HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE : A TALE OF FONTENOY AND CULLODEN

George Henty

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I: The Return of a Prodigal

It was a dull evening in the month of September, 1728. The apprentices had closed and barred the shutters and the day's work was over. Supper was laid in the long room over the shop, the viands were on the table, and round it were standing Bailie Anderson and his wife, his foreman John Gillespie, and his two apprentices. The latter were furtively eying the eatables, and wondering how much longer the grace which their master was delivering would be. Suddenly there was a knock at the door below. No one stirred until the bailie had finished his grace, before which time the knock had been twice repeated.

"Elspeth, woman," the bailie said when he had brought the grace to an end, "go down below and see who knocks so impatiently; look through the grille before you open the door; these are nor times when one opens to the first stranger who knocks."

The old servant, who had been standing behind her mistress, went downstairs. The door was opened, and they heard an exclamation of surprise at the answer to her question, "Who is it that's knocking as if the house belonged to him?"

Those gathered up stairs heard the bolts withdrawn. There was a confused sound of talking and then a heavy step was heard ascending the stairs, and without introduction a tall man, wrapped in a cloak and carrying a child of some two years old, strode into the room. He threw his hat on to a settle and advanced straight towards the bailie, who looked in surprise at this unceremonious entry.

"Don't you know me, Andrew?"

"Heaven preserve us," the bailie exclaimed, "why it's Malcolm!"

"Malcolm himself," the visitor repeated, "sound in wind and limb."

"The Lord be praised!" the bailie exclaimed as he grasped the other's hand and wrung it warmly. "I had thought you dead years and years ago. Janet, this is my brother Malcolm of whom you have often heard me speak."

"And of whom you can have heard little good, mistress, if my brother has spoken the truth concerning me. I was ever a ne'er do well, while Andrew struck hard and fast to our father's trade."

"My husband has ever spoken with affection of you," Janet Anderson said. "The bailie is not given to speak ill of any, much less of his own flesh and blood."

"And now sit down, Malcolm. Supper is waiting, and you are, I doubt not, ready for it. It is ill talking to a fasting man. When you have done you shall tell me what you have been doing for the last fifteen years, and how it comes that you thus suddenly come back among us with your boy."

"He is no boy of mine," Malcolm said; "but I will tell you all about it presently. First let me lay him down on that settle, for the poor little chap is fast asleep and dead tired out. Elspeth, roll up my cloak and make a pillow for him. That's right, he will do nicely now. You are changed less than any of us, Elspeth. Just as hard to look at, and, I doubt not, just as soft at heart as you used to be when you tried to shield me when I got into scrapes. And now to supper."

Little was said during the meal; fortunately the table was bounteously spread, for the newcomer's appetite was prodigious; but at last he was satisfied, and after a long drink at the horn beside him, which Elspeth had kept filled with ale, he said:

"There's nothing like a Scottish meal after all, Andrew. French living is well enough for a time, but one tires of it; and many a time when I have been lying down supperless on the sod, after marching and fighting the whole day, I have longed for a bowl of porridge and a platter well filled with oatmeal cakes."

Supper over, John and the apprentices retired. Elspeth went off to prepare the guest's chamber and to make up a little bed for the child.

"Now, brother, let us hear your story; but, first of all, perhaps

you want to light your pipe?"

"That do I," Malcolm replied, "if Mistress Janet has no objection thereto."

"She is accustomed to it," the bailie said, answering for her. "I smoke myself; I deem that tobacco, like other things, was given for our use, and methinks that with a pipe between the lips men's brains work more easily and that it leadeth to pleasant converse."

Janet went to a cupboard, brought out two long pipes and a jar of tobacco, placed two tumblers, a flat bottle, and a jug of water on the table.

"That is right," the bailie said. "I do not often touch strong waters. The habit, as I see too plainly, is a harmful one, and in this good city of Glasgow there are many, even of those so placed that they should be an example to their fellows, who are given nightly to drink more than is good for them; but on an occasion like the present I deem it no harm to take a glass."

"I should think not," Malcolm said heartily; "it is long since I tasted a glass of real Scotch spirit, and I never need an excuse for taking a glass of whatever it be that comes in my way. Not, Mistress Janet, that I am a toper. I don't say that at the sack of a town, or at times when liquor is running, so to speak, to waste, I am more backward than the rest; but my hand wouldn't be as steady as it is if I had been one of those who are never so happy as when they are filling themselves with liquor. And now, Andrew, to my story. You know that when I saw you last–just when the troubles in '15 began–in spite of all your warnings to

the contrary, I must needs throw myself into the thick of them. You, like a wise man, stuck to your shop, and here you are now a bailie of Glasgow; while I, who have been wandering over the face of the earth fighting for the cause of France and risking my life a thousand times in a matter which concerned me in no way, have returned just as penniless as I set out."

"It is said, brother Malcolm," Janet said mildly, "that a rolling stone gathers no moss."

"That is true enough," Malcolm assented; "and yet do you know there are few rolling stones who, if their time were to come over again, would remain fixed in their bed. Of course we have not the pleasures of home, of wives and children; but the life of adventure has its own joys, which I, for one, would not change for the others. However, brother, as you know, I threw myself heart and soul into that business.

"The last time I saw you was just as I was starting with a score of others to make our way to join the Earl of Mar's army at Perth. I have seen many an army since, but never did I see sixteen thousand finer fighting men than were there assembled. The Laird of Mackintosh brought five hundred clansmen from Inverness shire, the Marquis of Huntly had five hundred horse and two thousand foot, and the Earl Marischal had a thousand men. The Laird of Glenlyon brought five hundred Campbells, and the Marquis of Tullibardine fourteen hundred, and a score of other chiefs of less power were there with their clansmen. There were enough men there to have done anything had they

been properly armed and led; but though arms and ammunition had been promised from France, none came, and the Earl of Mar had so little decision that he would have wrecked the finest army that ever marched.

"The army lay doing nothing for weeks, and just before we were expecting a movement, the company I belonged to was sent with a force of Highlanders under Mackintosh to join the army under the Lords Derwentwater, Kenmure, and Nithsdale. Lord Derwentwater had risen with a number of other gentlemen, and with their attendants and friends had marched against Newcastle. They had done nothing there but remained idle near Hexham till, joined by a force raised in the Lowlands of Scotland by the Earls of Nithsdale, Carnwath, and Wintoun, the united army marched north again to Kelso, where we joined them.

"We Scots soon saw that we had gained nothing by the change of commanders. Lord Derwentwater was ignorant of military affairs, and he was greatly swayed by a Mr. Forster, who was somehow at the head of the business, and who was not only incompetent, but proved to be a coward, if not, as most folks believed, a traitor. So dissension soon broke out, and four hundred Highlanders marched away north. After a long delay it was resolved to move south, where, it was said, we should be joined by great numbers in Lancashire; but by this time all had greatly lost spirit and hope in the enterprise. We crossed the border and marched down through Penrith, Appleby, and Kendal to Lancaster, and then on to Preston.

