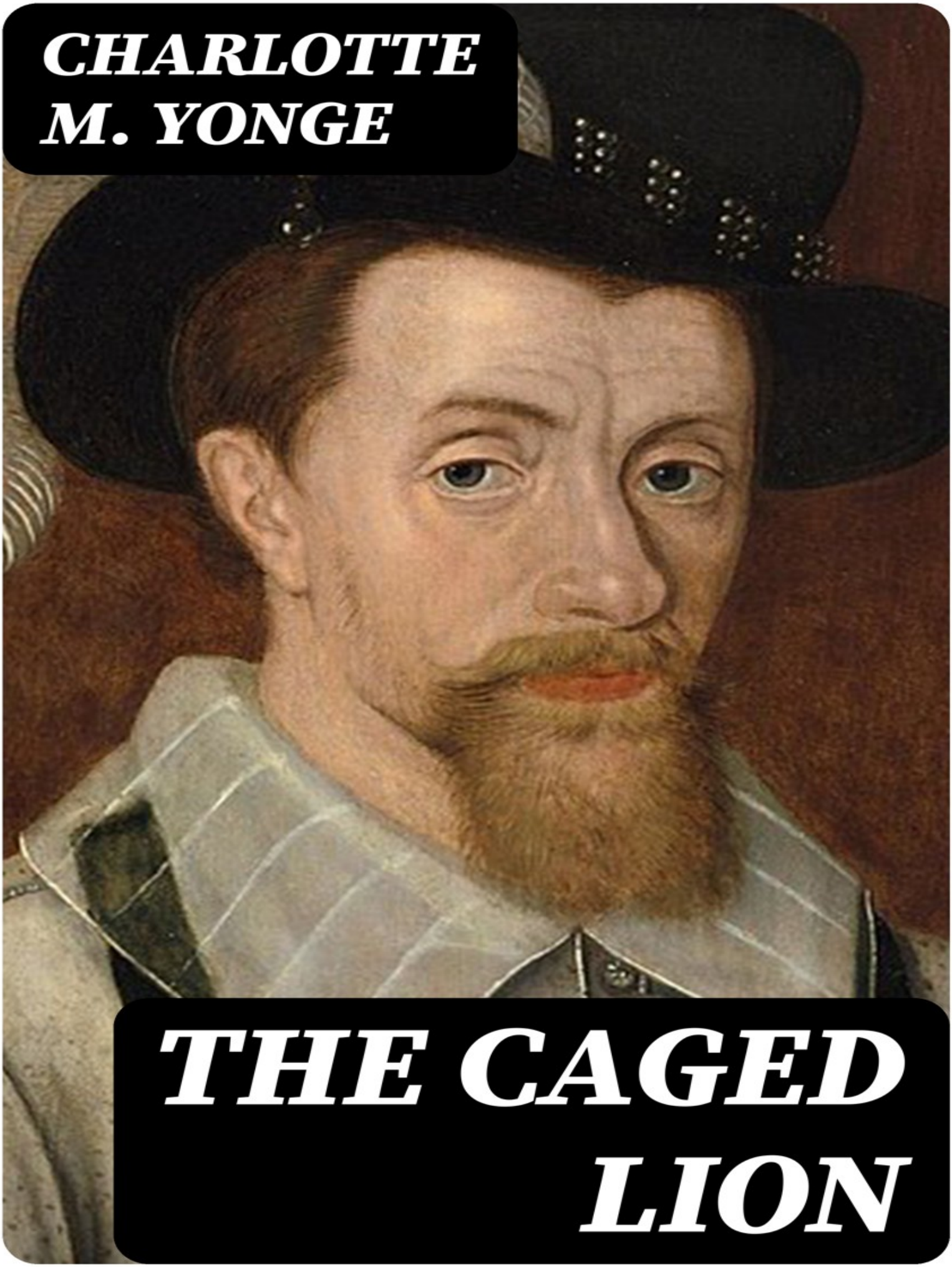
CHARLOTTE M. YONGE



THE CAGED LION

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The Caged Lion

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PREFACE

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

James's expedition to Scotland is wholly imaginary, though there appears to have been space for it during Henry's progress to the North to pay his devotions at Beverley Minster. The hero of the story is likewise invention, though, as Froissart ascribes to King Robert II. 'eleven sons who loved arms,' Malcolm may well be supposed to be the son of one of those unaccounted for in the pedigrees of Stewart. The same may be said of Esclairmonde. There were plenty of Luxemburgs in the Low Countries, but the individual is not to be identified. Readers of Tyler's 'Henry V.,' of Agnes Strickland's 'Queens,' Tytler's 'Scotland,' and Barante's 'Histoire de Bourgogne' will be at no loss for the origin of all I have ventured to say of the really historical personages. Mr. Fox Bourne's 'English Merchants' furnished the tradition respecting Whittington. I am afraid the knighthood was really conferred on Henry's first return to

England, after the battle of Agincourt; but human—or at least story-telling—nature could not resist an anachronism of a few years for such a story. The only other wilful alteration of a matter of time is with regard to the Duke of Burgundy's interview with Henry. At the time of Henry's last stay at Paris the Duke was attending the death-bed of his wife, Michelle of France, but he had been several times in the King's camp at the siege of Meaux.

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

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

benefactor to learning in Scotland, and founder of her earliest University, having been himself educated at Paris.

The Abbey of Coldingham is described from a local compilation of the early part of the century, with an account of the history of that grand old foundation, and the struggle for appointments between the parent house at Durham and the Scottish Government. Priors Akefield and Drax are historical, and as the latter really did commission a body of moss-troopers to divert an instalment of King James's ransom into his own private coffers, I do not think I can have done him much injustice. As the nunnery of St. Abbs has gone bodily into