hear of such lamentable weakness on the part of His Majesty.”

“Oh, are you? Well, if you knew His Majesty, *and* His Royal Highness, you would see what I mean.” His face softened. “It was no life for a young, active, healthy creature, in that mouldy old palace, with a handful of depressed elderly men, cocking him up from morning till night that he was born to be King of England.” The tone held pity. “Of course, he is spoilt. His Majesty expected me to manage him without laying a finger on him, or saying a word of reproof. What he needed was a riding-whip and plenty of it, but the King nearly swooned at any idea of that, and said dearest Carluccio had such a high spirit, and it must not be broken in any way.”

Lord George laughed angrily. “If infernal obstinacy and mulish stubbornness imply spirit, His Royal Highness has plenty.” He paused and asked: “Is the Duke of York as difficult to manage?”

Sheridan’s eyes closed. “The Duke of York, my lord, cares for nothing

save his own soul. Mass and music are his diversions. But as far as that goes, I cannot understand this infatuation of the Prince's. She is not even good-looking."

"His Royal Highness does not care for pretty women," Lord George objected. His thoughts went back to the brief weeks of revel at Holyrood. "Take the eight Ladies Montgomerie, for instance, beauties every one of them. Well, I would wager that he did not know them apart. And his manner to Lady Ogilvy or Mrs. Murray of Broughton is positively frigid."

"He never troubled his head about women." Sheridan shook his own. "In France he did not give me the smallest anxiety. In fact, between ourselves, my lord, if he had allowed a little petticoat influence to be used, he might have obtained more assistance from the King of France. His Majesty is—er——"

"Of course. Quite so." Lord George hastily agreed. "As men of the world, Sir Thomas, you and I know that women are necessary evils in politics, but to have the Prince and the Cause ruined by that black-headed Jezebel——"

"It's mighty annoying. I wish she had accepted Lord Elcho's proposals."

"It is more than annoying. It is degrading. But the Prince has no sense of what is fitting, no proper dignity——"

The feather-bed showed signs of a rent. "He has plenty of dignity, my lord. He can be mighty royal when he chooses," Sheridan protested.

"Oh, I grant you he can put on that charm and a grand air with his finery and jewels, but at bottom he is only an undisciplined, badly-behaved schoolboy." Lord George pointed a dramatic arm. "Now, I ask you to look at that, Sir Thomas. It just bears out what I say."

"That" was His Royal Highness's tawny head, thrust unexpectedly from an upper window, while its owner shouted directions to Lord Ogilvy underneath. My lord was on horseback, his fidgety mount sidling to and fro, snatching at the bit. Charles's high, ringing voice carried far on the winter air.

"No, no, no! You are so obstinate, Ogilvy. *Écoutez, donc!* Take the road to the *left*. I tell you it cuts off a quarter of a mile, and the other way is not safe. You may fall in with the enemy——"

"If I do, I shall tell the Duke of Cumberland where your Royal Highness is, and obtain a pardon and the thirty thousand pounds," Lord Ogilvy yelled back. He wheeled his mount, thrust in the spurs, and galloped off, sending a shower of muddy snow over Sheridan and Lord George. They looked after him with angry faces.

"That's a nice playboy," the Irishman remarked vindictively. He surveyed his soiled cloak with rising wrath. "And up to the neck in all the Prince's

pranks. He is on duty every night in His Royal Highness's room, and—well, I would wager that His Royal Highness is elsewhere.” They came under the window. “Hush-sh!”

Charles was still leaning over the sill. Lord George looked up, and hardened his heart against the bright, appealing face. “If your Royal Highness has anything to say to Lord Ogilvy,” he began frigidly, “surely he could wait upon you, sir? Shouting out of windows is——”

“Not done,” finished Charles affably. A demon of mischief danced in either eye. “Never mind, my lord. It is convenient, and saves time. If you have somewhat to say to me, pray come up,” he added. “I have a cold, and am keeping my room.”

“Your Royal Highness should try my remedy.” Thus Lord George after saluting and scrutinising a rather heavy-eyed Prince. “You may recollect that I contracted a most violent one with the rigours of the last three days' march before we came to Carlisle, and this is how I cured it. Wash with warm water ——”

1746 was not the age of baths. “All over?” inquired Charles Edward in horror.

“Certainly, sir. Then go to bed——”

“I should need to,” remarked His Royal Highness feelingly.

“I am speaking, sir. When in bed, take some oatmeal and water—what the Highlanders call a brochan—and it is vastly likely that next day you will be almost cured.”

Charles shut the window with a shudder. “I would rather have the cold,” he declared.

“Your Royal Highness certainly will have, if you remain in this atmosphere, instead of taking air and exercise.” Lord George scowled, principally at having his pet remedy derided. “And may I ask what is this mess you are drinking?”

“Tea.” The Prince looked up meekly. “Will your lordship have some?”

“No, I thank your Royal Highness. Tea at four o'clock in the afternoon! Who ever heard of such a thing?” He sniffed suspiciously. “And laced, I doubt, sir?”

“*Pourquoi pas?*” Charles shrugged his slim shoulders. “I need some support, considering all I have on my mind.” He looked at Lord George with the mixture of quizzicalness and impudence which always made the latter want to shake him. “I think you did not come here to discuss my ailments, my lord?” he remarked.

"No; my arrival is due to my determination to find out your Royal Highness's intentions as regards meeting the Duke of Cumberland's forces. Have you considered a battle, sir?"

Charles had, and was eager for it. He hunted amongst disordered papers. "Where the devil is that plan of one I drew up? What is the use of a secretary when one cannot find a thing?" He added cheerfully: "Sheridan and Murray are used to my ways, but I am in disgrace with Hay and Lumisden. Of course, I threw the ink at Hay yesterday, and the brandy at Lumisden to-day——"

"Your Royal Highness threw those articles at Mr. Hay and Mr. Lumisden!" Lord George stood appalled. "Why, pray, sir?"

"Oh, they got on my nerves," explained the Prince carelessly. He rang the bell, demanded his three secretaries, scolded them, set them searching everywhere for the missing plan, and suddenly uttered a yell of delight. "Why, there it is! All the time on the mantelpiece. Why did you not use your eyes?"

"Why did your Royal Highness not use yours?" growled Lord George. "They are younger than any of ours, sir."

Together they agreed to risk another battle with the approaching forces under the Duke of Cumberland. The Prince, after some discussion, handed over his plan. "If you will take it back with you to Falkirk, my lord, you can correct or modify it as you think fit, and return it to me by Mr. Murray." Lord George, disliking the mention of the Secretary, bowed stiffly.

The laughter came back into Charles's eyes. "It is good to think I shall soon have to do with the Duke of Cumberland," he said. "'Twill be a great battle, that may decide the fate of Scotland."

The other, looking at him, pitied him. He was so young, so blind, so certain. "God grant your Royal Highness victory, and this unhappy country peace," he rejoined. They parted with more kindness than usual. Charles went with Lord George to the door of the room and embraced him.

Mr. Secretary Murray for some time past had had his hands full. It was Lord Elcho who maliciously declared that he introduced Mr. Hay to the Prince in order to keep out other people whose influence he was more afraid of. He ruled Charles himself with consummate skill, but as he could not always be at the Prince's elbow, he established Hay as second-in-command and understudy—and found, too late, that he had hatched a cockatrice.

Charles was gay and sanguine the fatal evening before the blow fell. His confessor told him sourly that he should be on his knees, but the Prince laughed, stayed up unusually late, and demanded reels after dinner. The

prospect of battle and victory (defeat never entered his head) restored his lost vivacity, broke the spell that dark creature had wound round him, gave back to his step and glance their old blitheness and buoyancy. He joined in the dancing whole-heartedly, kicking up his long legs like a young colt. Sheridan watched him with worshipping eyes.

Charles was sound asleep next morning, Lord George's modified plan of battle under his pillow, when Ker of Graden, Lord George's aide-de-camp, galloped up to Bannockburn House. He was received by a servant, who passed him on to Mr. Hay. Mr. Hay took from his hands a package and a letter, the former for the Prince, the latter subscribed to himself. He shook his head as he read it, murmuring phrases from its contents half aloud.

"The Gentlemen who sign the enclosed representation intreat that you would take the most prudent method to lay it before His Royal Highness without loss of time.' His Royal Highness is presently asleep, Colonel Ker. I could not take upon myself to disturb him. 'We are sensible that it will be very unpleasant, but in the Name of God what can we do?' I see this is endorsed by my Lord George Murray. Really, sir, I think he might undertake his own disagreeable work, and not put it upon me, 'One thing we think of the greatest consequence, what ever His Royal Highness determine, let the thing be kept as secret as the nature of it will allow.' Quite, quite. Well, Colonel Ker, I can only promise to acquaint the Prince with this as soon as he wakes."

He glided away, the fatal document in his hand, his curiosity at fever-heat to see what it contained. Peeping into the royal apartment, he found Charles sitting up in bed, flushed and yawning, demanding breakfast and his valet. Hay procured both and waited. When next he ventured in, the Prince, partially dressed, was humming an Italian air, and undergoing the operation of the arranging of his long hair. He shook himself free from the protesting Morison's hands, and took the packet Hay presented. "You can come back and finish later, Morison," he said carelessly. "Who brought this, Hay? Oh, Colonel Ker, from my Lord George Murray. *Très bien.*"

He carried it to the window, from whence there came the tearing open of paper. A few minutes later Hay turned round at a violent exclamation. "Good God! have I lived to see this?" gasped the Prince. His face was livid, and in the delirium of passion he beat his head against the wall with a force that made him stagger. The Secretary caught the furious figure, which stood trembling against his arm, heaping savage imprecations upon Lord George. "I see his hand in this. 'Tis all his doing. By Heaven, Derby over again, and I am expected to smile and submit!"

He was nearly exhausted before Hay dared to leave him and fetch Sir Thomas Sheridan. The Irishman held the beautiful, disordered head in the

crook of his arm, and talked softly. "What is it, dear heart? This paper? Let me see." He took it from the clenched fingers and read it with pursed mouth. "They want you to retreat? But, my darling, you and Lord George were bent upon fighting only yesterday. You showed me your plan of battle and the one he sent back with some mighty sensible alterations. What has changed him in a few hours?"

"It is damnable." Charles spoke through set teeth. "He has done it, worked for it, and forced the others to agree." Together they looked at the signatures: Lochiel, Keppoch, Cluny, Clanranald, Ardshiel, Scotus, Lochgarry, Glengyle, and the Master of Lovat. "You see the arguments they employ, Sherry? 'It is but just now that we are appriz'd of the numbers that are gone off, besides the many sick that are in no condition to fight.' 'We are afraid Stirling Castle cannot be taken as soon as was expected.' Ah, they taunt me with that, curse them! 'To retire immediately to the Highlands.' 'The danger of your own person.' Why will they harp upon this? Have I ever considered it?"

They looked at one another, the Prince white-lipped, dishevelled, the partially-dressed hair hanging in disorder about his haggard young face. He was calmer than Sheridan dared to hope, seeing for himself that anger, argument, and abuse would serve him nothing, but he would hear no word in Lord George's favour. "He seeks to betray me. I read that in every line." His mouth was scornful as Sheridan gently showed the postscript to the cruel document. "We whose names are hereunto subscribed do hereby solemnly and in the Presence of God declare that tho' for reasons which to us seem of the greatest weight, we have advised His Royal Highness to retire beyond the Forth, We are still firmly resolved to stand by him and the Glorious Cause we have espoused to the utmost hazard of our lives and Fortunes."

"Words are cheap," Charles smiled bitterly. "Will you send Morison to me, Sherry. I have to finish dressing." He moved feebly out of the encircling arms. "I must write an answer to—this, which I shall want you to take to Falkirk for me."

He called in his smooth-spoken Secretary, who drew up a dignified letter of remonstrance. Sheridan, armed with the Prince's full authority, went off to deliver it to the chiefs and to discuss the matter. He gained little satisfaction, but brought back Cluny and Keppoch, the only two bold enough to face the Prince. For hours the three sat in conclave, Charles quietly obstinate, the Scots equally firm. It was worse, in a measure, than Derby. They were frankly brutal to him, beating down his arguments, refusing to yield an inch. He lost his temper, and after a stormy scene dismissed both, thankful to escape without personal violence.

Till midnight he sat alone, composing a bitter letter of argument ending in

acquiescence. He would agree to his officers' demands because he was powerless to do anything else, but he saw only ruin and defeat before them. When it was done, he took his head in his hands, seeking dumbly for consolation. One thing remained in this desert of misery and loss, the woman who had said that she loved him. For nights she had denied herself to him. He had importuned her in vain. He groped his way down the dark stair, and knocked on the dividing panel.

She drew back the barrier. He saw her face beyond, and her form, wrapped in some clinging garment of dull blue. He came in and stood before her, suppliant, wretched. "Everything has failed me. I am deserted on all sides, and I think my heart is broken. Have you no comfort for me?"

She held out her arms. He took her in his own, devouring her face with fierce kisses. His nearness shut out the world. His hot, disappointed passion seemed to quench her, drown her, bear her down. She dragged the panel across, and they were alone, fenced in, her defences broken, her citadel overthrown. It was a miserable victory, but in his wretchedness, his bewilderment, he took it, forgetting his manhood and her helplessness.

CHAPTER XII

“He seeks advice from none, yet never has his own way, and this from his following a course contrary to that above recommended. For being of a secret disposition, he never discloses his intentions to any, nor asks their opinion; so that it is only when his plans are to be carried out that they begin to be discovered and known, and at the same time to be thwarted by those he has about him, when he being facile gives way. Hence it happens that what he does one day he undoes the next, so that his wishes and designs are never fully understood, and that it is impossible to build on his resolves.”

—MACHIAVELLI: *The Prince*.

AFTERWARDS, shame took him by the throat. Following that miserable night of furtive, shared embraces, he crept back to his own room in the chill grey of the January morning. He crawled into bed, where he lay in a weary huddle, but sleep was far from him. What was she doing, this woman whom he had wronged and smirched and soiled? Was she—Papist like himself—prone before her God, imploring pardon for this thing they had both done? Mortal sin! Mortal sin! Her words, her veiled warning, droned in his ears.

He shut his dry, wakeful eyes, but her face hung before them in the dark. He saw her in a dozen shapes, a hundred aspects, as she had been to him throughout these few fevered weeks. He pictured her bending over the fire, or standing, a frigid, withdrawn figure, by his bed, or with cold lips, yielding to his arms. Did he love her? Had he ever loved her? He remembered the grave passion in her speech as she vowed fidelity to him under all circumstances and changes. Did he want her? Would he not rather crave to put her life as far from him as possible, making her what poor amends he could for their dark, spoiled dream?

Lord George Murray, grimly prepared for a long struggle ending in a reluctant, ill-tempered capitulation, came to Bannockburn House late in the evening. He found the Prince alone in his room, staring out at a yellow sunset. Charles was cold and calm, his manner as drained of life as the sharpened young face of colour, but quietly prepared to yield his own wishes and opinions to those of others. There was no bad grace, no forced air of resignation about him. The old charm and stateliness still haloed him. Morison had dressed the fair hair so as to hide the livid bruise on the temple, but when he pushed the tumbled masses back in a constant gesture of fatigue, it showed plainly by the candle-light. Lord George wondered.

They plunged at once into arrangements for the retreat on the morrow. Never had he known the Prince so passive and acquiescent. Charles sat there listlessly, agreeing with anything that his companion proposed. It was not the

despair which had seized him after Derby. This time the iron had pierced deeper into his soul, and to the agony of the wound was added the stinging salt of shame. His ears were alert for a woman's accusing voice. Her face, pale, reproachful, blotted out all else.

The candles burned lower, and the night grew old. It was past twelve o'clock before the two rose from the paper-strewn table. The army was to be in readiness to march between nine and ten in the morning. Lord George, without hesitation, again undertook to guard the rear, and was allowed to select his own men for the purpose. "Your Royal Highness looks worn out." He spoke with unusual gentleness. "Will you try to obtain some sleep, sir? You cannot risk falling ill."

Charles turned away his face. Left alone, he was sitting sunk in a miserable apathy when Hay announced O'Sullivan. He roused himself wearily at the Irishman's entrance. "Did Lord George Murray tell you what he and I concerted after supper? We march to-morrow between nine and ten of the clock. You will dispatch orders to the Duke of Perth and Lord John Drummond to have their regiments in readiness by then. The rendezvous is beside the church of St. Ninian's. Lord George designs to remain with the rear-guard till everyone has gone off in order."

O'Sullivan had come to argue, and he did. In his softly-spoken, plausible brogue he proposed an earlier hour for the retreat. The heavy cannon must be abandoned, and all ammunition that they could not take with them destroyed. Why wait until broad daylight, wasting valuable time?

Charles sat sunk in thought. If he stole from the house at five in the morning, he would avoid a heart-breaking interview, a tearful farewell, a woman's renewed, unwanted protestations of loyalty and devotion. For a few fleeting hours her kisses had drowned his misery, but now, with his defeat, his impotence, brought home to him unbearably, his one wish was to avoid her. She had seen his humiliation, and he hated the thought. Shame and pride were oddly mingled. He no longer valued her, now that he had brought her to her knees.

"But"—he pushed back the hair from his throbbing brow with feverish hands—"Lord George was positive for the later hour. He will object to a change of plan, and—and"—his voice quivered—"I cannot endure any more argument. I am worn out."

The Irishman's eyes dropped. "Your Royal Highness may safely leave it to me, sir. I can arrange everything without your being troubled." His smooth accents took a cunning note. "It would teach Lord George a lesson if he were shown that he is not the most important person in your Royal Highness's army

The Prince’s face sharpened to suspicion. “The hour for the retreat cannot be altered without Lord George Murray’s sanction, Colonel O’Sullivan.”

“Of course not, sir.” O’Sullivan waved deprecating hands. “But your Royal Highness has ventured before now to change arrangements made by Lord George, and to disobey his orders.”

He had said enough. The hint that Lord George was in supreme authority, that he, the Prince Regent, must meekly do as he was told by his lieutenant-general, fanned a spark to a flame. Charles flushed deeply. The retreat was of Lord George’s management and sanctioning, the Prince a puppet in his hands, the details of the withdrawal from Stirling made to suit Lord George’s views and convenience, and no other’s. Charles read all this in O’Sullivan’s scornful smile. He rose and stood with clenched hands.

“We evacuate the town at five o’clock. Be good enough to make arrangements for this, and to issue orders to those concerned.” His face was working with painful emotion.

At the last second, when O’Sullivan had already left the room, Charles ran to the door. “O’Sullivan!” His voice rang down the dark corridor. “You must let Lord George know of this change. Send an express at once to him at his quarters.”

The Irishman grinned in the dark. Charles had gone back into his room without waiting for any reply, and the evil look on his quartermaster-general’s face was unperceived. The other went cat-footed away. “Ah, ah, I have you now, my Lord George,” he muttered softly. “You call me a coward to my face, do you, tell me I am never seen in action? Well, well, just wait.”

His thoughts were very pleasant. At five o’clock, a bare four hours away, Stirling would be evacuated by the Highland army. At nine o’clock Lord George Murray, with a none too adequate guard, would arrive at the rendezvous, to find the active Castle of Stirling awaiting him, and the Hanoverian troops hard upon his heels. A stray shot might end him, or a larger force overpower his own and take him prisoner. It would be very easy for O’Sullivan to deny that he had received orders from the Prince to acquaint Lord George with the altered arrangements. Charles had written nothing. That last hurried call from the door of his room could have been overheard by no one. O’Sullivan triumphed quietly.

Lord George was quartered at Easter Green Yards, a picturesquely-named farm a mile from Bannockburn. It was so late by the time he left the Prince that he decided it was not worth his while to go to bed. At intervals for the rest of the night his cavalry patrols brought in reports of the enemy’s progress, and

daylight saw the active lieutenant-general superintending the loading of carts with certain stores, spoil from reluctant Glasgow. In the middle of deciding the vexed problem of how to apportion one horse amongst six vehicles, a dull, thunderous roar shook the atmosphere. Lord George scolded his clamorous, apprehensive Highlanders, declaring that the noise was probably the guns of Stirling Castle firing upon some of the Prince's men.

At nine o'clock he rode off with Ker of Graden, anticipating finding the entire Jacobite army drawn up in a field adjoining St. Ninian's, ready for a review and a march. His jaw fell as he drew near to the appointed rendezvous. Where were the Highlanders? Where was His Royal Highness? Above all, where was the graceful building of St. Ninian's Church? Nothing remained but the tower, haloed by grey clouds of smoke, and surrounded by a collection of gaping rustics. These last divided their attention equally between the ruined kirk and an overturned post-chaise. The church had been accidentally destroyed by the retreating troops in blowing up some gunpowder, and the occupants of the vehicle, Lochiel and Mrs. Murray of Broughton, he with a wound in his foot since Falkirk, she in an interesting condition, were flung out on the road when the explosion frightened the horses. Several unoffending people had been killed, and the unfortunate, discreditable business was undoubtedly first blood to Colonel O'Sullivan.