"I was little more than a lad, Andrew, but even to me it seemed madness thus to march into England with only two thousand men. Of these twelve hundred were foot, commanded by Brigadier Mackintosh; the others were horse. There were two troops of Stanhope's dragoons quartered in Preston, but these retired when we neared the town, and we entered without opposition. Next day, which was, I remember, the 10th of November, the Chevalier was proclaimed king, and some country gentlemen with their tenants came in and joined us.

"I suppose it would have come to the same thing in the end, but never were things so badly managed as they were by Mr. Forster.

"Preston was a strong natural position; an enemy coming from the south could only reach it by crossing a narrow bridge over the river Ribble a mile and a half away, and this could have been held by a company against an army. From the bridge to the town the road was so narrow that in several places two men could not ride abreast. It ran between two high and steep banks, and it was here that Cromwell was nearly killed when he attacked Charles's troops.

"Well, all these places, where we might certainly have defended ourselves, were neglected, and we were all kept in the town, where we formed four main posts. One was in the churchyard, and this was commanded by Brigadier Mackintosh. In support of this was the volunteer horse under Derwentwater and the three other lords. Lord Charles Murray was in command at a barricade at a little distance from the churchyard. Colonel

Mackintosh had charge of a post at a windmill; and the fourth was in the centre of the town.

"Lord Derwentwater was a poor general, but he was a brave man. He and his two brothers, the Ratcliffs, rode about everywhere, setting an example of coolness, animating the soldiers, and seeing to the work on the barriers. Two days after we reached the town we heard that General Wilde was approaching. Colonel Farquharson was sent forward with a portion of Mackintosh's battalion to hold the bridge and the pass; but Mr. Forster, who went out on horseback, no sooner saw the enemy approaching than he gave orders to Farquharson and his men to retreat to the town. If I had been in Farquharson's place I would have put a bullet through the coward's head, and would have defended the bridge till the last.

"After that everything was confusion; the Highlanders came back into the town furious and disheartened. The garrison prepared to receive the enemy. Mr. Forster was seen no more, and in fact he went straight back to the house where he was lodging and took his bed, where he remained till all was over. The enemy came on slowly. They could not understand why strong posts should be left undefended, and feared falling in an ambuscade. I was at the post commanded by Brigadier Mackintosh. I had joined a company commanded by Leslie of Glenlyon, who had brought with him some twenty men, and had made up his company with men who, like myself, came up without a leader. His company was attached to Mackintosh's

regiment.

"Presently the English came in sight, and as soon as they ascertained that we were still there, which they had begun to doubt, they attacked us. We beat them back handsomely, and Derwentwater with his cavalry charged their dragoons so fiercely that he drove them out of the town. It was late in the afternoon when the fight began, and all night the struggle went on. At each of our posts we beat them back over and over again. The town was on fire in half a dozen places, but luckily the night was still and the flames did not spread. We knew that it was a hopeless fight we were making; for, from some prisoners, we learned that three regiments of dragoons were also coming up against us, and had already arrived at Clitheroe. From some inhabitants, I suppose, the enemy learned that the street leading to Wigan had nor been barricaded, and Lord Forrester brought up Preston's regiment by this way, and suddenly fell on the flank of our barrier. It was a tough fight, but we held our own till the news came that Forster had agreed to capitulate.

"I don't say that our case wasn't hopeless. We were outnumbered and had no leader; sooner or later we must have been overpowered. Still, no capitulation should have been made except on the terms of mercy to all concerned. But Forster no doubt felt safe about himself, and that was all he cared for; and the end showed that he knew what he was about, for while all the brave young noblemen, and numbers of others, were either executed or punished in other ways, Forster, who had been the

leading spirit who had persuaded them to rise, and led them into this strait, was after a short imprisonment suffered to go free. I tell you, brother Andrew, if I were to meet him now, even if it were in a church, I would drive my dagger into his heart.

"However, there we were. So furious were we that it was with difficulty the officers could prevent us from sallying out sword in hand and trying to cut our way through the enemy. As to Forster, if he had appeared in the streets he would have been hewn to pieces. However, it was useless to resist now; the English troops marched in and we laid down our arms, and our battalions marched into a church and were guarded as prisoners. It was not a great army they had taken, for there were but one thousand four hundred and ninety captured, including noblemen, gentlemen, and officers.

"Many of us were wounded more or less. I had got a slice on the shoulder from a dragoon's sword. This I gained when rushing out to rescue Leslie, who had been knocked down, and would have been slain by three dragoons had I not stood over him till some of our men rushed out and carried him in. He was not badly hurt, the sword having turned as it cut through his bonnet. My action won his regard, and from that time until a month since we have never been separated. Under a strong escort of soldiers we were marched south. In most places the country people mocked us as we passed; but here and there we saw among the crowds who gathered in the streets of the towns through which we passed, faces which we passed, faces which

expressed pity and sympathy

"We were not badly treated on the march by our guard, and had little to complain of. When we reached Barnet we fell out as usual when the march was over, and I went up to the door of a house and asked a woman, who looked pityingly at us, for a drink of water. She brought me some, and while I drank she said:

"'We are Catholics and well wishers of the Chevalier; if you can manage to slip in here after it is dark we will furnish you with a disguise, and will direct you to friends who will pass you on until you can escape.

"'Can you give me disguises for two?' I asked. 'I will not go without my captain.'

"'Yes,' she said, 'for two, but no more.'

"'I will steal away after dark,' I said as I gave her back the jug.

"I told Leslie what had happened, and he agreed to join me in time to escape, for there was no saying what fate might befall us in London; and, indeed, the very next morning severities commenced, the whole of the troops being obliged to suffer the indignity of having their arms tied behind them, and so being marched into London.

"After it was dark Leslie and I managed to steal away from our guards, who were not very watchful, for our uniform would at once have betrayed us, and the country people would have seized and handed us over. The woman was on the watch, and as soon as we neared the door she opened it. Her husband was with her and received us kindly. He at once furnished us with the attire of

two countrymen, and, letting us out by a back way, started with us across the country.

"After walking twenty miles he brought us to the house of another adherent of the Chevalier, where we remained all day. So we were passed on until we reached the coast, where we lay hid for some days until an arrangement was made with the captain of a fishing boat to take us to sea, and either to land us at Calais or to put us on board a French fishing boat. So we got over without trouble.

"Long before that, as you know, the business had virtually come to an end here. The Earl of Mar's army lay week after week at Perth, till at last it met the enemy under Argyle at Sheriffmuir.

"You know how that went. The Highland clans in the right and centre carried all before them, and drove the enemy from the field, but on the left they beat us badly. So both parties claimed the victory. But, victory or defeat, it was fatal to the cause of the Chevalier. Half the Highland clans went off to their homes that night, and Mar had to fall back to Perth.

"Well, that was really the end of it. The Chevalier landed, and for a while our hopes rose. He did nothing, and our hopes fell. At last he took ship and went away, and the affair was over, except for the hangings and slaughterings.