the sea, I have been the less constrained by the inconvenient action of fact upon fiction. And for the Hospital of St. Katharine's-by-the-Tower, its history is to be found in Stowe's 'Survey of London,' and likewise in the evidence before the Parliamentary Commission, which shows what it was intended by Queen Philippa to have been to the river-side population, and what it might have been had such intentions been understood and acted on—nay, what it may yet become, since the foundation remains intact, although the building has been removed.

C. M. YONGE.

November 24, 1869.

CHAPTER I: THE GUEST OF GLENUSKIE

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

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

The castle was necessarily narrow and confined; its massive walls took up much even of the narrow space that the rock afforded; but it had been so piled up that it seemed as though the builders wished to make height compensate

for straitness. There was, too, an unusual amount of grace, both in the outline of the gateway with its mighty flanking towers, and of the lofty donjon tower, that shot up like a great finger above the Massy More, as the main building was commonly called by the inhabitants of Glenuskie.

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

The early spring of the year 1421 was bleak and dreary in that wild lonely vale, and large was the fire burning on the hearth in the castle hall, in the full warmth of which there sat, with a light blue cloth cloak drawn tightly round him, a tall old man, of the giant mould of Scotland, and with a massive thoughtful brow, whose grand form was rendered visible by the absence of hair, only a few remnants of yellow locks mixed with silver floating from his temples to mingle

with his magnificent white beard. A small blue bonnet, with a short eagle feather, fastened with a brooch of river pearl, was held in the hands that were clasped over his face, as, bending down in his chair, he murmured through his white beard, ‘Have mercy, good Lord, have mercy on the land. Have mercy on my son,—and guard him when he goes out and when he comes in. Have mercy on the children I have toiled for, and teach me to judge and act for them aright in these sore straits; and above all, have mercy on our King, break his fetters, and send him home to be the healer of his land, the avenger of her cruel wrongs.’