Lord George subsequently overtook him on the road, and Greek met Greek. "Who advised the flight, for I can call it nothing else?" Lord George demanded.

O'Sullivan, concealing his deep chagrin at finding his lordship hale and unimpaired, could not tell.

"Why did they not apprise me if there were any alteration as to the resolution that was taken when I was present at one o'clock in the morning?"

O'Sullivan looked down, murmuring the excuse of the hurry they were in. The Prince had certainly given him orders to evacuate the town earlier. Written orders? Sure, no, verbal. Had not Lord George received the same? Dear, dear! Mighty careless of His Royal Highness, but then he was young, and——

"It was all a plot," raved Lord George. He sat on horseback, livid and furious. "I might have known he was planning something underhand when he was so quiet and acquiescent last night. 'Yes, my lord.' 'Of course your lordship will know best.' 'I leave it entirely to you, Lord George.' I shall insist on his calling a council, and accounting to me for this discreditable flight. Oh, it is scandalous! I should be more than justified in resigning my command."

He rode off, leaving O'Sullivan disappointed, but deeply delighted at having shifted the blame to Charles's royal shoulders. Lord George overtook

the Prince at Leckie, just as His Royal Highness, after an ample meal at a farmhouse, was swinging one straight, slender leg across his horse's back. He sat as erect as ever, but the brown eyes had a glazed, sleepless look, and the supple mouth was set in lines of weariness. He listened with twitching brow to Lord George's fulminations over the disgraceful manner of the army's going off, ("So contrary to all that had been agreed upon, and so dishonourable to them,") and deliberately took refuge in riding away. Lord George's anger leaped to fever-heat as he looked after him.

The hurry, confusion, and shameful organisation, evidence of which he perceived at every mile, added fuel to his wrath. At first the slight the Prince had put upon him was less the cause of his chagrin than this scramble and haste, abhorrent to his orderly soldier's mind, but his feeling of humiliation mounted and deepened as he reviewed the position. Without a word of explanation, without the elementary courtesy of informing him of the change, all his carefully-laid scheme for a retreat in complete order had been altered with the Prince's sanction and connivance. A smaller-minded man would have played into the hands of O'Sullivan, Murray, and the rest of the Prince's incompetent advisers by resigning everything, but Lord George remembered the lesson of Carlisle. The Cause should not suffer through him, but His Royal Highness must explain.

Unfortunately, by the time they met again, Charles considered himself the aggrieved party. On reaching Crieff, he had reviewed his army, and found the tale of desertions grossly exaggerated. He would listen to no explanations as to the numbers of stragglers that had fallen in along the way. It had been totally unnecessary to retreat, he declared stormily, and Lord George must have instigated the whole thing for his own private ends.

To the Prince, suspicious and resentful, came Lord George, snuffing the battle-smoke from afar, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, laden with reproaches, requiring explanations. He made Lord John Drummond's peaceful house of Fairnton ring with his indignation. Charles had consented to the first council since Derby. He sat at the head of the table, very determined to hold his own, to yield to nobody, but the torrent of Lord George's wrath bore down reason and argument. With blazing eyes he towered over the Prince and the chiefs, (he had refused to sit down,) hotly demanding the name of the pernicious person who had suggested the earlier hour for the retreat. "I never got so much as a message, nor knew anything of any change. Who was responsible?" he raved.

Charles looked entreatingly across the table at his quartermaster-general. "O'Sullivan?"

The Irishman gazed back with a face of brass. "Your Royal Highness?"

There was a dead silence. Through it the river in the policies talked loudly. Then the Prince turned proudly to the angry man awaiting his reply. "I decline to name anybody, my lord. I take the responsibility upon myself." He spoke haughtily.

Lord George shrugged his shoulders and sat down. "In that case, sir, there is no more to be said. But I believe the like of it was never heard of."

The subject was temporarily shelved, and the question of the route northward brought forward. Charles took no part in the discussion, but sat with mutinous mouth and folded arms, listening in silence to the arguments going on around him. Lord George glanced at him once or twice. He knew, as well as if he had been present, the dark things which had passed between the Prince and a woman two nights ago. What was hidden behind the faintly-frowning brow, the high, inscrutable, shut-in look of that young face? Charles had lost his colour and his arrogance. Did he regret those brief hours of shared passion, crave to exchange his sword for a woman's arms, or was he glad to have shaken her yoke from off his neck?

Inverness was the army's ultimate goal, and the problem of whether it should march in one united body by way of Angus and Aberdeenshire along the coast, or take Wade's road through the Highlands, provoked an animated and acrimonious discussion. The chiefs favoured the latter proposal, the Prince and the Lowlanders the former. Finally the matter was put to the vote, when those preferring the less lengthy and less difficult route through the Highlands carried their point by a large majority. Anxious faces were turned towards the Prince, but His Royal Highness had suddenly taken an obstinate fit, and was positive for the coast road. His attitude was pure perversity, as he could have had no personal bias in favour of either. Lochiel, in order to prevent further dissension, took his side, only to find himself countered by Cluny, who had not forgotten his last interview with His Royal Highness at Bannockburn House. He stalked out, and ran into the arms of Mr. Secretary Murray, who, curiously enough, chanced to be passing the door of the room in which the council sat.

"It is past belief that the Prince should be so positive in a thing so contrary to reason and his own interest, especially when a great majority of the Council of War are of another opinion." Cluny angrily outlined the state of affairs. "What can you advise, Mr. Murray?"

The narrow eyes closed. "Consult Sir Thomas Sheridan, sir."

Sheridan, sighing heavily, was fetched, and took his Carluccio for a walk in the policies. What arguments he used will never be known, but after an interval he marched back a slightly less sulky young man, prepared to yield with tolerable grace. It being advisable to separate the Prince and Lord George,

it was eventually concerted that the former with the clans should approach Inverness by the Highland road, while the horse and Lowland regiments under Lord George Murray and Lord John Drummond (presently glaring across the table at one another like a couple of enraged mastiffs) should march by way of Aberdeen along the coast. This decision was not reached without more wrangling and altercation, ending in Lord George shaking off the dust of Fairnton, and departing for Perth in an angry whirlwind.

Work! Work was the only alternative to rabies. A terrific display of energy aided him to put the Prince temporarily out of his mind, but underneath his anger simmered unabated. He packed off Lord Ogilvy with his regiment and the Farquharsons to the Braes of Angus, in order that the men might visit their homes *en route*. "But if any of them desert, my lord, tell them that I shall come and shoot them with my own hands." He sent Lord Pitsligo with his troops to Peterhead, where a Spanish ship was reported to have landed money and arms for the Prince, and Lord Elcho, with the rest of the horse, direct to Montrose, to escort the garrison there to Aberdeen. Having thus suitably disposed of everyone, Lord George dispatched the most of his column to Perth under Lord John Drummond, and halted about a mile from Fairnton himself, with a handful of Athol Highlanders.

In a bare field, fringed by a small fir wood, Lord George pitched a tent and sat inside writing orders. The heavy cannon at Perth must be spiked, and the field pieces sent to Blair Castle. The Duke of Athol was still there, dictating depressing letters, complaining of rheumatism and the indifference and disobedience of his tenants. He found it impossible to raise even one regiment to reinforce the Prince's army. "I wish him joy of His Royal Highness, and the fiery cross, and the whole damned muddle," reflected Lord George. "Weary fa' the day when I was fool enough to come out." In the midst of writing furiously, a commotion outside the tent disturbed him.

Two Highlanders, more or less sentries, squabbling in Gaelic, had had their attention distracted by a cloaked figure crossing the field. The quick, light step seemed familiar, but the face was too carefully concealed for recognition. The intruder halted, and asked for Lord George Murray. They shook their heads. Lord George had given strict orders that he was not to be interrupted. Even for the Prince himself they dared not——

There was a queer little muffled laugh, and the folds of the cloak parted. At the sight of two brilliant eyes looking out of a pale, proud face, the men fell upon their knees. The flap of the tent was dashed back, and Lord George, storming in fluent Gaelic, appeared on the threshold.

"What is the meaning of this? Go away and finish your quarrel elsewhere. I said that I would see no one." One of the Highlanders plucked him by the

plaid, murmuring something. "Tearlach! The Prince? Nonsense!" He peered closer, and his face changed. "Merciful God above us! What daft thing will your Royal Highness do next?"

"I had to come. I must speak to you," Charles gasped. He caught Lord George's sleeve, half in entreaty, partly to keep himself from falling.

The other freed his arm as if the long fingers had been a serpent. "Be good enough to return to Fairnton, sir, and I will wait upon your Royal Highness there. Where is your escort?"

"Nowhere. I—I came alone." He stood shaking from head to foot. "Let me come in, my lord. There are fewer eavesdroppers than at Fairnton."

"Ashamed of himself," reflected Lord George. He held back the tent-flap, and ill-temperedly escorted the Prince into the stuffy interior. He had been sitting on a rolled-up plaid, and using his knee as a writing-table. The place was nearly dark, and so small that the two faces could have touched.

"I had to come." Charles repeated his former statement mechanically. "I could not let you go, my lord, without some explanation."

His voice died under that stern, unrelenting gaze. "There is no explanation that your Royal Highness can give me. If you refer to the retreat from Stirling, the change of orders must have been deliberately concerted between yourself and Colonel O'Sullivan, sir, after I had received instructions that the town was not to be evacuated by the army until nine o'clock of the next morning. I blame Colonel O'Sullivan for persuading your Royal Highness to alter the hour in order that he might gratify his own private purposes." He paused, and added grimly: "There can be no doubt as to what those were."

"You mean—you mean"—Charles raised both hands and covered his face—"that O'Sullivan hoped—intended that you—you might be taken prisoner——"

"Or killed. Precisely." Lord George's shoulders heaved contemptuously. "With your Royal Highness's consent to, and approval of, the altered hour, either was exactly his intention. I regret his acute disappointment."

The Prince leaned against the wall of the tent. "You force me to believe it of him, my lord, but—but you cannot think that I—abetted him?"

The answer, cool, without bitterness, sent him shrinking as far from the speaker as space permitted. "How can I think otherwise, sir? I received no word or message from your Royal Highness——"

The Prince broke in vehemently. "I told O'Sullivan that you must be informed of the change. I gave him orders to tell you."

Lord George's lip curled. "Written orders, sir?"

“No—no.” The stately head drooped. “Verbal ones.”

“Bah!” Charles started at the contemptuous sound as though a whip had cut him across the face. “I see it all plainly. Your Royal Highness was talked over by your Irish favourite, persuaded to alter all arrangements previously made with myself, (it is not the first time such a thing has happened, sir,) and then salved your conscience by calling after Colonel O’Sullivan that he must not forget to inform me.” Charles’s scarlet cheeks confirmed the accuracy of this random shot. “Of course, Colonel O’Sullivan’s motive was mighty plain,” Lord George continued, “and I am beginning to see your Royal Highness’s.”

The Prince held out entreating hands. “Lord George, will you not believe me when I say that your possible danger never crossed my mind? I thought you would have been informed——”

Lord George cut him short, curtly, brutally. “So your Royal Highness says. If you had the smallest sense of fitness, or of what is due to me, sir, you would dismiss Colonel O’Sullivan for flat disobedience to your commands, *if he received orders to report to me of this change.*” He halted, but no comment came. “At the council, when I demanded the person responsible, he said nothing, and you shouldered the blame.” His scorn grew. “Of course, your Royal Highness was anxious to avoid an unpleasant parting interview with your mis——Miss Walkinshaw”——the angry flash of Charles’s eyes warned him in time, and he adroitly altered the obnoxious word——“so naturally, when Colonel O’Sullivan suggested leaving Stirling earlier, you were glad to agree. Lesser mortals, such as myself and those unfortunates killed in that devilish explosion, must give way before a Prince’s whims and convenience. No doubt you will confess everything to your priest, and get absolution. Such a Papist trick!”

Charles was deadly white. “If—if you think this, why did you not say it at the council?” He stood panting, hand to throat, a tortured thing at bay.

Under the stern, sad gaze which met his own, his head drooped. “Would your Royal Highness have had me shame you before your chiefs and officers?” Lord George asked quietly. “I cannot forget, sir, that you are my king’s son.”

“*Mon Dieu!* but I think that is just what you do forget!” flashed the Prince. It was an utter revelation, an intolerable horror, that his relations with the woman at Bannockburn were known, discussed, a tale that is told. He groped blindly for the flap of the tent.

Lord George began to play with some papers beside him. “If your Royal Highness has nothing further to say to me——” he hinted broadly.

“I think I have said sufficient.” The angry young voice quivered painfully. “I have come to you, my lord, and humbled myself, come to—to explain and

ask your pardon for what after all was an error, and no fault of mine. I *did* order O'Sullivan to tell you that arrangements were changed." He paused, catching his breath. "I have said more to you than I ever thought to say to any man living, and in return you have nothing for me but insults and incredulity."

The walls of the tent suddenly seemed to lurch inward. He put out his hands, clutched blindly at space, and crashed down in a dead faint. Lord George caught him, breaking the force of the fall, and before the black waters of unconsciousness closed over his head Charles caught a glimpse of the soul behind that stern mask and arrogant face and bearing. Anguished horror, naked fear, real love for the wilful, unhappy creature who irritated him past endurance every day, showed in George Murray's eyes as for a second he feared that the Prince was dead. Charles came round to find his head supported on Lord George's arm, a strong taste of brandy in his mouth, and the old, sarcastic smile curving his companion's lips. The Prince turned his face fretfully away.

"The next time that your Royal Highness proposes to swoon, I should be monstrous obliged to be informed beforehand." The tone was dry, but not unkind. "I could then escort you outside in good time, sir. There is really no room in here for such activities."

"It was not my fault. I never did such a thing before." He drank a mouthful more of the proffered brandy, and tried to struggle to his feet. Lord George put a folded plaid under his head. It was peevishly pushed away.

"Is your Royal Highness so angered with me that you will not even accept of my plaid?" The question betrayed deep hurt.

"It is not that. Why will you misinterpret everything I say and do?" The Prince thrust the bright folds further from him. "You will need it yourself." He huddled on the ground, sick and shaken, Lord George standing beside him, a few blades of grass dividing their bodies, a gulf wider than the space between Heaven and Hell separating their souls. "It is of no use, my lord," he said wearily. "We shall never pull together. Perhaps—perhaps things may be better if we are apart for a time." He crouched there, his face sunk in his hands. "Pray continue with your writing. I regret that I interrupted you."

"If your Royal Highness came unescorted, I should inform Sir Thomas Sheridan where you are." Lord George bit his lip reflectively. "Does he know?"

"No." Charles shook his head weakly. "I—I got out of a window."

The other turned away in despair. "Well, as your Royal Highness distrusts and suspects everything I say and do, you had better read what I write. I shall send one of my men straight to Fairnton, and when you feel recovered, sir, you

can return there, with a proper escort and myself in attendance.”

Charles battled feebly for freedom. “No. It is unnecessary. I can go, as I came, alone.”

“Your Royal Highness cannot.” Lord George made a gesture expressive of irritated resignation. “If my company en’t agreeable, you can walk on one side of the road, and I on the other.”

He wrote rapidly. The Prince watched the upright figure, (Lord George never lounged,) the stern profile, the air of decision and energy and strength which his lieutenant-general carried with him, and felt anew the hopelessness of striving to adjust their relations. No amount of explanations would wipe out the stain of Lord George’s imagined treachery from the Prince’s mind, or overcome the older man’s intolerance and scorn of the Prince’s youth. To both these obstacles had been added the miserable muddle and misunderstanding over the retreat from Stirling. Lord George held out the sheet he had just written. Charles read it, his lips twitching.

“SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that His Royal Highness is presently with me. He will return, suitably escorted, when our conversation is concluded. Your obedient, humble servant,

GEORGE MURRAY.”

It was late afternoon by the time they came out of the tent together. The day had been of that deceitful kind when February filches a few hours from spring, but the transient sun was fading from a thin, remote sky fast turning to grey, and a keen wind met their faces. The country lay in sodden stretches, ridged, sticky plough-fields, or great spaces of dun-coloured moor. The crying of a peewit rang harsh and complaining, and against the horizon wandered the outlines of bare woods.

Charles, physically exhausted, was thankful to take his companion’s arm. Lord George strode beside him in a stern silence, causing the unfortunate Prince to feel like a prisoner on the way to execution, a sensation which a solid phalanx of Athol men immediately in the rear did nothing to dispel. In desperation he asked: “I trust that you have good news from Tullibardine, my lord?”

Lord George looked surprised, but replied stiffly: “My lady and her infant are both in a very good way, I thank your Royal Highness.”

Charles inquired meekly: “Is it a boy or a girl? You—you did not tell me anything about the event.”

“I see no reason for inflicting my private concerns upon your Royal

Highness. It is a daughter, born towards the end of last month." The answer was frigid. "Had she been a son, the victor of Falkirk would have been entitled, but as it is a girl, we design to name her Katharine, after my mother."

The snubbed Charles persevered. "I appreciate the compliment, my lord. Are you not pleased with Mademoiselle?"

"No. I should have preferred a son." Lord George frowned.

"But you have sons, and it will be of interest educating and wedding her." The Prince spoke eagerly. "In seventeen years' time, you will be apprising me of Miss Katharine Murray's bridal, my lord, and then a fig for the son you wanted!"

In seventeen years' time, for fifteen of which poor little Katharine had been dust, Lord George, after a decade and a half of weary exile, lay beneath the paving of a church in Holland, and the Prince, soured, disappointed, obsessed with grievances and suspicions, was sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of degradation and failure. Looking at the pair now, it seemed incredible that such a fate should overtake either, but the weird of both was written thus.

Lord George smiled at the eager young face beside him, and made an effort to overcome his peevishness. "I will convey your Royal Highness's very kind consideration to my wife when next I write," he promised.

"Pray do." The Prince looked dubious, then wistful. "I trust she will not regard my inquiries as intrusive, although she is a Whig——"

"A Whig! My wife a Whig!" Lord George released his arm in an access of fury. "What fresh insult will your Royal Highness level at me next?" he raved.

"I—I thought she must be." The wretched Charles stammered miserable excuses for his maladroitness. "Your eldest son is, and—and there was no appearance of her ladyship that pleasant occasion when you entertained me at Tullibardine, so naturally I imagined she was opposed to me and my Cause."

"Considering my lady's situation, and the fact that your Royal Highness is young and unmarried, it was concerted between us as vastly more suitable that she should not be present when I had the honour of entertaining you, sir," thundered Lord George. He relapsed into a dreadful silence, which even Charles did not dare to break. It lasted until the gates of Fairnton were reached, from which there leisurely emerged the form of Sir Thomas Sheridan.

Charles leaned against him, and stared helplessly after Lord George. The latter, with no more ceremony or farewell than a stiff bow, was striding down the road. As the receding figure disappeared from sight amid a cloud of dust and Highlanders, the Prince incontinently burst into tears.

"Brute!" He sobbed hysterically. "Oh, thank God I am done with him for a

few weeks.” With the unerring genius for putting the other person in the wrong which distinguished him all his life, he turned in a fury to the unfortunate Sheridan. “It’s all your fault, Sherry,” he gasped. “Yes, it is. How dare you contradict me? If you had allowed me to get rid of Lord George at Carlisle when I wanted to, and when he offered, all this would never have happened. I hope he will be killed by the Hanoverians, or join the Duke of Cumberland, or—or anything, so long as he and I do not meet again!”

Carlisle—Derby—Bannockburn—links slender and unbreakable forged in the chain of fate binding these two, a chain snapped only at Culloden. Beware Drum Mossie Moor, that drear plain of destiny waiting in the windy and inscrutable north.

PART III

VAIN SHADOWS

“What, then, can justify the deliberate folly and madness of fighting under such circumstances? But our time was come. We were at variance within ourselves: Irish intriguers and French politics were too predominant in our councils.”—*Memoirs of Sir Robert Strange*.

CHAPTER XIII

“Let your hands meet
Round the weight of my head;
Lift ye my feet
As the feet of the dead;
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.

Unto each man his fate;
Unto each as he saith
In whose fingers the weight
Of the world is as breath;
Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had laid hold upon death.