"Leslie, like most of the Scottish gentlemen who succeeded in reaching France, took service with the French king, and, of course, I did the same. It would have done your heart good to see how the Scottish regiments fought on many a field; the very best

troops of France were never before us, and many a tough field was decided by our charge. Leslie was a cornet. He was about my age; and you know I was but twenty when Sheriffmuir was fought. He rose to be a colonel, and would have given me a pair of colours over and over again if I would have taken them; but I felt more comfortable among our troopers than I should have done among the officers, who were almost all men of good Highland family; so I remained Leslie's right hand.

"A braver soldier never swung a leg over saddle; but he was always in some love affair or another. Why he didn't marry I couldn't make out. I suppose he could never stick long enough to one woman. However, some four years ago he got into an affair more serious than any he had been in before, and this time he stuck to it in right earnest. Of course she was precisely one of the women he oughtn't to have fallen in love with, though I for one couldn't blame him, for a prettier creature wasn't to be found in France. Unfortunately she was the only daughter of the Marquis de Recambours, one of the wealthiest and most powerful of French nobles, and there was no more chance of his giving his consent to her throwing herself away upon a Scottish soldier of fortune than to her going into a nunnery; less, in fact. However, she was as much in love with Leslie as he was with her, and so they got secretly married. Two years ago this child was born, but she managed somehow to keep it from her father, who was all this time urging her to marry the Duke de Chateaurouge.

"At last, as ill luck would have it, he shut her up in a convent

just a week before she had arranged to fly with Leslie to Germany, where he intended to take service until her father came round. Leslie would have got her out somehow; but his regiment was ordered to the frontier, and it was eighteen months before we returned to Paris, where the child had been in keeping with some people with whom he had placed it. The very evening of his return I was cleaning his arms when he rushed into the room.

"'All is discovered,' he said; 'here is my signet ring, go at once and get the child, and make your way with it to Scotland; take all the money in the escritoire, quick!'

"I heard feet approaching, and dashed to the bureau, and transferred the bag of louis there to my pocket. An official with two followers entered.

"'Colonel Leslie,' he said, 'it is my duty to arrest you by order of his gracious majesty;' and he held out an order signed by the king.

"'I am unconscious of having done any wrong, sir, to his majesty, whom I have served for the last sixteen years. However, it is not for me to dispute his orders;' thereupon he unbuckled his sword and handed it to the officers. 'You will look after the things till I return, Malcolm. As I am sure I can clear myself of any charge that may be brought against me, I trust to be speedily back again.

"'Your trooper need not trouble himself,' the officer said; 'the official with me will take charge of everything, and will at once affix my seal to all your effects.'

"I went down stairs and saw the colonel enter a carriage with the two officials, then I went straight to the major. 'Colonel Leslie has been arrested, sir, on what charge I know not. He has intrusted a commission to me. Therefore, if you find I am absent from parade in the morning you will understand I am carrying out his orders.'

"The major was thunderstruck at the news, but told me to do as the colonel had ordered me, whatever it might be. I mounted the colonel's horse at once and rode to the house where the child was in keeping. The people knew me well, as I had often been there with messages from the colonel. When I showed them the signet ring, and told them that I had orders to take the child to his father, they made no opposition. I said I would return for him as soon as it was dusk. I then went and purchased a suit of civilian clothes, and returning to the house attired myself in these, and taking the child on the saddle before me, rode for the frontier.

"Following unfrequented roads, travelling only at night, and passing a day in a wood, I passed the frontier unmolested, and made my way to Ostend, where I sold the horse and took passage in the first ship sailing for Leith. I arrived there two days ago, and have walked here, with an occasional lift in a cart; and here I am, brother Andrew, to ask you for hospitality for a while for myself and Leslie's boy. I have a hundred louis, but these, of course, belong to the child. As for myself, I confess I have nothing; saving has never been in my line."

"You are heartily welcome, Malcolm, as long as you choose

to stop; but I trust that ere long you will hear of Colonel Leslie."

"I trust so," Malcolm said; "but if you knew the court of France as well as I do you would not feel very sanguine about it. It is easier to get into a prison than out of one."

"But the colonel has committed no crime!" the bailie said.

"His chance would be a great deal better if he had," Malcolm laughed. "A colonel of one of his majesty's Scottish regiments can do a good deal in the way of crime without much harm befalling him; but when it comes to marrying the daughter of a nobleman who is a great personage at court, without his consent, it is a different affair altogether, I can tell you. Leslie has powerful friends, and his brother officers will do what they can for him; but I can tell you services at the court of France go for very little. Influence is everything, and as the nobleman the marquis intended to be the husband of his daughter is also a great personage at court and a friend of Louis's, there is no saying how serious a matter they may make of it. Men have been kept prisoners for life for a far less serious business than this."

"But supposing he is released, does he know where to communicate with you?"

"I am afraid he doesn't," Malcolm said ruefully. "He knows that I come from Glasgow, but that is all. Still, when he is freed, no doubt he will come over himself to look for his son, and I am sure to hear of his being here."

"You might do, and you might not," the bailie said. "Still, we must hope for the best, Malcolm. At any rate I am in no haste

for the colonel to come. Now I have got you home again after all these years, I do not wish to lose you again in a hurry."

Malcolm only remained for a few weeks at his brother's house. The restraint of life at the bailie's was too much for him. Andrew's was a well ordered household. The bailie was methodical and regular, a leading figure in the kirk, far stricter than were most men of his time as to undue consumption of liquor, strong in exhortation in season and out of season. His wife was kindly but precise, and as outspoken as Andrew himself. For the first day or two the real affection which Andrew had for his younger brother, and the pleasure he felt at his return, shielded Malcolm from comment or rebuke; but after the very first day the bailie's wife had declared to herself that it was impossible that Malcolm could long remain an inmate of the house. She was not inhospitable, and would have made great sacrifices in some directions for the long missing brother of her husband; but his conduct outraged all the best feelings of a good Scotch housewife.

Even on that first day he did not come punctually to his meals. He was away about the town looking up old acquaintance, came in at dinner and again at supper after the meal had already begun, and dropped into his place and began to eat without saying a word of grace. He stamped about the house as if he had cavalry spurs still on his heels; talked in a voice that could be heard from attic to basement; used French and Flemish oaths which horrified the good lady, although she did not understand them; smoked at all

hours of the day, whereas Andrew always confined himself to his after supper pipe, and, in spite of his assertions on the previous evening, consumed an amount of liquor which horrified the good woman.

At his meals he talked loudly, kept the two apprentices in a titter with his stories of campaigning, spoke slightingly of the city authorities, and joked the bailie with a freedom and roughness which scandalized her. Andrew was slow to notice the incongruity of his brother's demeanour and bearing with the atmosphere of the house, although he soon became dimly conscious that there was a jarring element in the air. At the end of a week Malcolm broached the subject to him.