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

He was wrapped in a plaid, black and white, which increased the gray appearance of the pale sallow face and sad expression of the wearer, a boy of about seventeen, with soft pensive dark eyes and a sickly complexion, with that peculiar wistful cast of countenance that is apt to accompany deformity, though there was no actual malformation apparent, unless such might be reckoned the slight halt in the gait, and the small stature of the lad, who was no taller than many boys of twelve or fourteen. But there was a depth of melancholy in those dark brown eyes, that went far into the heart of any one who had the power to be touched with their yearning, appealing, almost piteous gaze, as though their owner had come into a world that was

much too hard for him, and were looking out in bewilderment and entreaty for some haven of peace.

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

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

‘And the reek?’ asked the uncle.

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

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

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

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

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

‘But listen, listen, dear Uncle. I have not spoken of it for a full year now. So that you cannot say it is the caresses of the good monks. No, nor the rude sayings of the Master of Albany,’ he added, colouring at a look of his uncle. ‘You bade me say no more till I be of full age; nor would I, save that I were safe lodged in an abbey; then might Patrick and

Lily be wedded, and he not have to leave us and seek his fortune far away in France; and in Patie's hands and leading, my vassals might be safe; but what could the doited helpless cripple do?' he added, the colour rising hotly to his cheek with pain and shame. 'Oh, Sir, let me but save my soul, and find peace in Coldingham!'

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

'You could give her to Patrick, Uncle.'

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

'And so Lilias must pine, and Patrick wander off to the weary French war,' sighed Malcolm; 'and I must be scorned by my cousins whenever the House of Stewart meets

together; and must strive with these fierce cruel men, that will ever be too hard for me when Patie is gone.' His eyes filled with tears as he continued, 'Ah! that fair chapel, with the sweet chant of the choir, the green smooth-shaven quadrangle, the calm cloister walk; there, there alone is rest. There, one ceases to be a prey and a laughing-stock; there, one sees no more bloodshed and spulzie; there, one need not be forced to treachery or violence. Oh, Uncle! my very soul is sick for Coldingham. How many years will it be ere I can myself bestow my sister on Patie, and hide my head in peace!'

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

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

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

'A knight—a knight in bright steel, and with three attendants,' said Lilias; 'one of Patrick's French comrades,

say I, by the grace of his riding.’

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

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

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

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

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

The chaplain was a wise, prudent, and much-respected man; nevertheless, young Sir Patrick Drummond felt little

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

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

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

greeted him, saying in a manly mellow voice and southern accent, ‘I have been bold enough to presume on the good father’s offer of hospitality, Sir.’

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

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

‘Even so, Sir,’ returned Sir David Drummond, who was, in fact, as his nephew’s guardian, usually known by this curious title; ‘and you here see my wards, the Lord Malcolm and Lady Lilias. Your knighthood will make allowances for the lad, he is but home-bred.’ For while Lilias with stately grace responded to Sir James Stewart’s courtly greeting, Malcolm bashfully made an awkward bow, and seemed ready to shrink within himself, as, indeed, the brutal jests of his rude cousins had made him dread and hate the eye of a stranger; and while the knight was led forward to the hall fire, he merely pressed up to the priest, and eagerly demanded under his breath, ‘Have you brought me the book?’ but Father Ninian had only time to nod, and sign that a volume was in his bosom, before old Sir David called out, ‘What now, Malcolm, forgetting that your part is to come and disarm the knight who does you the honour to be your guest?’ And Sir Patrick rather roughly pushed him forward,

gruffly whispering, ‘Leave not Lily to supply your lack of courtesy.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Nay, nay, Sir,’ cried Patrick angrily, ‘it is to save an ancient ally from the tyranny of our foulest foe. It is the only

place where a Scotsman can seek his fortune with honour, and without staining his soul with foul deeds. Bring our King home, and every sword shall be at his service.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

moment.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

Malcolm was not easy to draw out at first, but it presently appeared that he had been baffled by a tough bit of Latinity.

The knight looked, and readily expounded the sentence, so that all became plain; and then, as it was already too dark to pursue the study with comfort, he stood over the boy, talking to him of books and of poems, while the usually pale, listless, uninterested countenance responded by looks of eager delight and flushing colour.