Would God he had found me
Beneath fresh boughs!
Would God he had bound me
Unawares in mine house,
With light in my eyes, and songs in my lips, and a crown on my brows!”
Atalanta in Calydon.

THE long weeks crawled by. It was a terrible winter, black, bone-piercing cold day after day, much snow and sleet, or soaking, abundant rain which yet failed to quicken the laggard spring. At Culloden House, a square, bald outline in the flatness of wet, hindered country, wind crumpled the long reaches of Nairn water, and then went sighing over the spaces of bare land. The Prince's thoughts often stole insensibly to the woman at Bannockburn. Should he ever see her face again, that pale, inscrutable face, and the piercing black eyes? He did not ask himself whether he craved to. They had had their hour of madness together, and their spent passion, a burned-down thing, easier to let it die of inanition and waiting. He had vaster matters to contemplate than a woman's kisses. Here in the high north he must make his last stand. His hands clenched. Better to go out in one final, fiery defiance, leaving a name and a story to endure for the generations yet to come, than to slip away like a thief in the night, his reckless, chimerical scheme a byword and a failure, he himself branded as coward and turncoat. For one mad second he was tempted to regret his headlong flight from Stirling. A few hours might have made an end.

At Culloden House he looked his affairs squarely in the face. Lord Loudon had withdrawn the Government troops from Inverness, which fell to the Prince without the slightest opposition. He did not anticipate a long defiance from the small garrison remaining at the castle. And now there came to him at Culloden my Lord George Murray, that ruddy, determined gentleman, full of schemes and successes. Charles was languid, shackled by the beginnings of a chill caught the frosty night of his hurried flight, inadequately clad, from Moy Hall,

but Lord George glowed with health and vigour. He seemed no whit the worse of the appalling march from Aberdeen along snowy, well-nigh impassable roads. Part of his column had been detached and left to garrison Elgin and Nairn, with a view to separating Loudon and the Duke of Cumberland. Young Lord Ogilvy and his men had already come to Inverness. Their slackness in arriving had highly exasperated Lord George, receiving from His Royal Highness at Moy Hall peremptory summonses to hurry. He listened to the Prince's version of the Rout of Moy, took snuff, refrained heroically from commenting on the very unbecoming cold Charles had contracted, and finally observed modestly that it had all happened through his own absence. "Had I been present, sir, I should never have permitted your Royal Highness to go to Moy Hall with such a miserably inadequate retinue." He strode about the room, too engrossed in his own enthusiastic plans to notice the Prince's silence, the weary effort it cost him to pay attention. Fort Augustus and Fort William must be taken, he declared, Lord Loudon's forces scattered as completely as possible, the East coast as far as Aberdeen kept in the Jacobites' possession for the purpose of landing ships which brought supplies. Charles coughed, and nodded listlessly.

"I have concerted a scheme together with Lord Pitsligo, sir, for securing five thousand bolls of meal from the shires of Banff, Moray, and Nairn." He went into the details minutely. "I propose that most of this meal should be sent to the Highlands, so that if we are obliged to retreat there, in order to draw the Duke of Cumberland to the hills with his army, we may have subsistence."

The word retreat sent a cloud to Charles's brow. "I am of opinion that the meal should be brought to Inverness," he objected.

Lord George shrugged his shoulders. "As your Royal Highness pleases, but it will be a further carriage for most of it."

The long, cold days went on. There was a breathing-space, a hint of calm. At Aberdeen the enemy bided his time, husbanding men and strength. The Highland army, gaunt, determined, held Inverness. The Prince occupied himself between Culloden House, Castlehill, nearer the town, and the town itself. He was thin and fevered, still inflexibly determined to fight Cumberland sometime, somewhere. Those about him marked him withdrawn into himself, giving little of confidence or friendship to any, save Sheridan. At Inverness, that bleak man, John Murray of Broughton, fell ill, struggled on doggedly, resigned much of his work into the hands of Hay, and saw with bitterness his careful fortress of cards tottering. The cold grew and grew.

"Are you tired, child? You look so white." The speaker was Sir Thomas

Sheridan.

“Non, non.” The Prince spurred his horse faster.

He was riding through the long main street of Elgin on his way to Gordon Castle. They had come across miles of level country, with far-flung views over moor and hills, to the grey, dirty little burgh with its ruined cathedral. The sleety air cut the Prince's face. He shivered and pulled his cloak closer to his chin. He hated this sunless north, these small, ugly towns, the veiled hostility, the stupid, gaping faces. March had come in like a lion indeed, accompanied by great storms of blustering wind. It seemed to penetrate the Prince's thin young body, no longer boasting its former perfect health.

Sheridan, glancing at him a second later, wondered why he had thought him pale. He was flushed and erect, his eyes like stars. He chattered of the Duke of Gordon, reported to have left his castle to join Cumberland, of Lord Elcho and his troop which he had just seen at Forres, of old Lord Pitsligo, whom he had made governor of Elgin, of the fall of Fort Augustus, a success chiefly due to Brigadier Stapleton. “Are you cold, Sherry? I should not have requested you to come with me, but I so like to have you, and I dislike the attendance of anyone with whom I am obliged to make conversation. I suppose we shall lie at the castle? Hey for a good fire!”

He did not lie at the castle. Before they turned out of the mean streets of Elgin, he began to moan and clutch his side. Sheridan, terrified, got down from the saddle, and helped the Prince to dismount. He leaned heavily against the other's shoulder, drawing his breath in short, rasping jerks, like the harshness of a saw against wood. “Get me into an inn, anywhere,” he whispered. “Oh, this pain!”

There was an old house down a wynd, turreted, irregular, where once on a day Earls of Moray had drunk and dined and died. Into this his escort carried their Prince. He was past speech, past recognition of anyone but Sheridan, racked with pain and distress and apprehension. The people of the house were for him and his Cause. They laid their rambling accommodation, their willing service, at his feet. It was long before the days of skilled nursing or wise physicians. Drugs and bleeding were the staple remedies for every ailment. For hours he suffered and struggled, the cold twilight of the north sharp and green above the housetops, the old stairs echoing to the tramp of those hurriedly summoned, and obeying with dread. Men stood outside the room and talked in hushed voices. This evil had come so suddenly, taking them unawares, unprepared, sick for the future. Late in the evening the Prince woke from a stupor of exhaustion and weakness to demand his confessor. The still-faced MacDonald came and stood by the bedside, cold and priestly.

The Prince sent Sheridan from the room, and struggled up in bed. The other made no motion to aid him. The voice, sinking to husky, unintelligible whispers, ran on hoarsely. "I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my most grievous fault——"

Sheridan, shut out from the room and that broken, urgent pleading, wrung his hands. "It will kill him to talk. What can he have to confess? Will that priest never be done?"

The door opened, letting out a hoarse moaning. The priest emerged, his face inscrutable. "His Royal Highness asks for my Lord George Murray." The cold eyes sought the Duke of Athol amongst the stricken group. "It is desirable that he should be sent for without delay."

Sheridan went into the Prince's room. It was hot with a huge fire, and the window, tightly shut, made a green square in the shadows. The dark, printed bed-curtains were drawn back at one side, the musty folds clutched in a tortured hand. He lay high against pillows, each breath an agony, the brown eyes staring and piteous. Sheridan stooped over him, wiped the pain-sweat from brow and lips, lifted the burning body out of its helpless huddle. "What can I do for you, my darling? Let me do something."

"Lord George!" A stab of anguish divided the brief words.

"The Duke of Athol is sending for him. There!" A clatter of horse-hoofs shattered the quiet of the street. "Why do you want him, Carluccio? You cannot talk."

"I must see him. I have something to tell him." The words seemed wrung out like separate drops of blood. "MacDonald will not give me absolution unless I do, and—and I cannot die without it, Sherry. I should burn for ever ——"

"Oh, God forbid, my darling! There, there! Try to lie quiet. He may not be here yet a while. It is a ride of forty miles." He knelt, his arm under the tormented shoulders. "Do you want anyone else?"

The head moved feebly in a vague negative. Later, as the awful breathing grew worse, he relapsed afresh into semi-consciousness. Once he said something about dying. "I did not know it would be so lonely." A short time afterwards he gasped: "Poor Papa! He will never see his Carluccio again. Sherry"—the eyes turned blindly to that faithful watcher—"when—afterwards—go to Rome, and—and tell him——"

"What am I to tell His Majesty, my darling?" He leaned nearer.

"Tell him—I did do my best, but it has been so difficult." The words were

brief and anguished. "They are all so cold, so full of their own dignity and rights, and we cannot understand one another. They are jealous because I like the Irish, and why should I not? They are of my own religion, and pay more attention to what I say——"

"Carluccio, never mind these things now. Try to lie quiet."

"I cannot breathe." He lay gasping, choked, rambling sentences about the cold—the cold, pitiful repetitions of names, sometimes uttered with anger, sometimes in an anguish of imploring appeal, coming from his lips, to which Sheridan listened, tortured, until sheer exhaustion stopped the spent voice. Towards dawn he grew very low. Bouts of consciousness, of suffering, alternated with long periods of wandering or stupor. He knew the Duke of Perth, when the latter knelt beside him and repeated some of the prayers which the Roman Church concedes to the dying. He was very weak, breathing badly, but the staring eyes looked more tranquil. As he rose to leave, the Duke whispered to Sheridan that if Lord George Murray did not come shortly the priest should be summoned instead.

Lord Pitsligo ventured in as the Duke slipped out. Charles recognised him, and smiled pitifully. Pitsligo kissed the clenched hand, kneeling by the bed with the stiffness of old age. "Is there anything that I can do for your Royal Highness?" he asked tenderly.

"You can—pray for me." The words were barely audible. "We are not of the same faith, but——"

The old man bowed his head. "We worship the same God, sir, and we have the same hope of salvation." He pressed the nerveless fingers to the cross at the end of the rosary which lay fallen from them. "Try to put away the outward symbols, anything that comes between the soul and God, and leave yourself in His hands. His mercy endureth for ever."

"I cannot die." The Prince tossed and moaned. "I am afraid to die with this sin unconfessed."

It was horrible to contemplate the wreck which a few hours had made of one so beautiful, so much beloved. The hands, clenched in agony, shared the change and distortion of the face. Shorn of the cumbrous mass of false hair that he wore in the daytime, the head seemed strangely small. In some aspects he was indescribably aged, in other ways he appeared a child, broken and bewildered. The time went on. Hours . . . hours . . . hours. Sometimes it was bright, sometimes dark, sometimes candle-light. Faces came to him out of the mist that was like drowning water on all sides. Voices reached him vaguely from a great way off. He felt tears and men's lips upon his hand. The lids, sunken at last over the appeal of the eyes, did not lift when a horse dashed

down the wynd and stopped.

"Thank God you are in time!" The Duke of Athol almost leaped the steep, crooked stairs to meet the wind-blown, snow-sprinkled figure dismounting stiffly from the saddle. Outside, the quiet street was intensely cold, every line and angle of the old house outlined in sharp black against a green, wicked-looking sky.

"I was not in. I found the message on my return." Lord George curtly divested himself of his soaked cloak. "See to my horse, I beg, and I will wait upon His Royal Highness." He strode into the hall. "How is he?"

"Dying." The dread word fell away among the shadows.

Lord George stood aghast. "Dying! Impossible! I saw him yesterday. What ails him?"

"A bad fever of cold. It has reached the lungs." They were ascending the stairs side by side, and the Duke laid a hand upon his brother's arm. "Be as gentle with him as you can," he pleaded. "Try to do as he asks, whatever it may be. I know things have not always been as they might between you——"

"He has defied and thwarted me, and put me out of patience every day, and now he coolly chooses to die, leaving everyone else to straighten out the utter confusion he has plunged his affairs into." Lord George turned a scowling face upon his companion. "I suppose he has those Irish round him, keening and bawling, and a pack of priests praying?"

"Only Mr. MacDonald and Sir Thomas Sheridan. You can hardly turn *him* out." He opened a door noiselessly. "Oh, that breathing! He must be in torment."

They went into the room, hushed, save for the rattling respirations, the little noise of the fire. The Duke stooped over the ghastly face on the pillows. "Your Royal Highness sent for my brother. He is here now, sir." He moved aside, beckoning Lord George forward in response to a faint movement that spelt understanding and permission.

The bed was a large four-poster which seemed to block up the whole room, a dark thing in the vague, fire-crossed darkness. Beneath the shadow cast by the great top of carved wood, Lord George made out the motionless, huddled outlines of the Prince's body, and the small, dank head. He lay beaten and silenced, a travesty, a mocking parody, a piteous ghost of the gay, gallant Charles who had won Scotland's heart. Lord George thought of him marching erect and graceful at the head of his clans, sitting eager and argumentative over the council-table, a brilliant figure entering the dark gallery of Holyrood, or riding in wind and mist along cheering lines of men alust to fight for him. He knelt and kissed the still hand. The eyelids drew back with a pitiful effort, and

the eyes beneath focussed their clouded stare on that stern face.

“Eh——”—the faint, breathy whisper in place of the Prince’s high, ringing tones shocked Lord George more than Charles’s changed appearance—“I wanted to see you, my lord. Could you—come nearer? You seem—so blurred.”

The other leaned forward, looking steadfastly into the altered face. “I am here, sir. Close beside your Royal Highness. What is it?”

Charles lay panting. “There is so much to say, to arrange, and no time.” He motioned towards a small leather case lying beside him. “Jewels,” he moaned. “Take them, and—and sell them, to pay the men. I have so little money . . . my poor Highlanders . . .”

“I will do so, if your Royal Highness wishes, but I beg of you not to concern your mind with such things now.” Was this why the Prince had brought him through the snow, to pawn glittering trinkets in order to pay his ragged army? Of what avail such tardy realisation of how much he owed, and not money alone?

“I made Morison fetch them. MacDonald was so angry. He said I must not think of worldly matters now, that I ought to think of my soul.” The attenuated voice stopped.

He groped piteously for his beads. Lord George put them into his hand, and beckoned the Duke of Perth over. As he drew back, he told himself disgustedly that he had always known that the Prince was a Roman Catholic, but had never realised the disquieting fact so plainly until now. Many a time he had met the priest coming from Charles’s room, and recently had learned about the Mass privately celebrated at Christmas for His Royal Highness and his Papist friends; but the rosary, the outward and visible sign of his adherence to the Church of Rome, set every one of Lord George Murray’s Presbyterian teeth on edge.

He stood frowning down into the fire, his thoughts tossed and bitter. The Prince’s death would be a catastrophe, but one that must only hasten the inevitable end. They might muster here, and either grimly gather for a last battle, or seek refuge in scattering amongst the mountains, but with each alternative ruin stared them in the face. And he, the young leader of the mad, glorious enterprise, what an ending to his glowing hopes! To die in this obscure little Scots town, surrounded by pitying, semi-estranged faces, hostile religions, the secretive comfort lent by the symbols of his half-concealed faith, a faith unashamedly proclaimed at last, the high flame of ardour, strength, and ambition blown out like a candle snuffed in the pinch of Death’s bony fingers. Lord George turned, as the Duke of Perth approached him.

"His Royal Highness wishes everyone in the room to leave him, except you, my lord." He added, in answer to the raised brows of the other: "He has something especially private to communicate."

Lord George puzzled irritably what this might be. He stood again by the bed, gazing down at the sharpened triangle of the Prince's face, framed in the tangled locks scattered over the tossed pillows. Kneeling, he could make out the murmurs of the bitten lips—weak words, dictated by the failing mind and stupefied brain. Bannockburn . . . Bannockburn. . . . The syllables were repeated piteously. He bent his head in token of understanding.

"I did give O'Sullivan orders to tell you." Ill though he was, Charles shrank from the stern gaze and frigid mouth. "I did call after him, as you said—that day in the tent"—he paused, exhausted—"but I wanted to leave Stirling sooner, and—and I hoped he might not tell you, because—because I——"

With a savage effort Lord George forced himself to take possession of the Prince's groping hands. "Why does your Royal Highness tell me this?" he demanded.

"I do not know." Charles whimpered a little. "MacDonald said I must. No, do not take your hands away. I was angry, and I hoped—to annoy you, by changing the hour, but—I meant you no harm."

His head, lifted in imploring appeal, fell back. The short, shallow, painful breathing lifted the chest under the silk nightgown. Lord George spoke sharply, his eyes alight with a spark of anger.

"Your Royal Highness wanted to leave Stirling earlier, and hoped by altering the hour to annoy me. I understand. Is this all?"

"No." A gasp for breath, followed by a spate of words. "I could not see her again—Miss Walkinshaw. I—she—we had—that last night——"

Lord George rose. "That has nothing to do with me, sir. Your Royal Highness should keep such things for your confessor. I knew your motive. I risked your anger by telling you of it plainly, but I cannot comprehend why you send for me to go over the whole thing again." He paused, and added unwillingly: "I accept your word that you did tell Colonel O'Sullivan to acquaint me, and that he deliberately refrained from doing so."

"I want you to forgive me." Appeal and look were piteous. "I cannot die without absolution, and I shall not receive it unless I confess everything. Say you forgive me," he panted.

"I have nothing to forgive, sir."

"You have. Oh, *mon Dieu*, only say it!"

The other knelt again, and put his lips to the clammy hand. "If it will ease

your Royal Highness's mind, make you any happier, I do say it." He saw the shadow of peace steal across the drawn features. "Now, let us have no more nonsense about dying, and I should like to send that priest about his business!"

He left the Prince alone with his confessor, returning an hour later to a scene reeking of incense and Papist prayers. The room felt icy cold, for they had opened the window widely to let the passing soul go out in peace. Lord George shut it angrily, and turned to the bed. The Prince lay half on his pillows, partly in Sheridan's arms. The white face, its youth and grace blotted out ruthlessly by suffering and exhaustion, yet wore a strange look of calm, as if from the lifting of some great burden. He took the helpless body out of Sheridan's hold into his own. With a weary sigh, Charles settled down into a more natural attitude of rest.

Lord George saw the savage jealousy in the Irishman's face. His own softened. "He does not know me. It is only because my arms are stronger than yours, and doubtless he feels more comfortable. Will you not go to bed, and rest? His Royal Highness will need you more than anyone——"

"Indeed, I will not, and leave the poor child to your tender mercies. God knows you just hate him, and——"

"Sir Thomas, that is neither true nor just."

They looked at one another, then at the object of their solicitude and grievance. The Prince's head lolled back helplessly, the tawny confusion of his hair hanging down over Lord George's shoulder. He made no effort to free himself, showed no consciousness of whose was the arm of steel supporting him. "I want to sleep," he murmured feebly.

Lord George flushed deeply. He was nearer to loving the Prince than he had ever been before, when Charles lay there helplessly, as trustful and dependent as a child. For hours he knelt by him, supporting his whole weight, heedless of cold or cramp. The physicians had bled him, and though the fever had been subdued, the resultant weakness was terrible. Motionless, stupefied, he displayed no interest, seemingly only half conscious of what went on. As soon as he slept Lord George surrendered his post to Sheridan, who jealously declined help from anyone save the Master of Lovat. The boy had slipped into the ways of a sick-room with surprising facility and ease. The Prince knew him, and seemed to like to have him. He was endlessly patient, tactful and unobtrusive, as gentle as a woman in his care, but he was also surprisingly firm, administering stupes, blisters, medicine, or nourishment with a calm determination against which Charles's weakness was powerless. Lord Elcho had once described the Prince as having "a prodigious strong constitution,"

and it stood him in good stead now, against the horrors of bleeding, blistering, drenching with raw whisky, and the ignorance and discomfort surrounding any illness in 1746.

“You are cruel, child.” He gasped the reproach, tears standing in his eyes, as a reeking poultice was clapped to his chest, and mercilessly held in position. “I want Sheridan,” he moaned.

“Sir Thomas has gone to bed, and your Royal Highness only wants him to tell him what a brute I am. That can wait till the morning.” The boy took the hands that were striving feebly to tear away the burning breastplate. “No, no, it must be left for a little. You see you are breathing more easily already.” He held the panting creature in his arms. “There! There! Try to bear it. It hurts me more to have to hurt you.”

The Prince asked dully: “Where am I?”

“In bed, sir.” The boy smiled down at him.

“I know, but where? This is not my room at Culloden House.” The sunken eyes roved over the strange furniture, the unfamiliar hangings, then widened in fear. “Am I—a prisoner?”

Young Fraser laughed softly. “Oh, Heaven forbid, sir. Your Royal Highness is at Elgin. You were unwell on the way to Gordon Castle, so that it seemed wiser to remain in the town for a few days.”

Charles shook his head helplessly. “I do not remember.”