"Andrew," he said, "you are a good fellow, though you are a bailie and an elder of the kirk, and I thank you for the hearty welcome you have given me, and for your invitation to stay for a long time with you; but it will not do. Janet is a good woman and a kindly, but I can see that I keep her perpetually on thorns. In good truth, fifteen years of campaigning are but an indifferent preparation for a man as an inmate of a respectable household. I did not quite know myself how thoroughly I had become a devil may care trooper until I came back to my old life here. The ways of your house would soon be as intolerable to me as my ways are to your good wife, and therefore it is better by far that before any words have passed between you and me, and while we are as good friends as on the evening when I returned, I should get out of this. I met an old friend today, one of the lads who went with me from

Glasgow to join the Earl of Mar at Perth. He is well to do now, and trades in cattle, taking them in droves down into England. For the sake of old times he has offered me employment, and methinks it will suit me as well as any other."

"But you cannot surely be going as a drover, Malcolm!"

"Why not? The life is as good as any other. I would not sit down, after these years of roving, to an indoor life. I must either do that or cross the water again and take service abroad. I am only six and thirty yet, and am good for another fifteen years of soldiering, and right gladly would I go back if Leslie were again at the head of his regiment, but I have been spoiled by him. He ever treated me as a companion and as a friend rather than as a trooper in his regiment, and I should miss him sorely did I enter any other service. Then, too, I would fain be here to be ready to join him again if he sends for me or comes, and I should wish to keep an eye always on his boy. You will continue to take charge of him, won't you, Andrew? He is still a little strange, but he takes to Elspeth, and will give little trouble when he once learns the language."

"I don't like it at all, Malcolm," the bailie said.

"No, Andrew, but you must feel it is best. I doubt not that ere this your wife has told you her troubles concerning me."

As the bailie on the preceding night had listened to a long string of complaints and remonstrances on the part of his wife as to his brother's general conduct he could not deny the truth of Malcolm's supposition.

"Just so, Andrew," Malcolm went on; "I knew that it must be so. Mistress Janet has kept her lips closed firm to me, but I could see how difficult it was for her sometimes to do so. It could not be otherwise. I am as much out of place here as a wolf in a sheepfold. As to the droving, I shall not mention to all I meet that I am brother to one of the bailies of Glasgow. I shall like the life. The rough pony I shall ride will differ in his paces from my old charger, but at least it will be life in the saddle. I shall be earning an honest living; if I take more than is good for me I may get a broken head and none be the wiser, whereas if I remain here and fall foul of the city watch it would be grief and pain for you."

The bailie was silenced. He had already begun to perceive that Malcolm's ways and manners were incompatible with the peace and quiet of a respectable household, and that Janet's complaints were not altogether unreasonable. He had seen many of his acquaintances lift their eyebrows in disapprobation at the roystering talk of his brother, and had foreseen that it was probable trouble would come.

At the same rime he felt a repugnance to the thought that after so many years of absence his brother should so soon quit his house. It seemed a reflection alike on his affection and hospitality.

"You will take charge of the child, won't you?" Malcolm pleaded. "There is a purse of a hundred louis, which will, I should say, pay for any expense to which he may put you for some years."

"As if I would take the bairn's money!" Andrew exclaimed angrily. "What do you take me for, Malcolm? Assuredly I will take the child. Janet and I have no bairn of our own, and it's good for a house to have a child in it. I look upon it as if it were yours, for it is like enough you will never hear of its father again. It will have a hearty welcome. It is a bright little fellow, and in time I doubt not that Janet will take greatly to it. The charge of a child is a serious matter, and we cannot hope that we shall not have trouble with it, but there is trouble in all things. At any rate, Malcolm, we will do our best, and if at the end of a year I find that Janet has not taken to it we will see about some other arrangement. And, Malcolm, I do trust that you will stay with us for another week or two. It would seem to me as if I had turned you out of my house were you to leave me so soon."

So Malcolm made a three weeks' stay at his brother's, and then started upon his new occupation of driving Highland cattle down into Lancashire. Once every two or three months he came to Glasgow for a week or two between his trips. In spite of Andrew's entreaties he refused on these occasions to take up his abode with him, but took a lodging not far off, coming in the evening for an hour to smoke a pipe with his brother, and never failing of a morning to come in and take the child for a long walk with him, carrying him upon his shoulder, and keeping up a steady talk with him in his native French, which he was anxious that the boy should nor forget, as at some time or other he might again return to France.

Some weeks after Malcolm's return to Scotland, he wrote to Colonel Leslie, briefly giving his address at Glasgow; but making no allusion to the child, as, if the colonel were still in prison, the letter would be sure to be opened by the authorities. He also wrote to the major, giving him his address, and begging him to communicate it to Colonel Leslie whenever he should see him; that done, there was nothing for it but to wait quietly. The post was so uncertain in those days that he had but slight hope that either of his letters would ever reach their destination. No answer came to either of his letters.

Four years later Malcolm went over to Paris, and cautiously made inquiries; but no one had heard anything of Colonel Leslie from the day he had been arrested. The regiment was away fighting in the Low Countries, and the only thing Malcolm could do was to call upon the people who had had charge of the child, to give them his address in case the colonel should ever appear to inquire of them. He found, however, the house tenanted by other people. He learned that the last occupants had left years before. The neighbors remembered that one morning early some officers of the law had come to the house, and the man had been seized and carried away. He had been released some months later, only to find that his wife had died of grief and anxiety, and he had then sold off his goods and gone no one knew whither. Malcolm, therefore, returned to Glasgow, with the feeling that he had gained nothing by his journey.

CHAPTER II: The Jacobite Agent

So twelve years passed. Ronald Leslie grew up a sturdy lad, full of fun and mischief in spite of the sober atmosphere of the bailie's house; and neither flogging at school nor lecturing at home appeared to have the slightest effect in reducing him to that state of sober tranquillity which was in Mrs. Anderson's eyes the thing to be most desired in boys. Andrew was less deeply shocked than his wife at the discovery of Ronald's various delinquencies, but his sense of order and punctuality was constantly outraged. He was, however, really fond of the lad; and even Mrs. Anderson, greatly as the boy's ways constantly disturbed and ruffled her, was at heart as fond of him as was her husband. She considered, and not altogether wrongly, that his wilderness, as she called it, was in no slight degree due to his association with her husband's brother.

Ronald looked forward to the periodical visits of the drover with intense longing. He was sure of a sympathetic listener in Malcolm, who listened with approval to the tales of the various scrapes into which he had got since his last visit; of how, instead of going to school, he had played truant and with another boy his own age had embarked in a fisherman's boat and gone down the river and had not been able to get back until next day; how he had played tricks upon his dominie, and had conquered in single combat the son of Councillor Duff, the butcher, who had spoken

scoffing words at the Stuarts. Malcolm was, in fact, delighted to find, that in spite of repression and lectures his young charge was growing up a lad of spirit. He still hoped that some day Leslie might return, and he knew how horrified he would be were he to find that his son was becoming a smug and well conducted citizen. No small portion of his time on each of his visits to Glasgow Malcolm spent in training the boy in the use of arms.