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

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

Lilias sat between her uncle and his guest, looking so fair and bright that Patrick felt fresh accesses of angry jealousy, while the visitor talked as one able to report to the natives from another world, and that world the hateful England,

which as a Scotsman he was bound to abhor. Had it been France, it had been endurable, but praise of English habits was mere disloyalty; and yet, whenever Patrick tried to throw in a disparaging word, he found himself met with a quiet superiority such as he had believed no knight in Scotland could assume with him, and still it was neither brow-beating nor insolence, nothing that could give offence.

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

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

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

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

A flush of crimson flamed forth on Sir James Stewart's cheeks, and his tawny eye glanced with a fire like red lightning, but he seemed, as it were, to be holding himself

in, and answered with a voice forcibly kept low and calm, and therefore the more terribly stern, ‘Young Sir, I warn you to honour your future queen.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was an eager pressing round to hear, and not only were Lilias and Malcolm, but old Sir David himself, much affected by the strain, which the latter said put him in mind of the days of King Robert III., which, sad as they were, now seemed like good old times, so much worse was the present state of affairs. Sir James, however, seemed anxious to

prevent discussion of the verses he had sung, and applied to Malcolm to give a specimen of his powers: and thus, with music, ballad, and lay, the evening passed away, till the parting cup was sent round, and the Tutor of Glenuskie and Malcolm marshalled their guest to the apartment where he was to sleep, in a wainscoted box bedstead, and his two attendant squires, a great iron-gray Scot and a rosy honest-faced Englishman, on pallets on the floor.

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

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

Old Robert of Albany had been King Stork, his son Murdoch was King Log; and the misery was infinitely increased by the violence and lawlessness of Murdoch’s sons. King Robert II. had left Scotland the fearful legacy of, as Froissart says, ‘eleven sons who loved arms.’ Of these, Robert III. was the eldest, the Duke of Albany the second.

These were both dead, and were represented, the one by the captive young King James, the other by the Regent, Duke Murdoch of Albany, and his brother John, Earl of Buchan, now about to head a Scottish force, among whom Patrick Drummond intended to sail, to assist the French.

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

CHAPTER II: THE RESCUE OF COLDINGHAM

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

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

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

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

'Do not be so daft, Lord Malcolm,' replied the Squire, retaining his hold on the boy's bridle; 'what, rin your head

into the wolf’s mouth again, when we’ve barely brought you off haill and sain?’

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

‘Hoot, my lord! would I let you gang, when the Tutor spak to me as plain as I hear you now? “Take off Lord Malcolm,” says he; “save him, and you save the rest. See him safe to the Earl of Mar.” Those were his words, my lord; and if you wilna heed them, I will.’

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

‘Look you, Lord Malcolm,’ said Halbert, laying his finger on his nose, with a knowing expression, ‘my young lady is safe from harm so long as you are out of the Master of Albany’s reach. Had you come by a canny thrust in the fray, as no doubt was his purpose, or were you in his hands to be mewed in a convent, then were your sister worth the wedding; but the Master will never wed her while you live and have friends to back you, and his father, the Regent, will see she has no ill-usage. You’ll do best for yourself and her too, as well as Sir David, if you make for Dunbar, and call ben your uncles of Athole and Strathern.—How now, Rab? are the loons making this way?’

‘Na, na!’ said Rab, descending; ‘’tis from the other gate; ’tis a knight in blue damasked steel: he, methinks, that

harboured in our castle some weeks syne.’

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

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

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

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

And he gave way to another paroxysm of grief, while Halbert explained to Sir James Stewart that when Sir Patrick Drummond had gone to embark for France, with the army led to the aid of Charles VI. by the Earl of Buchan, his father and cousins, with a large escort, had accompanied him to Eyemouth; whence, after taking leave of him, they had set out to spend Passion-tide and Easter at Coldingham Abbey, after the frequent fashion of the devoutly inclined among