“There is no need to. Your Royal Highness is with your friends, and you must not worry.” He fetched a basin of milk warming by the fire, and fed the helpless creature spoonful by spoonful, until the head on his arm turned weakly aside. The boy waited, and when it came back again, continued his task, finally setting down an empty bowl. “Now, I want your Royal Highness to try to sleep.”

“Sheridan?” The eyelids fell obediently.

“In bed. He was so fatigued after never leaving your Royal Highness for two days and nights that the Duke of Athol persuaded him to go, as soon as you were pronounced out of danger.” He smiled at the Prince’s look of surprise. “Oh, yes, the Duke is here, and Lord George, and the Duke of Perth, and plenty of people. Quite a court. And now, no more talking.”

Lord George went back to Inverness after a brief interview with the Prince. Sir Thomas Sheridan came to the door in answer to his knock. “Oh, you wish His Royal Highness’s permission before returning to your quarters, my lord. Well, come in and ask for it, but be very gentle with him, poor child. He is as

frail as an egg-shell, and should not talk.”

Lord George reflected that the egg-shell simile was not inapt as he followed Sheridan across a room dark save for the firelight, and one shaded candle. The Prince lay motionless, supine, sunk in the enveloping weakness that wrapped him round like the folds of a rain-soaked plaid. His breathing was still difficult and hindered, but, compared with what it had been, sounded almost normal. The Master of Lovat, on the far side of the bed, had one hand. The other hung down helplessly over the bed’s edge, with no strength to move of its own accord. As Lord George lifted it to kiss, he felt the fingers close feebly round his. The Prince’s eyes held recognition, question, appeal, all that the lips strove to utter—uselessly. Lord George held the inert hand, and spoke with wonderful gentleness.

“I am away to Inverness to-night, sir, with your Royal Highness’s leave. My brother will send an express in the morning, to bring me intelligence of your progress, and I shall hope for good news.” He paused, and added: “If your Royal Highness has any commands for me, please convey them by the same messenger.”

The lips moved soundlessly. The Master of Lovat stooped to them, listened, looked across the bed. “His Royal Highness says that you are just to act as you incline best, my lord,” he said. “He trusts everything to you.”

Lord George flushed, and remarked stiffly that he was honoured. Again came that unuttered speech which the boy seemed able to interpret. “The Prince wants you to kiss him and say good-night, my lord.”

Lord George bent awkwardly and put his lips to the forehead, damp under the bright hair. It had been brushed and tied back, accentuating by its brilliance the colourless face, but on either side it lay limp and smooth, the straight hair of the very sick, robbed of vitality and insurgence. The lips moved again. Stooping his ear to them, Lord George made out the faint words: “Take care of yourself.”

“Yes, of course.” He rose, blinking back an unusual moisture from his eyes. “Now, your Royal Highness has not to worry,” he remarked masterfully. “I shall return in a few days, I trust with good news for you.” He replaced the limp hand on the bed. “Good-night, child.” He nodded over at young Fraser. “Good-night, Sir Thomas.”

The door shut behind him. Tears gathered slowly in the Prince’s eyes. Young Fraser took a handkerchief and dried them very gently. Sheridan came over to the bed, and stood smiling quizzically at his charge.

“Now, you can go to sleep in peace, Carluccio. You are rid of Lord George for the next few days.” He added distractedly: “Well, well, if you en’t the

queerest child! Shedding tears for him, when you are never done lamenting how much he thwarts you, and how you dislike him.”

The Master of Lovat slipped to his knees, and gathered up the beautiful, tired head. He felt a quick, passionate surge of love and loyalty through his being as the Prince turned feebly, laying his closed eyes against the boy’s breast. The other held him to him, stroking back the soft, bright hair, calling the Prince endearing Gaelic names. “There! there! you must not fret, M’eudail. No, no, Mo chridhe.” The pleasant voice soothed him, and he slept, the long eyelashes wet against his cheek.

CHAPTER XIV

“I have mark’d among the Nobility, some are so addicted to the service of the Prince, and Commonwealth, as they looke not for spoyle; such are to be honour’d and lov’d. There are others, which no obligation will fasten on, and they are of two sorts. The first are such as love their own ease: or, out of vice, of nature, or self-direction, avoide business and care. Yet, these the Prince may use with safety. The other remove themselves upon craft, and designe (as the Architects say) with a premeditated thought to their owne, rather than their Prince’s profit. Such let the Prince take heed of, and not doubt to reckon in the list of his open enemies. . . . But above all, the Prince is to remember, that when the great day of account comes, which neither Magistrate, nor Prince can shunne, there will be requir’d of him a reckoning for those whom hee hath trusted, as for himselfe, which hee must provide.”

—BEN JONSON: *Discoveries*.

CHARLES was a living illustration of the old adage concerning His Satanic Majesty, the monastic habit, and the sick-room. Within four days of his dangerous illness, his dissolution, his death-bed tremors and confessions, behold His Royal Highness sitting up in his four-poster, pillows at his spine, making a remarkable recovery, an ample dinner, and a striking appearance. Morison had dressed and powdered his dishevelled hair. He wore a startling garment of silk and lace, cousin-german to a bed-gown, which had obviously begun life across the Channel. There being nobody in attendance but my Lord Elcho, sprawling on the end of the Prince’s bed, Charles was eating fish in his fingers, and making up for his enforced abstinence from conversation by a now uninterrupted flow of talk. Lord Elcho, rejoicing in the necessity for only replying at intervals, “Indeed, sir?” “I have no doubt but that your Royal Highness was perfectly right,” and similar helpful and unexciting comments, surveyed him from under half-closed lids. How foreign the Prince looked, how comfortable and greedy and self-satisfied! Elcho had ridden in the eight miles from Forres to inquire for the royal progress, and had been bidden to amuse the invalid by partnering him at cards. Dinner had succeeded play, and Elcho, desperately bored, prayed for an opportunity to escape. Their relations were outwardly neutral and indifferent. Charles knew nothing of Elcho’s feeling for Clementina Walkinshaw, and occasionally wondered rather blankly why his aide-de-camp so plainly disliked him. When he was stronger he must make an effort to regain Elcho’s allegiance.

“And so I went straight to the King”—Charles’s utterance was somewhat impeded by fish—“and I said: ‘Really, Papa, at my age your Majesty might have a little more confidence in my judgment and discretion.’ (I wish God had made fish without bones!) And His Majesty replied: ‘Yes, dearest Carluccio, but you know you are monstrous impetuous, and it sounded so exactly like

you, dear child, that I——’ Oh, damn! There’s a knock at the door. Go and see who it is, Elcho.”

Lord Elcho skipped nimbly across the floor. “Is your Royal Highness receiving?”

Charles, masticating a large mouthful of fish, shook his head violently. Apparently Lord Elcho misinterpreted the gesture, for after putting his face out at the door, and holding a whispered colloquy with someone on the far side, he threw it open to its widest extent, announcing: “My Lord George Murray to wait upon your Royal Highness.”

“Oo-h-er!” spluttered the Prince Regent.

He crammed the remains of the fish into his mouth, hurriedly removed some bones, licked his fingers, and gave them a hasty polish in the sheet. None of these manœuvres were lost upon Lord George, advancing with raised eyebrows. Displaying remarkable aplomb, Charles extended his hand to the visitor. Lord George kissed the extreme tips of the royal fingers, and over his bent head the Prince hurled a homicidal look at Elcho. “When—when did you arrive, my lord?” he stammered.

“This moment. I came at once to pay my respects and inquire how your Royal Highness found yourself.” Lord George surveyed the flushed young face. “You look better, sir.”

“I am very glad to see you.” Charles gazed round wildly. “Sit down, if you can find a chair. Elcho!” His tone grew sharp and annoyed. “Take this abominable tray away, and get me some water for my hands.”

“I fear that I am interrupting your Royal Highness’s dinner.” Lord George contemplated the meal with frowning brows. “Fish? How vastly unnourishing! Now, if you would eat some good broth, sir, and a piece of boiled meat, or a roasted hen, together with a couple of glasses of wine, it would build up your strength.”

Charles looked shudderingly undecided whether to swoon or to be sick. “It is Friday.” He uttered the brief explanation with offended dignity.

“What has that to say to it, sir? Oh!” Lord George scowled as recollection dug him in the ribs. “But surely Mr. MacDonald would dispense your Royal Highness for once, after your severe illness?” he suggested stiffly.

“I have not requested him to.” The tone was cold. “Elcho!” He looked over at his aide-de-camp, still lounging by the door.

“Lord Elcho!” Lord George’s voice sounded very stern. “His Royal Highness addressed you—twice.”

“I know. I heard.” The answer was the perfection of insolence. “I have

rung for Morison.”

“His Royal Highness did not require anything of the kind. He told *you* to do what he wished.” Lord George was sitting erect, bristling with indignation. “Take that tray away directly.”

Elcho, muttering audibly that he was not bound to obey the orders of Lord George Murray, no matter what His Royal Highness might be obliged to do, advanced leisurely to the bed. Charles turned his shoulder upon him.

“Leave it,” he said haughtily. He spoke as though he addressed a servant. “You can go, Elcho.”

Lord Elcho went, slamming the door behind him. The room vibrated, and Charles clapped fishy hands to his head, trembling. Lord George rose.

“I never witnessed a worse exhibition of insolence, ill-breeding, temper, and gross disrespect. Surely your Royal Highness is not going to permit such behaviour from your aide-de-camp?” He went to the door. “Allow me to bring Lord Elcho back to make his apologies, sir.”

“No, leave him.” Charles smiled slightly. “ ’Twill annoy him vastly more if I ignore him entirely.”

Lord George returned to his seat, wearing a grim smile of approval. “If your Royal Highness would always act with this discretion and commonsense ——” he remarked.

“Oh, discretion!” said Charles Edward.

He was leaning back wearily against his pillows. The flush had faded, leaving him looking ill and worn. The cheek-bones were sharpened, the shadows under the eyes marked and painful. Lord George noticed with a pang that of late the habitually bright, eager expression had given place to one of continual anxiety. He put the tray aside himself, rang the bell, and sharply hurried up the rest of the hybrid meal the Prince had ordered. Charles was silent and listless.

“You are good to me, my lord.” He put out a hot, trembling hand. “Oh, I am wrong to complain, and my confessor tells me that instead of rebelling, I should look upon this sickness as sent from God, but—but it is terrible to lie here, useless, and to face the future. I see so little hope ahead.”

Lord George had seen little all along, but his was a fighting spirit. “Your Royal Highness is weak after your illness, and everything seems doubtful. You must not lose hope—and faith.” He sat silent for a moment. “What I chiefly came about to-day, was to request your leave, sir, to make a raid into Athol and endeavour to re-take Blair Castle. It would be of advantage to us, and I dislike intensely to think of a Hanoverian garrison there.”

“So do I. I was very happy at Blair.” The bright head drooped. “Of course venture it, my lord, only—only, must you destroy the castle in taking it? Athol _____”

“My brother is agreed with me on this point, sir. There can be no sentiment in war.” His lips shut firmly. “But I beg that your Royal Highness will not distress yourself,” he added gently.

Charles’s face quivered, and he looked away. A second later he had yielded to the comfort of a strong arm, and lay sobbing against Lord George’s shoulder. “Oh, you must forgive me, my lord. It is this wretched weakness, and I feel so forsaken, so alone. And Elcho——Oh, people do not mean to be unkind, but I have failed so utterly, and they visit it upon me, blame me——”

Lord George let him weep out his heart, his wrongs and bewilderment and disappointments. “Some are kind—Perth, and Lord Pitsligo, and your brother, but I know what I have brought upon them. Their eyes accuse me.” He raised his head feebly. “And I have lost Murray now. Did I not tell you? This came to-day.” He plucked a letter from under his pillow, and began to read it aloud. “‘May it please your Royal Highness——’ It does not please my Royal Highness at all. I am vastly *displeased*.” He smiled wanly. “There! you had better read it for yourself, my lord. My voice is tired.”

The prim, respectful epistle begged that the office of secretary might be given to another. Mr. Murray deeply regretted that his health would no longer permit him to continue his arduous labours. The Prince and Lord George looked ruefully at each other. For all his dislike of the man, Lord George had ever been the first to acknowledge that Murray had performed his difficult duties to admiration. At such a juncture it would be exceedingly hard to replace him.

“Can your Royal Highness suggest any suitable successor?” Lord George frowned. “I know that Sir Thomas Sheridan has acted as secretary for much of your private correspondence, but Mr. Murray had charge of the commissariat, and that is vastly important.”

Charles wearily put forward Hay of Restalrig. “He is willing to undertake all Murray’s duties, and has done most of his work during Murray’s illness and mine.”

If Charles had not mentioned Hay, and proposed his appointment, Lord George would probably have done so. But his autocratic temper was ruffled by the obvious way in which Charles asked his opinion as a mere form, when the thing was practically settled. “I have no means of knowing whether Mr. Hay is competent to carry out such important work,” he said stiffly. “Has your Royal Highness considered anyone else? There is your other secretary, Mr. Lumisden

—”

“I prefer Hay.” The icy tone dismissed alternatives. “He and Gibb have managed my household accounts since my dear Strickland’s death.”

“Of course the choice rests with your Royal Highness.”

“Naturally.” Charles spoke haughtily.

They remained in a rather awkward silence, each wondering why the other always managed to irritate him. A timid scratch at the door came as welcome diversion. “Come in, child,” the Prince called. He added to Lord George: “It is young Fraser. I would know his knock in Poland.”

The Master of Lovat, carrying another tray, appeared on the threshold. “I met Morison with your Royal Highness’s pudding, so I asked if I might have the honour of bringing it up instead.” He flushed in dismay. “Oh, your pardon, sir. I did not know that my Lord George Murray was here.”

“Well, he en’t going to eat you,” Charles observed coolly. He gave the boy one of his old, brilliant smiles. “Put it on the bed, and come and sit beside me. I’ll turn you into a pillow whilst I eat. Have you dined, my lord?”

“I shall dine at Inverness on my return, sir. There is no hurry——” The polite sentence was cut short by a peal at the bell. A scared servant answered it in record time.

“I want dinner immediately for Lord George Murray.” Charles leant back, pecking at what subsequently figured in his household book as “To an orange Pudine: 5s.” “A proper dinner, mind, not my stuff. I ordered tartlets, and they send up this. Bring me some shortbread and custard,” he directed.

Lord George smiled rather grimly. The Master of Lovat, perched on the bed, the Prince’s weight against him, held the tray steady and moved plates with the dexterity of a juggler. Charles had recovered his spirits and was talking, his voice rather hoarse, but his flow of conversation unchecked.

“You have not admired my beautiful bed-gown, my lord.” The said garment, in Lord George’s opinion, displayed an indecent amount of the royal neck and arms. “Nor my hair. Oh, *ciel!* I thought Morison would never get the tangles out.”

“I consider that silk absurdity monstrous unsuitable in your Royal Highness’s situation—not a scrap of warmth.” Lord George produced a cairngorm brooch from his own attire, and pinned the soft folds firmly across Charles’s white chest. “And I prefer your Royal Highness’s hair unpowdered and in a queue.”

Charles made a face. “Have some pudding, someone? I have tasted worse.” He continued to eat and talk. “I must look fit to be seen, now that I am

receiving again. Yesterday I had the Dowager Lady Mackintosh and Colonel Ann, so just imagine if I had not been suitably arrayed!"

"Young Lady Mackintosh would not have noticed. She spent the whole time with her head out of the window, calculating the distance from the ground, and whether anyone could get in from the street, and insisting that there should be a sentry beneath." The Master of Lovat grew voluble in his indignation. "The Dowager kept saying: 'Ann, His Royal Highness addressed you,' or: 'My dear Lady Mackintosh, you are displaying your—er—ankles,' but she took no notice. And when she was taking her leave, the Prince offered his cheek most graciously, and from the way she kissed it, it might have been the Duke of Cumberland's. I do not wonder that her husband is with the Government."

"Sit still, you young spitfire, or you will upset everything." Charles turned to tug the boy's hair. "Oh, here comes my custard, and your dinner is served, my lord." He dismissed Lord George with peremptory graciousness. "Pray, come up again when you are finished."

As the door shut behind Lord George, the Prince flung himself back on his pillows with a thump and a sigh. Dislodged, young Fraser slid to his feet, and glanced lovingly at him. He noted Charles's flushed face and general air of weary abandonment, the untidy bed and disordered room. "May I try if I could make your Royal Highness more comfortable?" he suggested shyly. "I fear Lord George has tired you."

"Everything tires me at present." Charles was suddenly listless, all his vivacity dead. "Oh, he was quite kind and pleasant until we quarrelled over Hay's appointment, child. I—I made a fool of myself a little while ago, and he showed very gentle to me." He fell into a muse. "I remember one night at Holyrood I had toothache, and he insisted that I should go to bed, and himself brought me laudanum. And you know how delicate of constitution Perth is. Often for supper he dares not take anything except boiled milk. Well, when we were on the march, I have seen Lord George go down to the kitchen of the inn or house where Perth was quartered, and prepare the milk himself. Perth never knew, and it is not as if they liked one another." He lay silent for a few minutes. "You may bring me some water for my hands, child," he said abruptly. "I asked Elcho to, and he replied in effect that he was my aide-de-camp, not my valet."

"How abominable!" breathed the Master of Lovat.

He fetched water, washed and dried the long fingers, then deftly dismantled the elaborate structure of hair. As he brushed out the powder, Charles lay with shut eyes, enjoying the long, rhythmical strokes. Young

Fraser talked softly.

"It is beautiful hair your Royal Highness has. So long and thick, and quite golden at the ends." He was busy making them curl round his fingers. "What a crime for you to powder it, sir, or wear a wig!"

"The mode, child." Charles lifted heavy eyelids. "One has to be in the mode."

"If I were Prince of Wales I should set a mode of my own," said the boy quaintly. "There! I will just tie it loosely. Has your Royal Highness a ribbon?"

"It's probably down my back. Lord! how it aches!" Charles arched it helpfully. "Got it? *Bon!* I wish you would give Morison a hint to be more gentle in dressing my unfortunate head. As I said to him this morning: 'For Heaven's sake, remember it is worth thirty thousand pounds, and if it is to be cut off on Tower Hill, pray leave me enough hair for the executioner to hold it up by!'" He turned round, hearing a stifled sob. "My dear child, I was only jesting. Come here. Tears? I can't allow that."

"The Elector would never be so wicked." The boy's slender hands clenched.

"Would he not? And my sweet cousin Cumberland? I am under no delusions about either." Charles's mouth was grim. "But I would never, never let it come to that whilst I have my right arm and—this."

"This" was a sharp, wicked-looking dirk, which he suddenly produced. The boy nodded in understanding, and cleverly put the dangerous implement out of the Prince's reach. As he shook up Charles's pillows, the action dislodged the royal rosary and a miniature of Clementina Walkinshaw. The Master of Lovat fortunately was as innocent as a child. He had never seen the lady, and the rumours about her and the Prince went in at one ear and out at the other. He restored the articles, remarking placidly: "I suppose that is her late Majesty Queen Clementine, sir?"

"Oh, Lord, no!" Charles coloured guiltily. "That's—Well, never mind. There is a miniature of Mamma in my jewel-case which I will show you. Bring it over, and we can look at the things together. I gave them to Lord George to sell when I thought I was going to die, but he evidently imagined I did not intend him to, for Sheridan put them back next day."

The trinkets glittered and glanced in the green March twilight. Charles turned them over carelessly, recalling the history of each. "Papa gave me that upon my coming-of-age. That ring belonged to Charles the Second when Prince of Wales. Isn't this a hideous thing? But the stones should be worth something." Suddenly he swept the whole shining mass in the boy's direction. "Here! choose a bauble for yourself, child. You have been mighty attentive in

this illness of mine, and I should like to mark my gratitude.”

“I do not want gratitude, sir.” The boy flushed and looked uncomfortable. “It is quite enough to see your Royal Highness growing strong again, and—and I am greatly privileged to be permitted to tend you.”

“Nonsense!” Charles was brilliant-cheeked and imperious. “I want you to have some trifle of mine to show your grandchildren.” He laughed huskily. “Then, when they ask where it came from, you can tell them: ‘Oh, it was the gift of Prince Charles. I nursed him through a fever, and a fine cross-patch he was, too.’ Eh?” He pinched the boy’s cheek.

“If anyone else said that, your Royal Highness would be vastly angry, and it is not true.” Young Fraser spoke calmly. He chose a ring, of no great intrinsic value, but which fitted his slim finger better than any other. “If your Royal Highness is graciously pleased to give me something, may I take this? but—but I shall say to my grandchildren”—he coloured vividly—“ ‘Your King and mine put that on my hand in return for my poor services, and he was the sweetest Prince in all history.’ ” He kissed the ring and then the hand that bestowed it. “I would ask no other than for my children to serve your Royal Highness, and better than I have done,” he said soberly.