"Your father was a gentleman," he would say to him, "and it is fitting that you should know how to handle a gentleman's arms. Clubs are well enough for citizens' apprentices, but I would have you handle rapier and broadsword as well as any of the young lairds. When you get old enough, Ronald, you and I will cross the seas, and together we will try and get to the bottom of the mystery of your father's fate, and if we find that the worst has come to the worst, we will seek our your mother. She will most likely have married again. They will be sure to have forced her into it; but even if she dare not acknowledge you as her son, her influence may obtain for you a commission in one of the king's regiments, and even if they think I'm too old for a trooper I will go as your follower. There are plenty of occasions at the court of France when a sharp sword and a stout arm, even if it be somewhat stiffened by age, can do good service."

The lessons began as soon as Ronald was old enough to hold a light blade, and as between the pauses of exercise Malcolm was always ready to tell stories of his adventures in the wars of France, the days were full of delight to Ronald. When the

latter reached the age of fourteen Malcolm was not satisfied with the amount of proficiency which the lad was able to gain during his occasional visits, and therefore took him for further instruction to a comrade who had, like himself, served in France, and had returned and settled down in Glasgow, where he opened a fencing school, having been a maitre d'armes among the Scotch regiments.

The arrangement was, however, kept a profound secret from Andrew and his wife; but on half holidays, and on any other days when he could manage to slip away for an hour, Ronald went to his instructor and worked hard and steadily with the rapier. Had Mrs. Anderson had an idea of the manner in which he spent his time she would have been horrified, and would certainly have spared her encomiums on his improved conduct and the absence of the unsatisfactory reports which had before been so common.

The cloud of uncertainty which hung over his father's fate could not but have an influence upon the boy's character, and the happy carelessness and gaiety which were its natural characteristics were modified by the thought that his father might be languishing in a dungeon. Sometimes he would refuse to accompany his school fellows on their rambles or fishing expeditions, and would sit for hours thinking over all sorts of wild plans by which he might penetrate to him and aid him to escape. He was never tired of questioning Malcolm Anderson as to the prisons in which, if still alive, his father would be likely to be confined. He would ask as to their appearance, the height of

their walls, whether they were moated or not, and whether other houses abutted closely upon them. One day Malcolm asked him the reason of these questions, and he replied, "Of course I want to see how it will be possible to get my father out." And although Malcolm tried to impress upon him that it would be an almost impossible task even to discover in which prison his father was kept, he would not allow himself to be discouraged.

"There must be some way of finding out, Malcolm. You tell me that prisoners are not even known by their name to the warders, but only under a number. Still someone must know– there must be lists kept of those in prison, and I shall trust to my mother to find out for me. A great lady as she is must be able to get at people if she sets about it, and as certainly she must have loved my father very very much, or she never would have married him secretly, and got into such trouble for it. I am sure she will do her best when she finds that you and I have come over to get him out. When we know that, I think we ought to be able to manage. You could get employment as a warder, or I could go disguised as a woman, or as a priest, or somehow. I feel sure we shall succeed if we do but find out that he is alive and where he is."

Malcolm knew too much about the strong and well guarded prisons of France to share in the boy's sanguine hopes, but he did not try to discourage him. He thought that with such an object in life before him the boy would devote himself all the more eagerly to exercises which would strengthen his arm, increase his skill with weapons, and render him a brave and gallant officer, and

in this he was right. As the time went on Ronald became more and more serious. He took no part whatever in the school boy games and frolics in which he had been once a leader. He worked hard at his school tasks the sooner to be done with them, and above all devoted himself to acquiring a mastery of the sword with a perseverance and enthusiasm which quite surprised his instructor.

"I tell you, Malcolm, man," he said one day to his old comrade, after Ronald had been for upwards of two years his pupil, "if I had known, when you first asked me to teach the lad to handle a sword, how much of my time he was going to occupy, I should have laughed in your face, for ten times the sum you agreed to pay me would not have been enough; but, having begun it for your sake, I have gone on for the lad's. It has been a pleasure to teach him, so eager was he to learn–so ready to work heart and soul to improve. The boy's wrist is as strong as mine and his eye as quick. I have long since taught him all I know, and it is practice now, and not teaching, that we have every day. I tell you I have work to hold my own with him; he knows every trick and turn as well as I do, and is quicker with his lunge and riposte. Were it not that I have my extra length of arm in my favour I could not hold my own. As you know, I have many of the officers of the garrison among my pupils, and some of them have learned in good schools, but there is not one of them could defend himself for a minute against that boy. If it were not that the matter has to be kept secret I would set him in front of some of them, and you

would see what short work he would make of them. Have you heard the rumours, Malcolm, that the young Chevalier is likely to follow the example of his father, thirty years back, and to make a landing in Scotland?"

"I have heard some such rumours," Malcolm replied, "though whether there be aught in them I know not. I hope that if he does so he will at any rate follow the example of his father no further. As you know, I hold to the Stuarts, but I must own they are but poor hands at fighting. Charles the First ruined his cause; James the Second threw away the crown of Ireland by galloping away from the battle of the Boyne; the Chevalier showed here in '15 that he was no leader of men; and unless this lad is made of very different stuff to his forefathers he had best stay in France."

"But if he should come, Malcolm, I suppose you will join him? I am afraid I shall be fool enough to do so, even with my fifty years on my head. And you?"

"I suppose I shall be a fool too," Malcolm said. "The Stuarts are Scotch, you see, and with all their faults I would rather a thousand times have a Scottish king than these Germans who govern us from London. If the English like them let them keep them, and let us have a king of our own. However, nought may come of it; it may be but a rumour. It is a card which Louis has threatened to play a score of times, whenever he wishes to annoy England. It is more than likely that it will come to nought, as it has so often done before."

"But they tell me that there are agents travelling about among

the Highland clans, and that this time something is really to be done."

"They have said so over and over again, and nothing has come of it. For my part, I don't care which way it goes. After the muddle that was made of it thirty years ago it does not seem to me more likely that we shall get rid of the Hanoverians now. Besides, the hangings and slaughterings then, would, I should think, make the nobles and the heads of clans think twice ere they risked everything again."

"That is true, but when men's blood is up they do not count the cost; besides, the Highland clans are always ready to fight. If Prince Charles comes you will see there will not be much hanging back whatever the consequences may be. Well, you and I have not much to lose, except our lives."

"That is true enough, old friend; and I would rather die that way than any other. Still, to tell you the truth, I would rather keep my head on my shoulders for a few years if I can."

"Well, nothing may come of it; but if it does I shall strike a blow again for the old cause."