Charles lay with hidden face. “God grant it, child, but I fear—I fear——” The empty, splendourless future brushed him with a black wing of dread. He shivered suddenly. “Oh, I promised to show you Mamma’s picture. That is it in the small case.”

The Master of Lovat looked long, and then studied the head on the pillows. “Your Royal Highness is very like,” he murmured.

“Yes. The brow and the upper part of the face. I am like her in disposition too.” Charles spoke with listless agreement. “She gave me her high temper, and her boundless ambition, but they were killed when she linked her fate with a Stuart, and the Stuart ill-luck crushed her, as it may crush me too.” He sat up in bed. “What chance have I?” he cried stormily. “There is a curse upon our House, in our blood, and how shall I escape it? She was patient and resigned long before she died, but I have none of her piety, nor the King’s faith.” He lay back again, brooding, exhausted.

The boy, wrung with pity for him, ventured a timid: “Your Royal Highness’s faith——”

“No, child.” Charles spoke with a sombre face. “Elcho uttered truth when he said that it was still to seek. Oh!”—he made a gesture of impatience—“I know that I conform outwardly to the rules of the Church I was brought up in. I say my prayers, and confess, and hear Mass, but it is all the shackles of habit and convention, and because I fear to do otherwise. I dare not offend the Pope

or the King of France, and I dare not win the Scots and English by attending their services. I am a poor thing, child.”

The return of Lord George, to make his farewells, ended a rather painful silence. The Prince sat up in bed, and began to talk nonsense. “I hope my hair is to your liking now, my lord? And observe that I have exchanged my silk and lace for a plaid. All the same, I design to keep your brooch. It has a mighty strong pin.” He played with the scattered jewellery. “Why did your lordship give these back to me?”

“Because your Royal Highness obviously did not know what you were saying at the time.” Lord George admired some fine diamonds. “And many of them I incline to think are heirlooms, sir, and should not be disposed of.”

“You might say that of the Sobieski rubies, and I sold them abroad.” Charles sighed a little. “I was worth looking at in those,” he remarked complacently. “Now, Lord George, I beg of you not to tell me that rubies would disagree with my hair. They do not. *Allons!* What other nonsense did I talk when I was not myself?” he rattled on.

“Very much what your Royal Highness says when you are perfectly ordered in your intellects.” Lord George smiled grimly. “You do not want tongue, sir.”

“How blighting!” sighed the Prince. “But I must talk, or life is unendurable.” He cocked his head to one side. “For all that you are so stern, my lord, and disapprove of me and my vanities, who was it that came the length from Inverness in a snowstorm, and knelt for hours on a hard floor, supporting my eleven stone in his arms? *Dites!*”

Lord George shook his head, and declared that Sir Thomas Sheridan had been telling tales. The Master of Lovat, a tactful child, asked permission to go and see about more wood for the fire. When he had gone out of the room, Lord George also requested leave to depart. “Is there anything I can do for your Royal Highness first?” he inquired.

“Help me to sit up, please.” The Prince’s voice was husky and exhausted. “I keep slipping down, and then I cannot breathe. Thank you. How strong you are!” he observed wistfully.

Lord George said nothing. He was shocked by the emaciation of the Prince’s body, the sharpness of the shoulder-blades pressed against his sleeve. Charles, sitting up in bed, wound lean, feverish arms about his neck. “You will take care of yourself, my lord, and rejoin me as speedily as may be. And—and, if you can, spare Blair Castle for my sake.”

“Your Royal Highness must leave me to be the best judge of this. Possibly I shall not succeed in taking it.” He disengaged himself gently. “And you will

endeavour to get strong, sir, and do nothing foolish?”

“I can promise you that.” He was panting with the mere exertion of having sat up in the bed. The other laid him back against the pillows, deploring his thinness. “Oh, I shall soon put on flesh. Sheridan is for ever bringing me milk and broth, and forcing them down my throat. Are you wrapped up, my lord? It is such a cold night.”

“It is not cold.” Lord George Murray never hesitated to contradict royalty. “There is a fine moon, and I shall enjoy the ride vastly.”

Charles sighed. “I wish I were coming with you.”

“Oh, God forbid, sir!” exclaimed Lord George. He elevated horrified palms. “I would not undertake your Royal Highness on a moonlight ride for all you could give me.”

He put the long, beautiful hands to his lips, and was touched when the Prince leaned up feebly and kissed his wind-bitten cheek. It was one of the rare occasions when they came near to understanding and liking one another. Had Lord George been able to keep his temper and tongue in subjection, and to overcome his frigidity and dislike of Charles’s impulsiveness, had the Prince yielded his opinion on every occasion to Lord George’s, and shown himself docile, controlled, and gratefully obedient—in short, had both succeeded in entirely altering their natures and dispositions, there might have been some prospect of lasting harmony between them. But each liked his own way, Charles listened to tales, and Lord George was outspoken and injudicious. They were equally to blame, equally imperious, equally impatient of restraint.

Downstairs, Lord George bade farewell to his brother and some few others. Lord Pitsligo accompanied him to the mouth of the wynd, Lord George having declined to mount underneath the Prince’s windows and risk startling him. “I am going to see your lordship ride off,” the old man told him. “It is such a pleasure to watch really good horsemanship.”

Lord George was not averse to the simple compliment. “Indeed, my lord, I hope your sons and mine will show as straight backs in the saddle as we do, but I doubt it. The younger generation in this year of no grace are a positive spectacle on horseback.”

Lord Pitsligo smiled gently. “Come, come, Lord George, your remark must except His Royal Highness. He is a most graceful and effective figure when riding.”

“Oh, I grant you that, but it will be long enough before we see him in the saddle.” Lord George mounted and shook a gloomy head. “When I saw him this afternoon, I thought him vastly better at first, but directly that flush goes, he shows extremely frail.”

An example of the younger generation in the year of no grace was lounging by the fire when Lord Pitsligo returned, to wit, my Lord Elcho. Lord Pitsligo had heard all about his insolence to the Prince, but no trace of disapproval marred his gentleness. "It is a beautiful night. I think I should enjoy a stroll, but I would appreciate company and a young arm. My Lord Elcho, will you lend me yours?"

No one was ever other than pleasant and courteous to the dear old man, whose own outlook and manner radiated gentleness and charm. Elcho, fully anticipating a scolding, came at once, but to his agreeable disappointment Lord Pitsligo never mentioned the Prince. He talked of Elcho's travels. "Indeed, indeed? What advantages young people have nowadays!" He turned the conversation to music. "A delightful opera. Your lordship heard it at Rome? Ah, how ideal!" He talked and thawed Elcho into mellowness and amiability, bringing him back finally softened and ashamed.

"I suppose Lord George had great complaints of my rudeness to His Royal Highness?" The tone was still sulky. "Do you think I should apologise, my lord?"

"Well"—Lord Pitsligo mused—"it might be tactful if you would request him to receive you, and then judge for yourself. You must not remain long. Just ask if you may kiss his hand and wish him a comfortable night. He is ill, and needs every allowance to be made."

Elcho dawdled upstairs. Sir Thomas Sheridan took the message, returning with a sour look and a sharp intimation that my lord was not to fatigue the Prince. "It is mighty good of His Royal Highness to grant you an audience at all, Lord Elcho, after your impudent behaviour this afternoon. Oh, yes, the whole house knows about it. Go in, pray. The Prince dislikes to be kept waiting."

"'Tis a vast pity you did not bring him up better." Lord Elcho looked impertinently at the Irishman. "Instead of instilling nonsense about passive obedience and absolute monarchy into His Royal Highness's head, you might have inculcated sense and gratitude. But we all know you are infinitely fitter to bring up Jesuits than princes who pretend to the British crown."

Sheridan, longing to smite that sneering face, kept his temper admirably. "Of course, I am aware that my poor Prince never enjoyed your advantages, my lord. For instance, if he had been sent to Winchester as you were——" He shrugged his shoulders and added quietly: "But at least I endeavoured to teach him two things you are singularly deficient in: breeding and good manners. Now, will you kindly wait upon him? He is very far from recovered, and should not be kept awake."

The Master of Lovat came out of the room as Elcho, scowling darkly, passed in. He joined Sheridan on the shallow landing where a high window stared down upon the mean roofs of Elgin. "I hope Lord Elcho will not fatigue the Prince." The boy's brow was puckered and anxious. "He seems so weary to-night."

The Irishman glanced with shrewd eyes at the young speaker. "You do not like Lord Elcho," he told him.

Young Fraser looked away quickly. "I have seen little of him, but I think he is hatefully cruel. I saw him, at Bannockburn, beating a dog. Of course I took it away," the boy continued simply, "but it was so hurt I had to destroy it; and—and"—his voice dropped—"I detest his manner towards His Royal Highness."

"Well"—the voice matched the sharpened, weary face—"what have you to say for yourself?" Elcho stood by the bedside, shifting from either foot like a chidden schoolboy. The Prince lay high amongst his pillows, his attire slipped and showing a shoulder and breast as white as any woman's. Elcho muttered that he was sorry.

"Sorry for what?" Charles peaked quizzical brows. "Because you showed in Lord George when I was all fishy and disordered, or because you declined to do a little thing like bringing me water when I could not fetch it for myself?" He stretched out his hand. "Why do you hate me, Elcho?"

The question stirred smouldering fires of passion and jealousy that had lain dormant for years. Elcho's eyes flashed. His thoughts went back to his very first sight of Charles, on his earliest furtive visit to the exiled King at Rome. The tall stripling of twenty had been called into the room, and yielded Elcho a careless hand to kiss. Later, he had invited the latter to join him on a shooting expedition, when his prowess aroused Elcho's envy. The two had seen a good deal of one another abroad, and Elcho had always felt hatefully conscious of his own inferiority. He told himself that he had been deceived as to the amount of support Charles would receive, or he had never lent his sword and money to the Cause. And behind all, above all, there was the dark woman at Bannockburn who had roused Elcho's passion. Her coldness maddened him, and he told himself that here lay the reason for it. His wrath, long suppressed, broke forth.

"Your Royal Highness can ask me that? Pah! You have drawn me, with the rest of your unhappy adherents, into a Cause whose only ending is ruin for us all. You care for nothing but yourself and your personal ambition. You put your Papist and Irish followers, who have little to lose, before men that have

risked their all, and you think a smile and a gracious word enough reward. You do not seem to have the least sense of what they have done for you. On the contrary, you often say that they have done nothing but their duty, as your father's subjects are bound to do."

There was a fierce, watching silence. Mechanically the Prince drew a fold of the bed-coverings up over his shoulder. His eyes were bewildered.

"You deceived me, took my money, and how did you not treat me?" Elcho's uncontrolled voice raged on. "There was a woman, Miss Walkinshaw, at Bannockburn House. I loved her—honourably. I might have won her, but you—you came between us, and made her love you to her ruin. Plainly you think a Prince can do no wrong."

The silence fell again, a long silence fraught with pain. Then: "God knows, child," said Charles Edward, "that I have not so many friends I can willingly lose one, but I will accept no disloyal service. If you feel thus towards me, you had better leave me."

"It is too late now." Elcho's anger had evaporated, but his eyes and mouth were hard. "I shall stay by your Royal Highness to the end. It cannot be long delayed."

Charles shuddered. The words confirmed the haunting dread that he refused to face: the knowledge that his Cause was doomed. They looked at one another, each with the bitterness of failure, of broken friendship, on his lips. Was this what it had all led to, those hours of boyish companionship, of hunting together on the high places of Italy, the shared enthusiasms, dangers, hardships, and hopes of this desperate expedition? Furtive hate, corroding jealousy, the menace of the future looked at the Prince out of Elcho's eyes. He turned away his own.

"Oh, Elcho!" he said faintly. He struggled up and held out his arms in a last pitiable appeal. Elcho advanced, but perceiving the reluctance in his gait, Charles motioned him back with flaming face. "No; leave me," he ordered briefly.

The Master of Lovat slipped into the room directly he had seen Lord Elcho go downstairs. He found the Prince huddled in bed, the clothes disordered, his eyes staring. The boy covered him tenderly, shrouding the heaving chest, and wisely taking no notice of Charles's evident emotion and misery. He talked softly as he knelt and chafed the stone-cold feet.

"Sir Thomas has gone down for a posset, and when your Royal Highness has taken that, and had a sleep, you will feel better. I am going to put out the candles and tuck you up, and no one shall come in unless you wish." He rose and drew the bed-curtains forward. "How tired you look!" he observed

tenderly.

“So I am tired, child. Tired of everything, and most of all of myself.” The Prince leaned his aching forehead against young Fraser’s shoulder, and wept, weakly, forlornly, hopelessly. “I wish I had died at Prestonpans or Falkirk, or even here in this illness,” he declared brokenly, “before I lived to listen to Elcho saying—that.”

He seemed very low, shrinking from any but this boy and Sheridan. When the latter stooped over him to bid him good-night, he put up weak arms and clung to the Irishman. “You won’t go away, Sherry? You won’t leave me?” he implored.

“No, no, my darling. I will not go to bed, if you wish me to stay here.” The Prince shook his head feebly at the suggestion.

“Oh, you need your rest. I know you have hardly been an hour away from me.” He fondled Sheridan’s hand with weary tenderness. “Leave your door open. I like to feel that you are quite near.”

He lay wakeful, with frowning brows, watched anxiously and lovingly by the Master of Lovat. About midnight he called him over, and asked him to talk. “I cannot sleep, child, and I am so weary of my own thoughts.”

“May I read to your Royal Highness?”

“No, I hate books.” He scowled a little. “Tell me something that will divert me.”

He listened with weak interest to a spirited account of salmon-fishing. “I never saw a salmon killed with the rod. Tell your father that I purpose one of these days, when I am strong, to view his country of the Aird, and fish salmon upon the Beauly. You can go along with me, and the sport would entertain me vastly.”

The Master of Lovat professed dutiful delight at this project, but wondered worriedly what his slippery papa would have to say. Fortunately, the prospect of the Duke of Cumberland’s approach would probably put such fancies out of Prince Charles’s head. “My father would be monstrous honoured, sir,” he answered non-committally.

After a week in bed Charles dragged himself up, with swimming head and aching limbs. The weather was still keenly cold, grey, sunless, a savage east wind driving the clouds across the uncoloured sky. He huddled over the fire in his bed-chamber, shuddering from the draughts that penetrated every crevice, thin, coughing, worn to a shadow of his former self, but high-couraged and indomitable. After two days of creeping about his room, he adventured

downstairs. The Master of Lovat escorted and supported him, leaving him with the stern intimation that he must not remain longer than ten minutes. In a dark little apartment on the ground-floor, dwarfed by solemn portraits up the walls, he found a group of card-players. They dropped their hands at the appearance of the ghostly young figure with loose hair, and crowded round him, exclaiming and worshipping. He shook his head over their anxiety, smiling at them out of wet eyes. No, he had not meant to disturb anyone. They must go on with their game. He examined their cards critically. "Athol, what a hand! Remember, you will not get your luck in the other way." His officers laughed and looked at him, love in their faces.

"Will your Royal Highness take my place?" the Duke inquired, smiling. Charles declined. He preferred to sit at the feet of Gamaliel and learn wisdom. "Or should I have said Gallio?" he asked simply. The gentleman in question was Lord Pitsligo, so deeply engrossed in a book that he had not noticed His Royal Highness's entrance. "Thank you, Kilmarnock, I think I will take your plaid, since you are so vastly obliging." His fingers deftly unfastened the great jewelled stud from which the graceful folds swung.

"What is your Royal Highness doing, undressing me in public?" groaned the Earl. He laughed and slung off the garment. "Oh, I see. Well, come to the fire, sir, and let me put it over your feet."

The Prince acquiesced, and sat wearily by the hearth, his cheek propped on one hand. The flames picked out bright threads in his brown hair. At the end of the allotted time, the Master of Lovat appeared, and carried his charge off. The entire company escorted them upstairs, but, despite Charles's protestations, were dismissed at the bedroom door. The boy, a wise young judge, had noticed the Prince's glittering eyes and feverish colour. He put him to bed, angry and rebellious, and only admitted Lord Pitsligo on conditions.

"You horrid little tyrant! I will not be bullied." Suddenly he dropped against his pillows with a moan. "Perhaps you are right, child. I am more tired than I knew." He lifted his arm, and watched it fall limply. "Look at that!" he exclaimed disgustedly. "And a few nights ago I was dancing reels."

"A few nights ago your Royal Highness was so ill that we did not think you would be spared until morning." Lord Pitsligo's grave, tender rebuke brought an added flush to the Prince's face. "God has shown you and your followers great mercy, sir."

"I know, I know, my lord, and I am not ungrateful. Perhaps He has spared my life for some good purpose." The brown eyes lit up. "May I not yet, for all that has happened, win further victories, mayhap a crown?"

He sat flushed and eager, long in dreams, lured by the old pinchbeck

ambition. Lord Pitsligo looked at him, his mild face softened and pitying.

“I am an old man now”—he spoke simply—“and though I would fain be spared to see my King seated in St. James’s, I do not look to live to see your Royal Highness on the throne of your fathers. You and I, sir, would pray that that may be a far day——”

“Amen,” whispered the Prince.

“But I would take my years’ privilege, and say this to you.” He gathered the clinging hands into his own. “A crown is a very great thing, and rightful ambition is a good sceptre, but how little are both in the sight of God! We are here for so short a time, and so soon forgotten, and in the light of Eternity earthly diadems rank as nothing. God has prepared a crown of righteousness for His redeemed, and I would fain see that upon your brow.” He knelt, though Charles strove to prevent him. “Why should I not kneel to my Prince?” he asked simply. He kissed his hands. “God bless your Royal Highness, and bring you in His good time to His everlasting kingdom, and a crown that fadeth not away.”

CHAPTER XV

“When I-Who-am meet face to face upon my way forlorn
The happy I-Who-might-have-been—the demi-god unborn
When he with all my dreams fulfilled meets me outfought, outworn,
It is as Sorrow meeting Joy, as Midnight meeting Morn.
He slays me with his pitying eyes, he flays me with his scorn—
When I meet I-Who-might-have-been—the demi-god unborn.”

RONALD CAMPBELL MACFIE.

A BITTER, inclement April succeeded a savage March. Snow and cold bound the whole country in bands of iron. The Prince was once more at Inverness, his health tolerably restored, his waning forces divided to the best advantage. Brigadier Stapleton was besieging Fort William, and Lord George Murray doggedly determined to take Blair Castle. Lord John Drummond was pitted against Major-General Bland, while the Duke of Perth was pursuing Lord Loudon. But the treasury-chest was nearly empty; a ship, bringing relief and money, had fallen into the enemy's hands; there were grumbling and desertions in the ill-paid, badly-fed army, discord and dissensions amongst the officers. The Prince himself had deteriorated in mind and body. Since the humiliating hour when retreat was forced upon him at Derby, he had grown more haughty and autocratic, more exacting and unreasonable. His former charming imperiousness had hardened into a self-willed determination to have his own way in small matters when balked of it in greater. On all sides ruin menaced him, but with the obstinacy that upheld him throughout his difficulties he refused to recognise the unpalatable truth.

The old distrust of Lord George Murray had revived, the old, haunting apprehension that he meant to betray him. Secretary Murray, lying wretchedly ill at Inverness, was now a negligible quantity, but his works lived after him. Lord George's dissatisfaction with his appointment as Murray's successor had been carried to Hay of Restalrig's ears. He lost no opportunity of dropping tales and hints into Charles's. What was this story of Lord George's having captured a Swedish officer, and returning him politely to the Prince of Hesse? What was in the letter Lord George sent with the man? “To send him back without consulting your Royal Highness is a thing so contrary to all military practice that no one that has the least sense can be guilty of it without some private reason of his own,” Hay murmured.

Lord George was still engaged in the fruitless siege of Blair Castle, his only hope of taking it being by reducing the garrison through slow starvation. That sharp March morning he had dispatched an express to the Prince to say that an army was marching to the castle's relief. If Charles would send him

twelve hundred men, he proposed to pitch upon advantageous ground and fight the enemy.

The Prince summoned Hay, and threw him the letter with a sneer. "Twelve hundred men! Does Lord George think I am the Duke of Cumberland? How can I spare so many?"