At home Ronald heard nothing but expressions of loyalty to the crown. The mere fact that the Highlanders espoused the cause of the Stuarts was sufficient in itself to make the Lowlanders take the opposite side. The religious feeling, which had always counted for so much in the Lowlands, and had caused Scotland to side with the Parliament against King Charles, had not lost its force. The leanings of the Stuarts were, it was known, still

strongly in favour of the Catholic religion, and although Prince Charles Edward was reported to be more Protestant in feelings than the rest of his race, this was not sufficient to counterbalance the effect of the hereditary Catholic tendency. Otherwise there was no feeling of active loyalty towards the reigning king in Scotland. The first and second Georges had none of the attributes which attract loyal affection. The first could with difficulty speak the language of the people over whom he ruled. Their feelings and sympathies were Hanoverian rather than English, and all court favours were bestowed as fast as possible upon their countrymen. They had neither the bearing nor manner which men associate with royalty, nor the graces and power of attraction which distinguished the Stuarts. Commonplace and homely in manner, in figure, and in bearing, they were not men whom their fellows could look up to or respect; their very vices were coarse, and the Hanoverian men and women they gathered round them were hated by the English people.

Thus neither in England nor Scotland was there any warm feeling of loyalty for the reigning house; and though it was possible that but few would adventure life and property in the cause of the Stuarts, it was equally certain that outside the army there were still fewer who would draw sword for the Hanoverian king. Among the people of the Lowland cities of Scotland the loyalty which existed was religious rather than civil, and rested upon the fact that their forefathers had fought against the Stuarts, while the Highlanders had always supported their cause. Thus,

although in the household and in kirk Ronald had heard King George prayed for regularly, he had heard no word concerning him calculated to waken a boyish feeling of loyalty, still less of enthusiasm. Upon the other hand he knew that his father had fought and suffered for the Stuarts and was an exile in their cause, and that Hanoverians had handed over the estate of which he himself would now be the heir to one of their adherents.

"It is no use talking of these matters to Andrew," Malcolm impressed upon him; "it would do no good. When he was a young man he took the side of the Hanoverians, and he won't change now; while, did Mistress Janet guess that your heart was with the Stuarts, she would say that I was ruining you, and should bring you to a gallows. She is not fond of me now, though she does her best to be civil to her husband's brother; but did she know that you had become a Jacobite, like enough she would move Andrew to put a stop to your being with me, and there would be all sorts of trouble."

"But they could nor prevent my being with you," Ronald said indignantly. "My father gave me into your charge, not into theirs."

"That's true enough, laddie; but it is they who have cared for you and brought you up. When you are a man you can no doubt go which way it pleases you; but till then you owe your duty and respect to them, and not to me, who have done nought for you but just carry you over here in my cloak."

"I know they have done everything for me," Ronald said

penitently. "They have been very good and kind, and I love them both; but for all that it is only natural that my father should be first, and that my heart should be in the cause that he fought for."

"That is right enough, Ronald, and I would not have it otherwise, and I have striven to do my best to make you as he would like to see you. Did he never come back again I should be sorry indeed to see Colonel Leslie's son growing up a Glasgow tradesman, as my brother no doubt intends you to be, for I know he has long since given up any thought of hearing from your father; but in that you and I will have a say when the time comes. Until then you must treat Andrew as your natural guardian, and there is no need to anger him by letting him know that your heart is with the king over the water, any more than that you can wield a sword like a gentleman. Let us have peace as long as we can. You are getting on for sixteen now; another two years and we will think about going to Paris together. I am off again tomorrow, Ronald; it will not be a long trip this time, but maybe before I get back we shall have news from France which will set the land on fire."

A short time after this conversation, as Ronald on his return from college (for he was now entered at the university) passed through the shop, the bailie was in conversation with one of the city magistrates, and Ronald caught the words:

"He is somewhere in the city. He came down from the Highlands, where he has been going to and fro, two days since. I have a warrant out against him, and the constables are on the

lookout. I hope to have him in jail before tonight. These pestilent rogues are a curse to the land, though I cannot think the clans would be fools enough to rise again, even though Charles Stuart did come."

Ronald went straight up to his room, and for a few minutes sat in thought. The man of whom they spoke was doubtless an emissary of Prince Charles, and his arrest might have serious consequences, perhaps bring ruin on all with whom he had been in communication. Who he was or what he was like Ronald knew not; but he determined at any rate to endeavour to defeat the intentions of the magistrate to lay hands on him. Accordingly a few minutes later, while the magistrate was still talking with Andrew, he again went out.

Ronald waited about outside the door till he left, and then followed him at a short distance. The magistrate spoke to several acquaintances on the way, and then went to the council chamber. Waiting outside, Ronald saw two or three of the magistrates enter. An hour later the magistrate he was watching came out; but he had gone but a few paces when a man hurrying up approached him. They talked earnestly for a minute or two. The magistrate then re-entered the building, remained there a few minutes, and then joined the man who was waiting outside. Ronald had stolen up and taken his stand close by.

"It is all arranged," the magistrate said; "as soon as night has fallen a party will go down, surround the house, and arrest him. It is better not to do it in daylight. I shall lead the party, which

will come round to my house, so if the men you have left on watch bring you news that he has changed his hiding place, let me know at once.

The magistrate walked on. Ronald stood irresolute. He had obtained no clue as to the residence of the person of whom they were in search, and after a moment's thought he determined to keep an eye upon the constable, who would most likely join his comrade on the watch. This, however, he did not do immediately. He had probably been for some time at work, and now took the opportunity of going home for a meal, for he at once made his way to a quiet part of the city, and entered a small house.

It was half an hour before he came out again, and Ronald fidgeted with impatience, for it was already growing dusk. When he issued out Ronald saw that he was armed with a heavy cudgel. He walked quickly now, and Ronald, following at a distance, passed nearly across the town, and down a quiet street which terminated against the old wall running from the Castle Port to a small tower. When he got near the bottom of the street a man came out from an archway, and the two spoke together. From their gestures Ronald felt sure that it was the last house on the left hand side of the street that was being watched. He had not ventured to follow far down the street, for as there was no thoroughfare he would at once be regarded with suspicion. The question now was how to warn the man of his danger. He knew several men were on the watch, and as only one was in the street, doubtless the others were behind the house. If anything was to

be done there was no time to be lost, for the darkness was fast closing in.

After a minute's thought he went quickly up the street, and then started at a run, and then came down upon a place where he could ascend the wall, which was at many points in bad repair. With some difficulty he climbed up, and found that he was exactly opposite the house he wished to reach. It was dark now. Even in the principal streets the town was only lit by oil lamps here and there, and there was no attempt at illumination in the quiet quarters, persons who went abroad after nightfall always carrying a lantern with them. There was still sufficient light to show Ronald that the house stood at a distance of some fourteen feet from the wall. The roof sloped too steeply for him to maintain his holding upon it; but halfway along the house was a dormer window about three feet above the gutter. It was unglazed, and doubtless gave light to a granary or store room.

Ronald saw that his only chance was to alight on the roof close enough to this window to be able to grasp the woodwork. At any other moment he would have hesitated before attempting such a leap. The wall was only a few feet wide, and he could therefore get but little run for a spring. His blood was, however, up, and having taken his resolution he did not hesitate. Drawing back as far as he could he took three steps, and then sprang for the window. Its sill was some three feet higher than the edge of the wall from which he sprang.