He wrote back curt word that he could not fulfil the request, "in the way my army is now situated." The siege dragged on dismally, and was abandoned the first week of April. Lord George, savage at his failure, worn by his hardships, returned to Inverness. Panic-stricken expresses recalling him arrived continually, as the Duke of Cumberland was believed to be on the march. The news of Lord George's failure to take Blair Castle provided a fresh weapon for his enemies' malice. They did not let slip this golden opportunity of still further blackening his character to Charles. Why had the siege failed? Because it was his brother's, Lord George had spared a family seat. His action in withdrawing his forces was due to a misplaced sentiment. He could have destroyed the castle had he wished. Charles listened, believed, harboured deeper suspicions and grievances.

Had he not been so warped by unjust doubts, he must have felt touched with the undisguised pleasure Lord George showed upon finding him about and recovered. The Prince yielded him a cold hand. "Well, tell me everything," he said.

It was a great tale, an epic of hardships, courage, and indomitable endurance. It lost nothing by being told so simply. Lord George made light of his personal feelings, of what he had suffered through aiming at the destruction of his brother's house, of his own dangers, fatigues, and incessant work. Charles listened with frowning brows and petulant mouth. At the end he observed: "So you could not take it after all? *Mon Dieu!* but it has been wasted time and energy."

They stared at one another, the sharp light in the room pitiless upon both faces. Charles looked secretive and suspicious. Lord George was honestly puzzled and perplexed. "I admit my failure, sir, but at least I cannot feel that I merit your Royal Highness's reproach," he remarked gravely. "I did not expect gratitude, but I claim to deserve some recognition. These last days have been excessive trying. Besides the marching and fatigues which others underwent, I had also all the orders to give, and dispositions to make. Though others were relieved, and took it in their turns, I had none to relieve me. Receiving and dispatching expresses, settling sentinels and guards—which at first I always saw done myself, till the thing went on of course—alarms, gaining of intelligence, and other necessary duties took up much time."

Charles frowned into the fire. "I am giving a ball to-night. Will your lordship condescend to be present?" he asked flippantly.

Lord George noticed for the first time that the Prince was sumptuously dressed. "Is that seemly or fitting, sir, with your army underpaid and complaining?" he replied sternly. "The men have had no pay for a month past."

The direct demand flushed the Prince's cheek. "I will still hold my head high." He set his teeth. "Have you returned long enough to see how matters stand with me, my lord?" He threw out his hands. "I received certain information at last that no French expedition will be sent. That was a crushing blow, but to keep up my army's spirits I have caused it to be spread about that a French landing, under my brother, may be expected daily." He met Lord George's eyes in haggard defiance and appeal. "Cumberland is likely to start his march northward, and how can Lord John Drummond hold the Spey against his forces? I have sold almost my last jewels, and have commissioned the designing and issuing of Jacobite banknotes, money being so scarce, and you blame me for squandering it upon entertainments that may keep our spirits gay." He turned his face away, adding brokenly: "I did not think you would so misunderstand me. It breaks my heart to see these men who love me, and who have followed and served me uncomplainingly, reduced to a handful of meal for food and pay. I cannot blame them for deserting." His voice shook violently. "Each day brings some fresh and cruel disappointment. You have failed to take Blair Castle, and hourly I expect intelligence that the siege of Fort William must be abandoned likewise."

They looked at one another, reproach, anger, suspicion, the dislike engendered by their uncongenial temperaments, quick between them. Then the Prince turned away, and stood staring fixedly out of the window. The attitude was a dismissal.

Lord George, haggard, dispirited, went to his brother. The Duke of Athol listened in silence to his tale, ending with the Prince's reception of him. At the conclusion he said wearily: "I would ask His Royal Highness to accept my demission, but all my friends tell me it might be of prejudice to the Cause at such a critical time. Otherwise, I have no desire to continue in the army."

"I would not do that." The Duke spoke gravely, tenderly.

His brother came over and knelt beside him, putting his head in a gesture of utter weariness on the older man's shoulder. The Duke passed his arm round him. "Geordie, my dear," he whispered very low. The years rolled back, and for a little while they were boys again, two children who played together, slept together, each seeing the world through the other's eyes.

Lord George rose stiffly. "No one has called me that for forty years," he said.

The cold persisted and strengthened. Half of April had gone over, but no hint of spring or warmth came to the bleak country. The woods were thin and brown, the mountains and bare rocks and bog-crossed moorlands of the north a landscape empty of colour and hope. The Prince's ragged, futile army, the shadow of its earlier self, was governed by chiefs whose patience was as threadbare as their garments and resources. Everywhere bad feeling existed. Charles seldom consulted the Scots, who, furiously jealous and resentful of his preference for the Irish, formed a separate and hostile camp, headed by Lord George Murray. Still, loyalty linked the unhappy and waning force, no matter how greatly the Prince's personal popularity had decreased. There was no hint of mutiny amongst the men, no suggestion of subjection to the Government by their officers. Charles was haggard, but gay. At times the swift descent southward, the taking of Edinburgh, followed by the triumph of Prestonpans, the fall of Carlisle, and that dash into the heart of England, felt dreamlike, unreal, contrasted with the bitterness of his present circumstances. His own hope, fanned by the elusive victory of Falkirk, lay in a battle with Cumberland's troops, advancing steadily, driving back his forces on the Spey, well fed, well equipped, well drilled. The utter madness of pitting his half-starved Highlanders against these refused to enter his head. His men had defeated Hawley's troops and Cope's. Why should not a third, decisive victory turn the tide? The old, persistent obsession that he was their lawful Prince, and that English soldiers would not dare to fight against him, upheld him confidently.

It was in this humour that he rode out from Inverness to Culloden House on the afternoon of April 14th. Two days previously rumours had come of the Duke of Cumberland's advance. Another twenty-four hours confirmed the ominous news, and told that his army was past the Spey. The air blew raw and bitter, full of looming snow. The day darkened, bringing in remnants of the Highland forces who had been summoned by countless expresses. Lochiel, still weather-stained and footsore from the abortive siege of Fort William; the Duke of Perth, haggard and pallid, from the Spey, where he had joined Lord John Drummond after himself dispersing Loudon's force; Lord George with his Athol men, all cold, apprehensive, dispirited, the fell sergeant in their midst.

Charles did not go to bed. He sat up late, eager, talkative, sanguine. In the great dining-room of Culloden House, hung round with disapproving portraits of President Forbes's forebears, he gave a supper-party. Provisions were

meagre and scanty, but the Prince's grace and charm, suddenly re-awakened, turned the meal to a regal banquet. Lord Elcho, ostensibly restored to favour, sat opposite to him, noting with a scathing eye the universal confusion and disorder. Mr. Hay, like many people suddenly and unexpectedly elevated to a position of responsibility, had proved unworthy of either his promotion or his predecessor. Even Lord George had failed to find grounds for disapproval in John Murray's management of the commissariat. Hay had lost his head, given himself airs, muddled matters atrociously, and made innumerable enemies. Thanks to him, there was ample provender for the army and its officers at Inverness, but little or none at Culloden. The talk ran upon the impending battle, the best position to be taken up, the possibilities of success or defeat. A hint of failure flushed the Prince's cheek, and brought a spark of anger to his eyes.

"Only those who are afraid can have any doubt as to the issue." His look was scathing.

"We are not by any means our full strength." The Duke of Perth spoke nervously. "Would your Royal Highness not retire to stronger ground, and await reinforcements?"

"No," Charles snapped. His lips were pressed together. "If you talk of retreat again, Perth, I——" He shook a bright head at him affectionately.

"We should have a rendezvous in case of defeat." Lord George was looking unusually stern and thoughtful.

The Prince thrust back his chair. "Unnecessary, my lord, totally unnecessary. I have every confidence in my Highlanders and my officers. Have I not seen what these men can do against a much larger foe?" Pressed, he became abusive and excitable. "Enough, enough, my lord. I command here, and I will not listen to another word."

In the cold mirk of daybreak he marched his shivering Highlanders off to a desolate moor a mile south-east of Culloden House. It was an hour's toilsome climb, through a thin plantation of trees, across dykes and little burns cutting the braise, tired feet stumbling in dead heather, until the bleak level broke upon the gaze. The place was utterly dreary, a long, wide, flat monotony of moor, swept by icy wind, damp and soggy to the tread. The cold windings of the Nairn shone a chilly grey. Great mountains to the west and south stood hidden in haar. It was raining and sodden, a day not calculated to raise the spirits of hungry, desperate men. The Prince reviewed them, gaunt, weather-stained ranks drawn up in two lines of battle, wolfish eyes set in wolfish faces, famine-pinched bodies shuddering in the shrill wind. He gave orders for them to get what rest they could, there in the open, and, turning away, found Lord George

at his elbow.

"I do not like this ground. It is certainly not proper for Highlanders." His look was truculent. "I propose that Brigadier Stapleton and Colonel Ker should view the ground on the other side of the Nairn."

Charles agreed to the suggestion. The thickening ram clotted his bright hair as he stood swinging his bonnet. "What do they call this plain?" he asked carelessly.

"Drum Mossie Moor, sir." Lord George moved away to speak to his aide-de-camp.

Charles remained rigid. Before his eyes rose up a vision of a squalid kitchen. In his ears rang a cracked, eerie voice: "Beware Drum Mossie Muir. It lies far north, waitin' ye." He was white and startled. Here lay the plain of fate, the spot on which his weird was written. "Did she mean death for me, see death? Shall I fall here—here in this desolation, all my hopes unfulfilled?"

He braced himself, flung up his head. He would not be defrauded of his battle, but not here. He strolled about, coaxing and cajoling the different chiefs, trying to persuade them to march off their men that evening to attack the enemy. "It was our plan at Falkirk, and it answered."

Lord George came back with a report from his scouts that the ground beyond the water was hilly and boggy, and might render the enemy's horse and cannon useless. "The battle should be there, to a certainty." He dismissed with lashing scorn Charles's harebrained scheme for pressing to meet Cumberland. "Your Royal Highness has so much confidence in the bravery of your army, that you are rather too hazardous. What you have seen them do, and the justice of your Cause, make you too venturesome, sir. You are for fighting on all occasions."

Charles stood vexed and undecided. O'Sullivan was in Inverness, so he could not be utilised as a court of appeal. "Keppoch and his men should be here to-day," the Duke of Athol added. "Will your Royal Highness not await him before deciding further?"

The strain of waiting lasted until late. The men were dispersed to their quarters, after it became evident that the enemy would not move that day. Lord Elcho, dispatched with a party of horse to discover what was passing in their camp at Nairn, returned with intelligence that all was quiet. The Prince presided over a council, the first since that stormy debate following the retreat from Stirling. It was held in the great dining-room, the windows, slowly darkening, giving on a dim vista of springless country, the walls supporting simpering or scowling painted faces, which seemed to sneer at the haggard living ones round the table. Charles, impatient, but still sanguine, asked what

his leaders proposed to do, as the enemy were stationary.

“They have probably been celebrating the Duke of Cumberland’s birthday.” Lord George smiled in his grim fashion. “Would your Royal Highness consent to a night attack upon their camp? We might have a better chance thus than by fighting in a plain field, and we cannot wait here starving.” He glared at Hay. “Thanks to gross mismanagement and unaccountable negligence on the part of those who have the charge of providing for the army, all the meal is at Inverness, and cannot be procured and prepared unless the men disperse, an unwise proceeding with the enemy about.”

He spoke grimly, fully expecting a torrent of expostulation from Charles, followed by a prompt rejection of his scheme. To his amazement and embarrassed horror, the Prince sprang up and caught him into his arms. “Yes, yes, yes! I heartily approve, my lord. In fact, you anticipate my own plan, but I had designed to keep it locked in my breast until all present had declared their sentiments.”

For once the Prince and Lord George were in accord, but with very different conjectures agitating each mind. The latter, overwhelmed in more senses than one by the solid weight hurled against him, stood rigid in the grip of the lean young arms, and smiled sourly. He saw the scheme as a forlorn hope, the lesser evil than starvation or fighting. Charles, rash, unimaginative, perceived an opportunity for a secret blow at his foes which could not fail of success.

The desperate project found only a moderate amount of approval and support. The Duke of Perth and his brother bluntly expressed their dislike of it. Lochiel seconded them, arguing that next day the army should be stronger by at least a thousand men. But the Prince, heartened by the arrival of Keppoch and his MacDonalds, carried the day. Even the discovery, late in the evening, that the half-starved Highlanders had in many cases scattered to Inverness to search for food, failed to dissuade or depress him. “When we begin the march the men will all be hearty, and those who have gone off will return and follow,” he declared. Lord George was less sanguine, but decided for the attempt, “as starvation or butchery is the alternative——” He shut his grim mouth on the unfinished sentence.

He drew the Prince aside, and, putting him on his honour to speak of the details to nobody, divulged his plan. The army must march in a body as far as Kilravock, some ten miles from Culloden, and there divide. Lord George, with the van, would cross the Nairn, and march down by the south side of the river, recross it, near the Duke’s camp, and attack the English army from the south. The remainder of the Highland force was to march along the north side of the Nairn, and attack, simultaneously with the van, from the west. All depended

upon speed and secrecy.

It was nine o'clock, a thick, secretive night, with wind moaning in the furze and tree-tops, when the first column wound away from Culloden House. Lord George led it, at the head of his Athol men, Lochiel and his clan following, Lord John Drummond bringing up the rear. The Prince chose to walk beside his horse in the space between the two columns. Away back through the dark, the square stone house made a blur in the vast space of moor, the camp-fires, lighted to deceive the foe, red, glancing blots.

At the last second, before the order to march was given, Lord George uttered a final appeal. "Will your Royal Highness not abandon the idea, now that you see how reduced our numbers are? Do you still continue bent upon the thing, sir?"

Charles flung up his head in the old gay gesture. "King James the Eighth!" he cried. His voice rang out with the words, and the long lines sent forth a cheer in answer. "There! You see."

He turned and caught Lord George into a silent, desperate embrace, ere the latter mounted. "God keep you! I may not see you again," he whispered. He noticed the stern face momentarily working as the stark dangers of the desperate enterprise came home to both. Then his arms dropped, and he went swiftly to his own place between the two columns. Only Sheridan was immediately with him, and they spoke little as the night drew round them.

A few Mackintoshes, who knew the country intimately, acted as guides. The high-road, broken with villages, was impossible, for intelligence of the approach of a large body of enemy might be carried to the Duke of Cumberland. The alternative route, called the moor-road, led along the foot of brooding mountains, faced by the sea. Undertread it was ankle-deep, in places knee-deep, in slimy mud. The horses slipped and stumbled, the men crept on doggedly. The darkness was so thick that a hand might have grasped it.

At intervals a message reached Lord George, requesting that he would halt. The second column could not keep up. They must not lose touch. He swore softly, and spoke a word of encouragement to his men, bidding them march slower. They obeyed like automatons. They were no longer human beings, but machines, chilled, starving, devoid of hope or enterprise. They did not understand why they were marshalled and led for miles through the stifling, haunted dark of these eerie woods. They knew dimly that at the end lay strife and bloodshed, a chance to fall or conquer, and victory had grown to mean to them little save food and rest.

Hoofs in the plashy mud caused Lord George to break off his grim train of

thought, and turn. Lord John Drummond, irritable and travel-stained, crashed through the brushwood and darkness. "Why will you go on?" he called out. "There is a gap in the line half a mile long. The men won't come up."

Above the blotted masses of the trees a faint silver of dawn thinned the sky. "Halt!" came sharply in Gaelic. The column shivered and stilled. Far ahead, they saw lights breaking the formless blackness, the windows of a little farmhouse called the Yellow Know. Woods framed it. Three miles beyond was Nairn, and cold in the night wound the river that had to be crossed.

Other officers came up, and stood about with blank faces. "Look at the sky. It must be near dawn." Lord John pulled out his repeating watch. "Two o'clock!" he exclaimed, dismayed.

"You had better speak freely, gentlemen." Lord George looked from one to another. "Lord John? Lochiel? Mr. Hepburn?"

"How far are we from Nairn?" "The length of three miles." "It will be broad daylight ere we reach it." "We had better return." "No, no, I could not agree to such a step now that we have advanced so far." The words were tossed to and fro, some for retreating, some for continuing the march. Amongst the keenest for going on was old Mr. Hepburn of Keith, friend of the pathfinder of Prestonpans. "I beg you will lose no time, my lord," he urged. "Let us carry out our design at any hazard."

A dull, muffled sound made everyone start. "A drum! Don't you hear it?" Lord George exclaimed. "The enemy are alarmed. We can't surprise them now."

"I never expected to find them asleep." The speaker tossed his handsome head. "But it is much better to march on and attack them, than to retreat, for they will most certainly follow, and oblige us to fight when we shall be in a much worse condition for fighting than we are now."

"It is all the fault of the second column, marching so slowly and retarding our progress." For once the gentle Lochiel displayed temper. "I was as keen for the attack as any, my lord, but I see now the folly of pressing on."

"To attack a camp near double our number, in broad daylight, would be madness. Better to return to Culloden as speedily as possible, to afford the men the chance of a few hours' rest." Lord George spoke with glum finality.

The thoughts of most went to the slim, erect figure plodding between the columns. "Ought not His Royal Highness to be informed of your design, my lord, if not consulted?" Lochiel suggested.

"His Royal Highness is a mile back, and the only way in this dark is to ride through the wood alongside of the men. The defile is so narrow in many places, occasioned by that stone wall, that it will be a work of considerable

time to send back and fore.” Lord George shook his head. “We dare not halt so long; besides”—a grim smile curved his mouth—“His Royal Highness would only order us to go on.”

At this point up rode Mr. Hay with a message from the Prince. His Royal Highness wished to know the meaning of the halt. He was promptly informed, plus the decision to return, and broke into excited arguments. Finding that no attention was paid, he wheeled his horse, and the chiefs heard it thundering back through the long, dense wood.

Charles, weary of his own feet, had mounted his horse, and was sitting irritably in the centre of the stationary columns. “Why do we stop? Is there something wrong?” He peered at Sheridan, close beside him, Patience upon a stout cob. “What do you think, Sherry?”

“It’s the dark and the bad walking, darling.” Sheridan looked anxiously into the Prince’s pale face. “Are you wrapped up, Carluccio?”

“Yes, yes. How you harp on my health!” He repented of his impatience, and flung Sheridan a slim, cold hand. “Feel that. Quite warm. Oh, look how light it is growing,” he groaned. “We shall never reach Nairn.”

A few minutes later Hay, heated and officious, cantered up. “Unless your Royal Highness goes to the front, and orders Lord George to go on, nothing can be done, sir. He and some of the chiefs do not think themselves strong enough for the attack,” he panted.

It was not too dark for Sheridan to see the sudden whiteness of the Prince’s face. “Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*” He set spurs to his horse, and was off instantly. Sheridan made a movement to follow, but Charles called back sharply that he was to remain. The Irishman turned on Hay.

“What do you mean, sir, by leaving His Royal Highness unescorted? Ride after him at once. He’ll break his neck, if he is not careful.”

Charles, riding desperately, almost rode down the first of a body of retreating men. “Where the devil are you going?” he cried sharply.

A young officer stepped forward and saluted. “We are ordered by the Duke of Perth to return to Culloden House, sir.”

Charles sat gnawing his under lip. “Where is the Duke? Call him here,” he commanded peremptorily. He waited in a cold passion until the Duke came up. “What do you mean by ordering the men back, Perth?”

“Lord George Murray, sir, with the first line, has gone back three-quarters of an hour ago.” He looked pityingly at the white, stormy young face.

Charles huddled in his saddle. “Good God! what can be the matter? What does he mean? We are equal, and could have blown them to the devil.”

Suddenly he sat erect. "Perhaps he has not gone far. Pray, Perth, can't you call them back?"

"I would beg to speak with your Royal Highness." He drew the Prince aside, and argued long and earnestly.

Charles's set face did not change. "Who gave you orders to retreat, Perth? What, Lord George? Did I not command to engage?" He ground out the words between his clenched teeth. "Ah, I need not have asked. He has betrayed me, and not for the first time." He sat with sunk head, and hands clenched upon the bridle-reins. "What use is it for me to give orders when my orders are disobeyed? But you must ride after him, Perth, and tell him I *command* him to return."

The Duke looked straight into the angry young face. "It is impossible, sir. Lord George is already so far on his way back that he could not bring up the army time enough to execute the intended plan."

The silence of the night and the dark woods was only broken by Charles's sharp breathing. "I see—I see," he muttered sombrely. He turned his horse, and addressed the patient, waiting ranks. "There is no help for it, my lads. March back to Culloden House." The words rang in his own ears like a death-knell. A groan from tired, dispirited men answered him. "I do not so much regret my own loss as their inevitable ruin," he told the Duke.