The leap was successful; his feet struck just upon the gutter,

and the impetus threw forward his body, and his hands grasped the woodwork of the window. In a moment he had dragged himself inside. It was quite dark within the room. He moved carefully, for the floor was piled with disused furniture, boxes, sacking, and rubbish. He was some time finding the door, but although he moved as carefully as he could he knocked over a heavy chest which was placed on a rickety chair, the two falling with a crash on the floor. At last he found the door and opened it. As he did so a light met his eyes, and he saw ascending the staircase a man with a drawn sword, and a woman holding a light above her head following closely. The man uttered an exclamation on seeing Ronald appear.

"A thief!" he said. "Surrender, or I will run you through at once."

"I am no thief," Ronald replied. "My name is Ronald Leslie, and I am a student at the university. I have come here to warn someone, whom I know not, in this house that it is watched, and that in a few minutes at the outside a band of the city watch will be here to capture him."

The man dropped the point of his sword, and taking the light from the woman held it closer to Ronald's face.

"How came you here?" he asked. "How did you learn this news?"

"The house is watched both sides below," Ronald said, "and I leapt from the wall through the dormer window. I heard a magistrate arranging with one of the constables for a capture,

and gathered that he of whom they were in search was a Jacobite, and as I come of a stock which has always been faithful to the Stuarts, I hastened to warn him."

The woman uttered a cry of alarm.

"I thank you with all my heart, young sir. I am he for whom they are in search, and if I get free you will render a service indeed to our cause; but there is no time to talk now, if what you tell me be true. You say the house is watched from both sides?"

"Yes; there are two men in the lane below, one or more, I know not how many, behind."

"There is no escape behind," the man said; "the walls are high, and other houses abut upon them. I will sally out and fight through the men in front."

"I can handle the sword," Ronald put in; "and if you will provide me with a weapon I will do my best by your side."

"You are a brave lad," the man said, "and I accept your aid."

He led the way down stairs and entered a room, took down a sword from over the fireplace, and gave it to Ronald.

As he took it in his hand there was a loud knocking at the door.

"Too late!" the man exclaimed. "Quick, the light, Mary! At any rate I must burn my papers."

He drew some letters from his pocket, lit them at the lamp, and threw them on the hearth; then opening a cabinet he drew forth a number of other papers and crumpling them up added them to the blaze.

"Thank God that is safe!" he said; "the worst evil is averted."

"Can you not escape by the way by which I came hither?" Ronald said. "The distance is too great to leap; but if you have got a plank, or can pull up a board from the floor, you could put it across to the wall and make your escape that way. I will try to hold the stairs till you are away."

"I will try at least," the man said. "Mary, bring the light, and aid me while our brave friend does his best to give us time."

So saying he sprang upstairs, while Ronald made his way down to the door.

"Who is making such a noise at the door of a quiet house at this time of night?" he shouted.

"Open in the king's name," was the reply; "we have a warrant to arrest one who is concealed here."

"There is no one concealed here," Ronald replied, "and I doubt that you are, as you say, officers of the peace; but if so, pass your warrant through the grill, and if it be signed and in due form I will open to you."

"I will show my warrant when need be," the voice answered. "Once more, open the door or we will break it in."

"Do it at your peril," Ronald replied. "How can I tell you are not thieves who seek to ransack the house, and that your warrant is a pretence? I warn you that the first who enters I will run him through the body."

The reply was a shower of blows on the door, and a similar attack was begun by a party behind the house. The door was strong, and after a minute or two the hammering ceased, and then

there was a creaking, straining noise, and Ronald knew they were applying a crowbar to force it open. He retreated to a landing halfway up the stairs, placed a lamp behind him so that it would show its light full on the faces of those ascending the stairs, and waited. A minute later there was a crash; the lock had yielded, but the bar still held the door in its place. Then the blows redoubled, mingled with the crashing of wood; then there was the sound of a heavy fall, and a body of men burst in.

There was a rush at the stairs, but the foremost halted at the sight of Ronald with his drawn sword.

"Keep back," he shouted, "or beware! The watch will be here in a few minutes, and then you will all be laid by the heels."

"Fools! We are the watch," one of the men exclaimed, and, dashing up the stairs, aimed a blow at Ronald. He guarded it and ran the man through the shoulder. He dropped his sword and fell back with a curse.

At this moment the woman ran down stairs from above and nodded to Ronald to signify that the fugitive had escaped.

"You see I hold to my word," Ronald said in a loud voice. "If ye be the watch, which I doubt, show me the warrant, or if ye have one in authority with you let him proclaim himself."

"Here is the warrant, and here am I, James M'Whirtle, a magistrate of this city."

"Why did you not say so before?" Ronald exclaimed, lowering his sword. "If it be truly the worshipful Mr. M'Whirtle let him show himself, for surely I know him well, having seen him often

in the house of my guardian, Bailie Anderson."

Mr. M'Whirtle, who had been keeping well in the rear, now came forward.

"It is himself." Ronald said. "Why did you not say you were here at once, Mr. M'Whirtle, instead of setting your men to break down the door, as if they were Highland caterans on a foray?"

"We bade you open in the king's name," the magistrate said, "and you withstood us, and it will be hanging matter for you, for you have aided the king's enemies."

"The king's enemies!" Ronald said in a tone of surprise. "How can there be any enemies of the king here, seeing there are only myself and the good woman up stairs? You will find no others."

"Search the house," the magistrate said furiously, "and take this malapert lad into custody on the charge of assisting the king's enemies, of impeding the course of justice, of withstanding by force of arms the issue of a lawful writ, and with grievously wounding one of the city watch."

Ronald laughed.

"It is a grievous list, worshipful sir; but mark you, as soon as you showed your warrant and declared yourself I gave way to you. I only resisted so long as it seemed to me you were evildoers breaking into a peaceful house."

Two of the watch remained as guard over Ronald; one of the others searched the house from top to bottom. No signs of the fugitive were discovered.

"He must be here somewhere," the magistrate said, "since he

was seen to enter, and the house has been closely watched ever since. See, there are a pile of ashes on the hearth as if papers had been recently burned. Sound the floors and the walls."

The investigation was particularly sharp in the attic, for a board was here found to be loose, and there were signs of its being recently wrenched out of its place, but as the room below was unceiled this discovery led to nothing. At last the magistrate was convinced that the fugitive was not concealed in the house, and, after placing his seals on the doors of all the rooms and leaving four men in charge, he left the place, Ronald, under the charge of four men, accompanying him.

On the arrival at the city Tolbooth Ronald was thrust into a cell and there left until morning. He was then brought before Mr. M'Whirtle and two other of the city magistrates. Andrew Anderson was in attendance, having been notified the night before of what had befallen Ronald. The bailie and his wife had at first been unable to credit the news, and were convinced that some mistake had been made. Andrew had tried to obtain his release on his promise to bring him up in the morning, but Mr. M'Whirtle and his colleagues, who had been hastily summoned together, would not hear of it.

"It's a case of treason, man. Treason against his gracious majesty; aiding and abetting one of the king's enemies, to say nought of brawling and assaulting the city watch."