It was dawn, a misty, uncertain dawn, with a wind that moaned of coming rain, when the remains of the Jacobite force reached Culloden. Many had fallen by the wayside, and slept their last sleep in Kilravock's dark and sodden woods. The first column had plodded back, and awaited the stragglers forming the second, the men, sick with want of rest and food, flinging themselves down in the open, to strive to forget their hunger in sleep, the officers standing about, a sullen, apprehensive group. The Prince straightened himself when he saw them, and, disdaining aid, dismounted stiffly from his horse. His face was white and aged, the hollow eyes fixed in a hard stare of anger. Lord George, equally haggard, bearing the stains of the march and the night, came forward to him, but the Prince waved him aside. "Do not touch me! Do not speak to me!" he panted. "In future no person but myself shall command my army. You vile traitor, who have deceived me, betrayed me——"

There was a loud murmur of disapproval from the chiefs. A few of the Athol men looked blackly at the Prince. He and Lord George were confronting one another, the very air vibrant with Charles's dark suspicions and anger. Lord George, his fine face suddenly old and worn, spoke quietly.

"Your Royal Highness is not yourself, or you would hesitate to offer such insults to a man who has always served you faithfully. When you are more

recovered, I shall be pleased to account to you for this apparent disregard of your orders, sir.” He turned to Sheridan. “Sir Thomas, the Prince is worn out. Will you make him rest? He has had no sleep, and God knows we shall want all our strength this day.”

Charles swayed against Sheridan. “No, no, I will not eat or repose so long as my poor Highlanders are starved.” He glared fiercely round the sour-faced group of his officers. “Go to Inverness, anywhere, and procure provisions,” he gasped. “I order it. Oh, Sherry!”

The Irishman took him away, the fair head drooping against Sheridan’s shoulder, the sagging body only upheld by his arm. The house, dank, fireless, felt like a tomb. He stumbled up shallow stairs to his bedroom, where he shut the door on Sheridan, bidding him savagely to admit no one. A quarter of an hour later Lord George found the faithful sentinel patrolling the corridor, but from the room there came no sound at all.

Lord George carried a little bread, and a quaigh containing a modicum of raw whisky. “I regret that this is all I have been able to procure for the Prince,” he said stiffly.

The Irishman smiled. “Mighty good of you to trouble about him, my lord, after what he said downstairs.”

“His Royal Highness was only putting into words at last what he has suspected of me all along.” The tone was sad, but without bitterness. “If it were true, it would have been intolerable, but as things stand I can afford to make every allowance for his heat. He was naturally acutely disappointed at the failure of our scheme.” He paused, and added; “I suppose he is in his room?”

“Yes, but I have orders to admit no one.” Sheridan took a quick step forward. “You dare not go in. He is very——”

“Thrawn,” concluded Lord George calmly. They looked at one another, each smiling without mirth. “But His Royal Highness must see me, Sir Thomas. These next few hours will decide whether we stand and fight here, or whether we retreat. The Prince is the right person to have the choice.”

He went forward and turned the handle of the door. It was not locked, and he entered the large, high-ceilinged, cold bed-chamber, where Forbeses of Culloden had been born and had died. The windows were uncurtained, giving upon a bleak, springless vista of raw country, the glassy windings of the Nairn, the sharp, leafless outlines of bare trees, the bald, snow-powdered tops of distant mountains. Inside the room, the bed, pushed against one wall, had a huddled figure thrown upon it in an abandonment of fatigue and despair.

The Prince did not stir as Lord George advanced. He was not asleep, for he

made a movement to bury his face deeper in the arm flung across the pillows. He wore the weather-stained tartans and mud-encrusted boots in which he had marched the previous night. It crossed Lord George's orderly mind to wonder what President Forbes (now involuntarily rusticated in Skye) would think of the state of his blankets on his return to his ancestral halls. His voice, level, unemotional, addressed the prone Prince.

"As your Royal Highness is always for fighting at all risks, be the circumstances what they may, I offer you a battle in three hours hence against the forces of the Duke of Cumberland."

Charles stirred slowly and raised his head. He looked bewildered, beaten, overwhelmed. "What do you say?" he asked dully.

Lord George repeated his exact words. "Your Royal Highness can decide between fighting, or retreating into the wilder parts further north. It is useless, I suppose, my proffering any advice, but I counsel you to think well before you throw away valuable lives in what cannot be other than a butchery. We are hopelessly outnumbered——"

The Prince broke in, his voice sharp and shrill. He was sitting up by this time, his face making a peaked, pinched oval against the dusk of disordered pillows, and the background of sombre wall. "I refuse to retreat. We stay and fight them here," he snapped.

Lord George bowed. "In that case, sir, I must go to consult Colonel O'Sullivan as to the disposition of our forces."

He was leaving the room when Charles recalled him. "Lord George!" The other turned, showing sleepless eyes set in a face scored with deep lines. "My lord, I——" The Prince lifted shaking hands to his head. "Cannot you advise me?" he implored. "What would you counsel?"

Lord George was deaf to the note of pleading. "After that public insult from your Royal Highness downstairs, it is a farce to recommend or suggest any course to you, sir. Since last night's fiasco, you distrust me more deeply than you have done all along." Their eyes met. The veils of reserve were stripped away at last. Each saw the other plainly, saw too to what greater ruin their strained relations and constant quarrels had brought the Cause, though doomed from the first. Ever afterwards Charles blamed Lord George, circumstances, fate, God, but never himself. He held out appealing hands now, which his companion made no effort to take. With a little moan, he dropped back again. "I wish I were dead," he said dully.

"Your Royal Highness will very probably have that felicity in a short time, if you persist in this mad notion of fighting." Lord George moved again to the door. Did the Prince even now refuse to recognise the desperate position in

which he stood?

Charles dragged himself up, sick, bewildered, his limbs stiff with cold. "Oh, you are cruel to me. Come here!" Lord George retraced his steps unwillingly till he stood by the bedside. "You must not heed what I said. I was angered, and so disappointed. You should not blame me for this pass." He sat erect, a spot of colour staining either cheek. "If we fight, we shall drive them back, and last night and this miserable morning will seem a dream. It will be another Prestonpans, another Falkirk. Oh, I feel it!" He was clinging to Lord George with ice-cold hands, talking rapidly through feverish, bitten lips. "My Highlanders will strike panic into any army——"

"Your Highlanders are starving, and their numbers so reduced by desertion that it is madness to pit them against Cumberland's trained, full-fed troops." Lord George gave back the entreating hands. "No, I am justly angered, sir, and not to be won over by your Royal Highness's pretty ways. Defeat will mean ruin and misery to thousands, and senseless slaughter, whereas by retreating to difficult, unknown territory we can baffle these strange English. Half the Frasers are not here. Cluny MacPherson and his men are only on their way from Badenoch, Lord Cromarty and his force—a large one—absent in Sutherland. I implore your Royal Highness to abandon this daft intention of fighting."

Charles shook his head obstinately. "We should have persevered last night, and cut the red-coats to pieces. Now we shall do it to-day instead."

Lord George, with an impatient jerk of his shoulders, turned away. "I claim the honour of the right wing for myself and the Athol men, sir," he remarked truculently.

Charles frowned feebly. "But—but there were disputes about that point, my lord, when we discussed fighting within the last few days."

Lord George, half across the room, halted. "Nobody who has any regard for the common cause, sir, would insist on such things on this occasion. We have been in use to have the right wing since Montrose's war."

Charles nodded stupidly. "As you will. I had better accompany your lordship if we are to assemble our ranks immediately."

Lord George shook his head. "There is no need, sir. We have some hours yet. I would entreat your Royal Highness to sleep, if you can." He proffered the quaigh and the meagre slice of bread. "This is all I could find for you in the way of food, but it is at least better than nothing."

The Prince smiled faintly, the ghost of the old, gracious smile. "I cannot eat alone. You must join me."

"No. There is little enough for your Royal Highness as it is." The gesture

was final in its curtness.

Charles looked at Lord George with bewildered brown gaze. "Are you so angered, my lord, that you refuse to break bread with me?"

Lord George flushed deeply and came back to the bedside. Together they divided and devoured the coarse, tasteless bread, the crude, stinging whisky. There was something in the nature of a sacrament about the pitiable meal, the last food they shared together in their ill-starred association. When it was finished, Lord George stooped and kissed the Prince's hand.

"Go to sleep, sir. I will wake you directly there is need." He covered him up, frowning at the bleakness of the room. "It is scarce worth while to light a fire, if there were anything to burn," he muttered.

They looked at one another, each realising that here was the end of much. No matter what the fortunes of the day, they were severed, separated, cut asunder in soul, however long both might continue on the earth. A muffled voice pursued Lord George as he opened the door. "I trust you to call me in time, my lord. I shall sleep, because I can depend upon you."

Sheridan came out of another room as the Prince's door shut. "You have been a long time, my lord. How is His Royal Highness?"

"Quieter. I hope he will sleep." Lord George drew the Irishman into a large, empty chamber, and looked steadfastly at the calm, sensible face. "I have done my utmost to persuade him to retreat and await the full strength of his army, but he is obdurate. He insists on fighting here, in a few hours." He nodded agreement to the other's murmur of "Madness." "It is madness, Sir Thomas, but he must drink as he has brewed. What I wished to say to you is this: Promise me, nay, swear, that in the almost certain event of our defeat and rout, you will never let His Royal Highness fall into the enemy's hands."

Sheridan shuddered. "You mean——?"

"I mean, sir, that at any cost, by force if needful, you will take him out of the battle. I know him, and he will never leave the field whilst a man of his remains on it." He struck his hands together. "God forgive me if I say that a stray bullet might be the greatest mercy, for he must not be taken prisoner."

"But the Duke of Cumberland would not dare to lay a finger on him, my lord." Sheridan's look was protesting. "He could only be detained temporarily in an honourable captivity. The Elector would never countenance his being harmed, much less executed."

Lord George's stern face worked. "I have heard tales of the Duke, sir, that no decent mouth would utter. He is human—and jealous. Thirty thousand pounds are offered for the Prince's person, *dead or alive*. Dead, he would rid the Elector and the Duke of an embarrassing prisoner. Captured alive, he might

suffer tortures and infamy unspeakable before death. It does not bear thinking of.” The picture of that proud, beautiful, haughty creature writhing in the hands of a merciless foe made the two who served him shudder. “Better death at a friend’s hands, or his own, than that; but, God willing, it may not come to such a strait.”

Sheridan faced the Scot fiercely. “ ’Tis a vast responsibility to thrust upon me, my lord.”

“There is no other I can trust, Sir Thomas. Who loves him as you do?” He drew his dirk. “Swear by the cross at the end of your Papist prayer-chain, as I shall swear by the Holy Iron, the most sacred oath a Highlander can take, that if humanly possible you will save him alive, and if not, that you will never let him fall into the Duke’s hands.”

The stern voice ceased. Outside, there came a thin singing of birds. Sir Thomas swore, kissed the crucifix, and put back the rosary. Lord George kissed the cold hilt of his dirk, and their eyes, meeting, grew wet.

In the doorway Lord George turned. “We may not have speech with one another again, Sir Thomas. Will you take my hand?” He clasped it and let it drop. “I know that I have to thank you for standing my friend many times with His Royal Highness.”

He smiled and went, a very gallant gentleman, cursed with incurable arrogance and an ungovernable temper. Sheridan crossed the passage in answer to a faint call.

The Prince was sitting up, wild-eyed. “Did Lord George say that it was time, Sherry? I heard his voice.”

“No, no, my darling. Not yet. Lie down.” He held the quivering creature in his arms, feeling the poor heart beat against him. Impossible to think that a few hours might still that burning, ardent life. “Carluccio, are you bent on fighting? It seems a fatal thing.”

The old obstinacy and suspicion began to cloud the Prince’s eyes. “Ah, Lord George has been talking to you, asking you to persuade me to alter my mind. I will not. I vow I will not.” He pushed Sheridan away. “So you too are against me, or afraid?” he sneered.

“There is no one but yourself should dare to say that.” Sheridan spoke quietly. “You have wrecked your Cause, child, by your own folly, only ’tis over late to reproach you with that now.” He persuaded the Prince to lie down. “Go to sleep,” he ordered him tenderly.

A chill hand stole into his. “Forgive me, Sherry. You must be wearied out and hungry, and I—I have nothing to give you. I think my heart is broken,” he added. “You are all I have left.”

He made the other bring a chair and sit beside him. Sheridan was nodding with lack of sleep, the Prince spiritless and worn out. He drew Sheridan's head down to the pillow beside his own. "You will not leave me? Lord George will wake us both when there is need."

Rain began to spatter against the windows, and the sullen sky matched the sombre, sad-coloured landscape. It was towards eleven when Lord George Murray and the Duke of Athol knocked at the door. Sheridan rose noiselessly, and opened it. "Must you wake His Royal Highness, my lord?" He read the truth in the other's eyes. "Very good."

The brothers looked at the Prince, sunk in the sleep of utter exhaustion of body and soul. "It is cruel to wake him, but I suppose we have to," the Duke murmured. "God help him, poor lad! What does the morrow hold in store for him?"

Lord George turned a scowling face upon the speaker. "God help all of us, I say. What does the morrow hold in store for any one, save ruin and death? I have tried my hardest to dissuade him from fighting, implored him to retreat to the Highlands, and hold the English in play until our troops are rested and reinforced, but to no purpose. He would listen to nothing save immediate battle."

"His Royal Highness could not support the fatigues of a hill campaign." The Duke contemplated the worn young face with loving eyes.

"His Royal Highness could support the fatigue as well as any person in the army." Lord George's scowl deepened. "Except, perhaps, Sir Thomas Sheridan and a few of the Irish, so we are obliged to be undone for their ease."

They roused him, gently enough. He sat up, clinging to the Duke's arm. "Yes, I am quite ready. I will come now. What news, my lord?"

"Lord Elcho's party of horse has come in with intelligence that the enemy are moving towards us, sir. We had better form our ranks." He gave the Prince his bonnet, and a heavy riding-cloak to wear over his tartan coat and buff waistcoat. "It is like to snow before long," he observed.

Charles looked from one to the other. In their faces he read pity, disapproval, anger, and he shrank, covering his own. It was only a momentary weakness, for he walked from the room and down the stair with high head and unfaltering step. His steward met him in the hall, pressing food upon him. The cloth was just ready to be laid. There was a roasted side of lamb and two hens. The Prince merely made a mute gesture of refusal.

The house was a hive of confusion and semi-panic. The chiefs, too tired for deliberation after the futile night-march, had snatched a few hours' uneasy sleep on chairs, tables, or the floor. Many of their men, drunken with fatigue,

prone with hunger, lay snoring in the mist-soaked open, unaroused by bagpipes and shouting. Others ran in and out, issuing contrary orders, quarrelling with one another, openly lamenting the decision to fight. The Prince, shivering, stepped forth into the snarling cold of the April morning.

He turned to address Lord George. "The men had better be told to form in order of battle." He read renewed disapproval in the face of the Cameron chief as Lochiel came up. "Are you too against fighting?" he asked him wearily.

"I am, sir, with so many of the men absent, and most not having tasted food for two days." He looked pleadingly at Charles. "We are all fatigued, and in no spirit for battle. If your Royal Highness would consent to cross the Nairn, and enter upon a mountain campaign——"

The Prince shook his head. "Too late, *mon cher*. How are we to obtain supplies of food? No, we must fight as and where we are."

They drew up upon the bleak moor, the earth soaked and spongy to the tread. Lord George regarded it with a disapproving eye. "I am convinced that this is wrong ground, sir." He addressed O'Sullivan, ranging the men in order of battle. "We have still time to cross the water and take up the ground which Brigadier Stapleton and Colonel Ker viewed yesterday."

There was a thud of hoofs as Lord Elcho galloped up and swung himself from the saddle. "I have the honour to report, sir, that the enemy are advancing," he called. Charles shivered. He seemed sunk in a bleak dream. "They are within a mile of us," Elcho added.

The Prince gazed round him, at the raw plateau of unfertile moor, at the shuddering, reduced ranks of Highlanders, at Lord George and O'Sullivan heatedly disputing over the right ground, at Elcho's bitter young face and malicious eyes. "Would you fight, Elcho?" he queried listlessly.

The other shrugged his shoulders. "As soon as stand to be mowed down by Cumberland's soldiers, or starve. Your pardon, sir. I forgot that your Royal Highness dislikes advice."

The Prince tried, pitifully, the old cajoleries. "I asked you for yours, my dear." He laid his arm round Elcho's shoulders. "How well your men look!" he told him. "Do you remember Lord George's complaints that riding was a lost accomplishment, and how one day at Bannockburn I took him to the window and bade him watch you and them?"

Lord Elcho drew coldly away from the caressing arm. "I have no wish to recall anything connected with Bannockburn," he said frigidly.

The Prince trembled. "How you hate me! Do not, ah, do not! If I have brought you to this, at least I have brought myself to worse."

Lord Elcho shrugged his shoulders again. "Why, I do not hate your Royal Highness. I think you are not worth hating," he answered. He moved away. "Well, like the man in the Scriptures, I had better go to my own place."

Lochiel came up to the Prince, a statue of misery and bewilderment beside his horse. "It is too cold for you to stand, sir. If your Royal Highness would walk about a little, it encourages the men to see their Prince."

Charles followed Lochiel, still as if he were a mere body, the controlling mind and soul in some distant region. O'Sullivan joined them, and the three stood watching the attenuated ranks form. Pitiful remnants of the splendid clans which the Prince had led on that quarrelsome, distracted march to Derby: Athol men, Camerons, Stewarts, Mackintoshes, Farquharsons, Chisholms, Ogilvys, Lord John Drummond commanding MacLauchlans and MacLeans, MacDonalds of Lochgarry, Keppoch, and Clanranald, the remains of Elcho's and Pitsligo's horse, a few Frasers, who with the Master of Lovat came up at the last moment. The Prince complained pettishly of the time they took to form. "How long they are! Cumberland will be upon us. Oh, this cold!" He stamped his feet fretfully.

Suddenly there was an exclamation from Lochiel. "Does not your Royal Highness observe that the MacDonalds are on the left to-day, sir?"

Charles looked bewildered. "Does it signify? I promised the right wing to Lord George and his Athol men," he rejoined listlessly.

Lochiel, whose gracious tact in resigning the coveted post of honour when it fell to his Camerons by lot the day before Prestonpans had done much to avert feud and disaster, shook his head. "A pity, sir. The MacDonalds are very tenacious of their hereditary right. Here are Keppoch and Clanranald."

The two angry chiefs now came up, with loud arguments anent their clan privilege. Lochgarry joined them, all three talking at once. Through the bombardment Charles made out that they insisted upon the MacDonalds having the right wing, that the Athol men had no business to be anywhere but on the left, and His Royal Highness must alter the disposition immediately. Charles looked at them entreatingly.

"For my sake, do not dispute it. I had already agreed to give the right wing to Lord George and his Athol men." He stooped to pleading. "Have I not enough to bear, without a fresh breach with him over this point? I implore you to let matters be as they are."

He turned away, and mounted into the saddle. The gaunt ranks cheered him, loyal to the last man, as he rode past them with words of encouragement. He took his station, guarded by some of FitzJames's Horse, on a small eminence, from whence he could see the tense, waiting wedge of tartan, the

dim, unending lines of the coming foe. He felt frozen, numbed, lifeless. This was the hour for which he had lived all these months, the hour that should turn or decide his fate. He met it, ill in body, sick and suspicious in mind, his officers at variance amongst themselves, his fortunes irreparably broken, his Highlanders starved and childishly acquiescent. There was no eagerness, no leashed-in impatience to charge. The air bit like a shark's tooth. Sleet, slanting steadily, was whitening the ground, and a howling wind tossed the stinging flakes in the Highland army's unprotected faces. Soon it mingled with the ghostly snow and acrid smell of gunpowder, as the English soldiery opened fire.

“It was a cold, misty, rainy day,” wrote Lord Elcho long years afterwards, “and the wind blew in the face of the Prince's army.”

CHAPTER XVI

“We will eat and drink later. Let us remain together a little, we who have loved each other so sadly, and have fought so long. . . . Whether it was but recently (for Time is nothing) or at the beginning of the world, I sent you out to war. I sat in the darkness where there is not any created thing, and to you I was only a voice commanding valour and an unnatural virtue. You heard the voice in the dark and you never heard it again. . . . But you were men. You did not forget your secret honour, though the whole cosmos turned an engine of torture to tear it out of you.”

G. K. CHESTERTON.

LESS than an hour later a little group surrounding a figure on a grey horse might have been seen making its way along a route some few miles from the field of slaughter. The sleet had changed to damp drizzle. To those in flight the heavy, louring air smelt of powder and blood. *Snow blown in the faces of the fleeing clansmen, and one mounted on a grey gelding, who rides faster than them all!* “Oh, Æneas, Æneas, would God I had died with you at Falkirk, before I lived to be the one your closing vision showed you ride away!”

Charles had sat watching with wild eyes the merciless destruction of his life's hopes. Impatient at standing there uselessly, his men mere targets for the enemy's fire, Lord George had sent to the Prince, requesting the order to attack. A cannon-shot killed the messenger returning with the required permission. Before the command to charge could be given, the Mackintoshes had broken from control and dashed forward. The whole right wing, Lord George on horseback at their head, followed suit. Their fierce impetus struck and broke the front line on the enemy's left. Barrel's and Munro's regiments were momentarily broken, and the Highlanders' onslaught through smoke and sleet continued, a puny triumph. Athol men, Camerons, Stewarts, Frasers, MacLeans, hurled themselves at the foe, until the fire of the Hanoverians' second line checked and disabled them. The Prince, half blind with tears, saw his desperate and broken ranks thinned, mown down, and totally routed. Incredible to him had been the sullen attitude of the MacDonalds, stubbornly preferring to stand to be slaughtered like droves of pigs, sooner than charge when another clan held the post of honour. The Duke of Perth urged them—uselessly. Keppoch, their chief, fell, to his everlasting honour. In the end the Prince broke frantically from the safe vantage ground surrounded by his friends, in a vain effort to rally the disordered clans. His bonnet had fallen off, and the long hair, loose and wild, made a plaything for the wind. A cannon-shot had fallen within a short distance of him, throwing up earth which splashed his face and mouth, but went totally disregarded. What was mud, to

the ruin that that fatal field meant to his Cause?

Sheridan, heedless of his own danger, came after the Prince and caught at his bridle. All round were groans, and ground slippery with blood. The Prince struck fiercely at the hand on the rein, then reeled in the saddle, throwing up his arms.

“Child, pull yourself together!” Sheridan was beside him, striving to take hold of the grey’s head. “You must come immediately. You cannot rally your men, and you have to think of yourself. Carluccio, do you hear me?”

If he heard, he paid no heed. The eyes, wild and glazed, stared at the scene of carnage, the lips moved spasmodically. Sheridan turned in despair to see O’Sullivan riding towards them.

“Sir, tell His Royal Highness he must come. There is not a moment to lose.” He took the little bottle of brandy that the other fortunately carried, and dashed the contents against the locked teeth. “Drink it, child, for God’s sake, and come.”

The raw spirit gave Charles back a modicum of voice and vitality. “I will not come, Sherry. I will stay here and rally them, or die.” He wrenched away his bridle. “Go, and you too, O’Sullivan, if you are afraid. My place is here.”

They looked at one another. He was gathering strength to dash into a hell’s mouth of smoke and slaughter. “Take the bridle, Colonel O’Sullivan.” Sheridan spoke in fierce, level tones. “Turn the brute’s head. Good God! have you never seen a horse before?” He gathered his own bridle into one hand, and passed the other arm round the limp, collapsing figure. “Carluccio, you must not faint. There, lean against me. Colonel O’Sullivan, you will have to manage the Prince’s horse and your own. We had better gallop.”

They rode madly, the Prince crouched in the saddle, the reins slack between numb, nerveless fingers. O’Sullivan had dropped the horse’s head, wrenched round so unceremoniously, and was riding alongside. They splashed through icy water at a rain-swollen ford, but not until they had put several miles between themselves and the carnage, did they halt.

Stewart, the Prince’s valet, who had been stationed a little behind him throughout the brief battle, followed, and now came up to him. “I have the canteens here, sir. Will your Royal Highness be pleased to take a refreshment of anything? You have not eaten or drunk this day.”

Charles shook his head vaguely. “Stewart, no meat, no drink,” he answered mechanically. He looked at the small escort of FitzJames’s Horse, and uttered a tentative suggestion that they should retire to Ruthven of Badenoch. “Go with them, Stewart,” he told his servant.

Laurence Oliphant, his young aide-de-camp, who had seen him safely out

of the fray, approached with a request to be permitted to return. "I deeply regret this issue for your Royal Highness's sake," he whispered. They looked at one another. Each was seeing a sombre room in Holyrood, and proud, boyish hands crowning a fair head.

"No help for it." Charles spoke vaguely. "God is all-powerful, and can give us the victory another day." Suddenly he flung out his arms. "Would to God I had lain in the field, for there is now no more to be done!"

There seemed no hot pursuit on the part of the enemy. The country was very still, the air sodden and lifeless. The landscape stretched formless, wet, unending. Sheridan helped the Prince to dismount, when, after staring about him aimlessly, he turned and buried his face in his horse's mane. They withdrew to a little distance, judging it kinder to leave him to recover.

He appeared utterly broken and bewildered. After a time he lifted his head, and hoarsely called Sheridan to him. The Irishman spread a plaid on the wet, coarse grass which the horses were peacefully nibbling, and made him sit down, wrapped in his riding-cloak. He did not speak, but smiled once when Sheridan wiped away the mud from his cheek. A whining wind went along the land.

He seemed to have no plans, no will left. The high-couraged, self-reliant, obstinate Charles had given place to this wide-eyed, shrinking ghost, shuddering and speechless. He leant against Sheridan as the latter knelt beside him and chafed his hands. "What do you incline to do, my darling?" the Irishman asked. "It may not be safe to stay here for long."

The Prince lifted a bleak face. "I want to go back to France," he said childishly.

France! In a country honeycombed with foes, swarming with spies, his deadliest enemy with a victorious army only a few miles away, he himself penniless, not even possessing a change of raiment, how could he reach the coast? He clung to Sheridan, saying hoarsely: "I must get from hence. I cannot trust these Scots. They have betrayed me, and they may sell me."

Stragglers from the battle began to overtake the group. He shrank from them, would scarcely speak to any. Not until Colonel Ker of Graden, a battered, blood-bespattered edition of the handsome aide-de-camp, rode up, did he show the faintest flicker of interest in any individual. He tottered forward with outstretched arms. "Lord George Murray?" he stammered.

"He was thrown from his horse, sir, during the action, but in no ways hurt." Colonel Ker kissed the limp hand. "I myself saw him leave the field, one of the last, mighty dishevelled, but otherwise uninjured. The Athol Brigade were practically cut to pieces, and lost a full half of their officers and men," he

added.

Charles shuddered. "Find Lord George out, sir, and take particular care of him," he requested. Sheridan, overhearing, wondered at the Prince's motive. Was it solicitude or fear?

The stragglers kept increasing, and so did Charles's obvious nervousness of the Scots. He showed a dim pleasure at seeing young Sheridan, and Captain O'Neill, an Irish officer recently arrived from France. The survivors asked his will. He made a vague suggestion that they should rendezvous at Ruthven of Badenoch, to which the majority presently departed, uneasy and suspicious.

Even more suspicious was Lord Elcho, who now came on the scene, accompanied by the Master of Lovat. They found the Prince prone in the wet grass, utterly broken down, sobbing heart-rendingly. Young Fraser knelt beside him, spoke softly to him, and lifted the proud, wild head off the ground. Charles looked at both with blank gaze, shrinking from Elcho's curt questions. The army was a total rout. What did His Royal Highness design to do? Where was he (Elcho) to take what remained of his life-guards? The inquiries came like pistol-shots.

The Prince crawled to his feet. "Every one had better go to Ruthven of Badenoch." The words were lifeless.

Elcho scowled. "And your Royal Highness? Are you to meet us there, sir? It may still be possible to rally your forces?" he urged.

"No." Charles shook his head with dreary obstinacy. "It is useless. My faithfullest followers are almost all cut to pieces. Lochiel and Keppoch (whose advice would to God had been followed) are wounded, with many others. We are too few to encounter the usurper's forces, who are in possession of our cannon, and even if we should return, my orders still would be counteracted as formerly. My case is at present bad, but then it would be worse."

He drooped against the Master of Lovat. The boy put a loving arm about him, as if he would protect him from Elcho's merciless eyes and probing queries. "His Royal Highness's safety is of the first importance," he said gently. "Your forces would be proud to follow, sir, if you put yourself again at their head, but you must decide what is the wisest measure."

"I aim at returning to France." He spoke dully, hopelessly. "I can do more for you there, procure aid from the French court——"

"And save your own neck." Elcho broke in brutally. "Bah! So you would desert and abandon the men who have given their all for you? Your mad folly in fighting to-day has wrecked much, but there are some who after all they have sacrificed in your Cause are still ready to fight again, if only you will rally and lead them. No, you prefer safety and France, and we are left behind to

pay the piper!”

Charles shrank wordlessly nearer to the Master of Lovat. The boy, furious, was starting a spirited rejoinder, when Sheridan, hitherto speechless with disgust, broke in.

“Damn your impudence, Lord Elcho! After the holy show you made of yourself on the Spey, running away without firing a shot, you are a mighty suitable person to accuse His Royal Highness of striving to save his own person. Who has a better right? En’t he the Prince?” He stood between Charles and Elcho, his face livid with wrath. “You must think the enemy a fool to be willing to leave us time to get the army together again. And suppose—though I have no hope of it—that he is slack, and gives us time, shall we, who with eight thousand brave and well-trained soldiers suffered defeat like ours, with much less people and more timid recruits, without money or arms or food, face the conqueror? Unless I am entirely mistaken, I can see no help for it except that the Prince should get off to the Continent and reserve himself for better times, if only they will come.”

Elcho, purple with fury, declared that he had never been so addressed in his life. The Irishman smiled grimly. “’Twill be a valuable experience for you,” he remarked placidly.

“One that I shall demand satisfaction for!” retorted the young fire-eater. He drew his sword, and only for the Prince’s interference might have attacked Sheridan. Charles hoarsely begged them not to intrude private dissensions at such a moment.

“Is that your Royal Highness’s last word?” Elcho put his foot in the stirrup. “You are bent upon returning to France?”

Charles, suddenly sunk in his former apathy, merely nodded. Elcho mounted and slowly backed his horse. All the smouldering jealousy of years, the corroding hate of the past months, the remembrance of the woman from whom Charles had severed him, were in his look, his words. He leaned down from the saddle. “You damned, cowardly Italian!” He spoke with slow venom, every syllable audible. “God help me! I will never see your face again!”

He wheeled and galloped off. The soft thud of his horse’s hoofs on the spongy turf made the only sound for a few seconds. Then, with a shrill, womanish scream, Charles flung up his arms in one of his wild, foreign gestures, and sank again on the ground. “Oh, Sheridan, Fraser, you heard what he called me!”

They came round him, soothed him to comparative calm, but there seemed to be no possibility of his pulling himself together and suggesting a definite or coherent plan. His nerve had gone completely for the present. He was

hauntingly conscious of the great price set upon his head. In every Scot there lurked an enemy, eager to purchase his own safety by selling his Prince. He must get away, but how, and where?

The Master of Lovat at last drew Sheridan aside. "His Royal Highness should not remain here, Sir Thomas. The Duke's forces may overtake him." He paused, and added: "They were butchering the wounded when I left the field."

Sheridan shuddered. "What are we to do, child? There is not a roof to shelter him, nor an inch of ground where he can count on safety." They looked at the huddled figure crouched on the grass, plucking aimlessly at the wet blades. "Where can we take him?"

The boy looked reflective. "My father is at Gortleg." He went over to the broken, bewildered travesty of the Prince he loved. "It is too cold and damp for your Royal Highness here," he said cheerfully. "Will you ride to Gortleg, sir, where you are certain to find my father? He might advise and aid."

Charles was feebly acquiescent. He allowed himself to be helped to his feet and almost lifted into the saddle. His face puckered like a child's about to cry when he learned that young Fraser was not to accompany him. "My place is with my men, sir. I must see how many are left, and if I can find Lord George Murray or the Duke of Perth, I will abide by their directions." He knelt on the wet earth, and kissed the cold, passive hands in turn. "Sir Thomas and Colonel O'Sullivan will take care of your Royal Highness. God keep you always, M'eudail! Oh, you have no bonnet. Take mine."

Charles leaned down from the saddle and kissed the boy's forehead gently between the wondering eyes. "I shall never see you again," he told him tonelessly. "Do not hate me—like Elcho."

It was sunset, the sky damp gold, the country full of sighing winds, by the time that a weary little cavalcade reached Gortleg. The long-backed, bleak house, with its small, staring windows, sat in the midst of rough-dyked fields. A few ragged Frasers, some filthy children, and a score of leggy fowls made moving and grotesque shadows through the mist-thickened twilight rapidly blotting out the landscape with its white breath. The huge, truculent ghillie guarding the door looked askance at the pale, shivering young man who dismounted stiffly from a jaded horse and demanded Lord Lovat.

"Ta Chief?" He led the way into a low-ceilinged room full of glancing firelight and leaping shadows. A large, unwieldy old man, bulging out of a chair, snored before a blaze of logs. A shaggy dog rose snarling from his side.

"What the deil——?" spluttered Simon Fraser, senior. He turned, groaning,

in his seat, to confront the tattered young man then in the doorway. His thick-jowled face grew purple.

“Lord Lovat?” The Prince came forward with stumbling step and extended hands.

“Aye, aye. And who may you be, sir, speirin’ for auld Simon?” He dragged his vast bulk to his tortured feet. “Why—why——”

They looked at one another, the crafty, fox-natured Fraser, and the haggard original of the miniature Lovat had seen in Peggy Ferrier’s tavern seventeen months earlier. All the old lord’s double-dealing and dodging had availed him naught. Here stood the Prince whom he had striven to avoid, whose Cause he had espoused in secret and abused in public, from his look a fugitive and destitute. The credulous old man had daily anticipated tidings of a great Jacobite victory. With a hoarse cry he staggered forward. “The battle? Speak!”

“Lost!” Charles threw out his arms in a wild gesture of despair. “My army cut to pieces, myself a landless, hunted Prince. Your son sent me here, my lord.”

The other clawed at his arm with a gross hand. “My son! My son! What of him?”

“Safe!” Charles smiled as the old lord croaked a harsh thanksgiving. “Your son was kind and faithful. Has his father no welcome for his Prince? If I had come with tidings of a vast victory, my lord, you had been more glad, but—but _____”

He swayed a little. The old man caught him, his seamed face working. The Prince’s charm shone out even now, as he stood haggard-eyed, travel-stained, bewildered in mind, broken in nerve. Lord Lovat forced back the sense of panic, the goad of his own personal safety. He kissed the limp, clinging hand. “Your Royal Highness must forgive me that I canna kneel. Come to the fire, sir,” he said.

Charles sat in the great chair, huddled close to the comforting blaze. The dog sniffed suspiciously, but because his adored master was leaning over this queer being, he accepted him unwillingly. The Prince’s head drooped against the old man’s shoulder. Sheridan, who knew Lord Lovat’s reputation, shuddered as he saw those grey locks mingled with his darling’s bright hair.

The house was full of wailing and whispers. News of the battle and its ending ran from lip to lip. Lovat’s kinsmen and retainers crowded into the room, looking with mingled curiosity and awe on the beaten figure crouched in the Chief’s seat. “If you had been with us, my lord, I had not been here,” Charles declared once.

“I sent my son and my clan.” The old fox stiffened. “My infirmities of

body must plead my excuse for not coming in person to serve my Prince.”

They spoke in French, to baffle greedy, listening ears. Lord Lovat asked for details of the battle, and shrugged his great shoulders. “None but a fool would have fought this day,” he muttered.

They brought in food, but the Prince refused it. With difficulty he was made to swallow some wine, and persuaded to lie down on a couch. From an uneasy doze, he sank into the deeper sleep of exhaustion. Footsteps and voices suddenly broke the country quiet, and he sprang up wild-eyed, his delicate features drawn and austere, terror dominating his aspect. “The enemy!” he panted.

It proved to be some children returning home. Gradually he calmed, but the incident had shaken his nerve still further. He must not tarry longer at Gortleg, he told his host. The old man, who had made no proffer of aid, being too concerned with the perils of his own position, asked the Prince his plans.

“I have none, save to make for the Western Isles, and if possible to return to France.” Charles took up his cloak mechanically, his look vague.

The watery old eyes sent out a fire-flash. “For shame, sir! Am I to count my Prince a coward? Would you abandon this enterprise after a single defeat? Think of your great ancestor, Robert Bruce,” he urged, “who lost eleven battles, and won Scotland by the twelfth. ’Tis poltroon’s work to run away!”

Charles was past being roused or angered by the lash of scorn. His face quivered, and he held out his arms in silence. The old man softened, gathered the drooping creature closely, murmured blessings and endearments in Gaelic, finally hobbled to the door to see him mount. The night was dim and grey, stars pricking through the misty reaches of sky. There was little wind, and only a slice of witchlike moon tilted high above a dark tangle of trees.

Wade’s road, a rough and muddy track, wound across the wild country, with the dull silver of Loch Ness glimmering in the distance. Charles sat his horse with bowed head, his thoughts confused and bitter. In turn he blamed Lord George, the stubborn MacDonalds, the want of food, the failure of the night-march, a thousand trivialities, but never himself. He was the certain victim, not the cause, of all this ruin. He could at no time have acted differently. The old, obsessing grievance of the retreat from Derby held him still, the turning-point in the road to success from which a malignant fate had forced him back. His own plight, his own misery, obliterated all else. It was never glanced at in his sullen, bewildered mind that he had brought ruin upon countless thousands, drenched Scotland in the blood of her sons, removed landmarks, and wrought the destruction of many a noble house. What were the loss, disappointment, and fall of any compared with his own?

He glanced at his companions, dim forms in the surrounding dimness. Sheridan was beside him, O'Sullivan and the others a little behind. Fate had sent a sure guide in the person of an Irishman named Burke, who, coming in search of his master, one of the Prince's aides-de-camp, had willingly agreed to conduct the party. Charles stared at the square, sturdy figure plodding in front. It was like a nightmare that he, Charles Edward Stuart, the rightful Prince of Wales, should be riding for his life and safety away from a scene of slaughter that had ended his hopes, with a few faithful followers as helpless as himself, destitute, in a country peopled with foes. The high, bleak scenery, the gloom and barrenness and lofty indifference of the rugged landscape, were a fit background for his forlorn position and bewildered uncertainty.

It was two in the morning, the world lightening in the April sharpness, and birds calling, when the party reached Invergarry Castle. It stared mournful and aloof on its crag, the waters surrounding it black, secretive, telling their secrets to none. The fugitives went into the echoing desolation of the deserted house, to find ghostly, stripped rooms, cupboards bare of any food, nothing to lie on save the hard floor. Charles thought listlessly of his arrival here, less than eight months before, the August sunshine, the ripe fields, and the slim figure of Æneas MacDonald welcoming his Prince. Now the boy was mouldering under the earth in a far-distant graveyard, his father lay a prisoner in Edinburgh Castle, his brother, returning from France with troops for the Prince's service, had been captured and conveyed to the Tower. He remembered the high hopes, the wild enterprise, the cheers and brave resolutions this house had borne witness to on his first coming. The silent walls now seemed to reproach him for the bloodshed and misery which his ill-advised attempt to restore his family's glory had brought on Scotland and Scotland's sons.

Worn-out, he slept, huddled close to Sheridan for warmth. He had marched all the previous night, foodless, had watched his dearest hopes overthrown in twenty-five minutes, had ridden forty miles with only the scanty repast eaten at Lord Lovat's to sustain him. It seemed as if he had reached the lowest stratum of physical and mental misery, and the future held no more terrors for him. Ahead, though he did not know it, waited the harsh verities once seen in a doited wife's vision. For him loomed months of hiding and privation, the stark realities of hunger, thirst, rags, and filth. He, nurtured in kings' palaces, was to know thankfulness for a mean roof over his head, a bed of wet heather for his hunted body. He was to learn faithfulness and undying love, the love that bestows all and asks nothing, the love that serves, and lives humbly on memory and gratitude. Elemental things—the scourge of rain, the horror of great wind, the darkness, companioned by watching fear, the lying in soaked

garments without light or warmth under the open sky, the limitless cruelty of raging seas and high cliffs and unassailable mountain-peaks, the stars for candles, faith for a lantern and a torch—all these were to teach him what men's praise and honour, a woman's love and soft lips, the bent knees and homage of great chiefs, had never taught him. In the desperate straits and dangers of his island wanderings, he was to show high courage, a patience and serenity, a trust in God's Providence and man's goodness, utterly alien to him hitherto. He, who had lost everything, for a very little time found his own soul, and a nation's devotion that was deathless.

Over Invergarry dawn showed red in the breaking east.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Scotland's Heir* by Winifred Duke]