The woman found in the house had also been brought up, but no precise charge was made against her. The court was crowded,

for Andrew, in his wrath at being unable to obtain Ronald's release, had not been backward in publishing his grievance, and many of his neighbours were present to hear this strange charge against Ronald Leslie.

The wounded constable and another first gave their evidence.

"I myself can confirm what has been said," Mr. M'Whirtle remarked, "seeing that I was present with the watch to see the arrest of a person against whom a warrant had been issued."

"Who is that person?" Ronald asked. "Seeing that I am charged with aiding and abetting his escape it seems to me that I have a right to know who he is."

The magistrates looked astounded at the effrontery of the question, but after a moment's consultation together Mr. M'Whirtle said that in the interest of justice it was unadvisable at the present moment to state the name of the person concerned.

"What have you to say, prisoner, to the charge made against you? In consideration of our good friend Bailie Anderson, known to be a worthy citizen and loyal subject of his majesty, we would be glad to hear what you have to say anent this charge."

"I have nothing to say," Ronald replied quietly. "Being in the house when it was attacked, with as much noise as if a band of Border ruffians were at the gate, I stood on the defence. I demanded to see what warrant they had for forcing an entry, and as they would show me none, I did my best to protect the house; but the moment Mr. M'Whirtle proclaimed who he was I lowered my sword and gave them passage."

There was a smile in the court at the boy's coolness.

"But how came ye there, young sir? How came ye to be in the house at all, if ye were there for a good motive?"

"That I decline to say," Ronald answered. "It seems to me that any one may be in a house by the consent of its owners, without having to give his reasons therefor."

"It will be the worse for you if you defy the court. I ask you again how came you there?"

"I have no objection to tell you how I came there," Ronald said. "I was walking on the old wall, which, as you know, runs close by the house, when I saw an ill looking loon hiding himself as if watching the house, looking behind I saw another ruffianly looking man there." Two gasps of indignation were heard from the porch at the back of the court. "Thinking that there was mischief on hand I leapt from the wall to the dormer window to warn the people of the house that there were ill doers who had designs upon the place, and then remained to see what came of it. That is the simple fact."

There was an exclamation of incredulity from the magistrates.

"If you doubt me," Ronald said, "you can send a man to the wall. I felt my feet loosen a tile and it slid down into the gutter."

One of the magistrates gave an order, and two of the watch left the court.

"And who did you find in the house?"

"I found this good woman, and sorely frightened she was when I told her what kind of folk were lurking outside."

"And was there anyone else there?"

"There was a man there," Ronald said quietly, "and he seemed alarmed too."

"What became of him?"

"I cannot say for certain," Ronald replied; "but if you ask my opinion I should say, that having no stomach for meeting people outside, he just went out the way I came in, especially as I heard the worshipful magistrate say that a board in the attic had been lifted."

The magistrates looked at each other in astonishment; the mode of escape had not occurred to any, and the disappearance of the fugitive was now explained.

"I never heard such a tale," one of the magistrates said after a pause. "It passes belief that a lad, belonging to the family of a worthy and respectable citizen, a bailie of the city and one who stands well with his fellow townsmen, should take a desperate leap from the wall through a window of a house where a traitor was in hiding, warn him that the house was watched, and give him time to escape while he defended the stairs. Such a tale, sure, was never told in a court. What say you, bailie?"

"I can say nought," Andrew said. "The boy is a good boy and a quiet one; given to mischief like other boys of his age, doubtless, but always amenable. What can have possessed him to behave in such a wild manner I cannot conceive, but it seems to me that it was but a boy's freak."

"It was no freak when he ran his sword through Peter Muir's

shoulder," Mr. M'Whirtle said. "Ye will allow that, neighbour Anderson."

"The man must have run against the sword," the bailie said, "seeing the boy scarce knows one end of a weapon from another."

"You are wrong there, bailie," one of the constables said; "for I have seen him many a time going into the school of James Macklewain, and I have heard a comrade say, who knows James, that the lad can handle a sword with the best of them."

"I will admit at once," Ronald said, "that I have gone to Macklewain's school and learned fencing of him. My father, Colonel Leslie of Glenlyon, was a gentleman, and it was right that I should wield a sword, and James Macklewain, who had fought in the French wars and knew my father, was good enough to teach me. I may say that my guardian knew nothing of this."

"No, indeed," Andrew said. "I never so much as dreamt of it. If I had done so he and I would have talked together to a purpose."

"Leslie of Glenlyon was concerned in the '15, was he not?" Mr. M'Whirtle said; "and had to fly the country; and his son seems to be treading in his steps, bailie. I doubt ye have been nourishing a viper in your bosom."

At this moment the two constables returned, and reported that certainly a tile was loose as the prisoner had described, and there were scratches as if of the feet of someone entering the window, but the leap was one that very few men would undertake.

"Your story is so far confirmed, prisoner; but it does not seem

to us that even had you seen two men watching a house it would be reasonable that you would risk your neck in this way without cause. Clearly you have aided and abetted a traitor to escape justice, and you will be remanded. I hope, before you are brought before us again, you will make up your mind to make a clean breast of it, and throw yourself on the king's mercy."

Ronald was accordingly led back to the cell, the bailie being too much overwhelmed with surprise at what he had heard to utter any remonstrance.

CHAPTER III: Free

After Ronald had been removed from the court the woman was questioned. She asserted that her master was away, and was, she believed, in France, and that in his absence she often let lodgings to strangers. That two days before, a man whom she knew not came and hired a room for a few days. That on the evening before, hearing a noise in the attic, she went up with him, and met Ronald coming down stairs. That when Ronald said there were strange men outside the house, and when immediately afterwards there was a great knocking at the door, the man drew his sword and ordered her to come up stairs with him. That he then made her assist him to pull up a plank, and thrust it from the attic to the wall, and ordered her to replace it when he had gone. She supposed he was a thief flying from justice, but was afraid to refuse to do his bidding.

"And why did you not tell us all this, woman, when we came in?" Mr. M'Whirtle asked sternly. "Had ye told us we might have overtaken him."

"I was too much frightened," the woman answered. "There were swords out and blood running, and men using words contrary both to the law and Scripture. I was frighted enough before, and I just put my apron over my head and sat down till the hubbub was over. And then as no one asked me any questions, and I feared I might have done wrong in aiding a thief to escape,

I just held my tongue."

No cross questioning could elicit anything further from the woman, who indeed seemed frightened almost out of her senses, and the magistrate at last ordered her to return to the house and remain there under the supervision of the constable until again sent for.

Andrew Anderson returned home sorely disturbed in his mind. Hitherto he had told none, even of his intimates, that the boy living in his house was the son of Colonel Leslie, but had spoken of him as the child of an old acquaintance who had left him to his care. The open announcement of Ronald that he was the son of one of the leaders in the last rebellion, coming just as it did when the air was thick with rumours of another rising, troubled him greatly; and there was the fact that the boy had, unknown to him, been learning fencing; and lastly this interference, which had enabled a notorious emissary of the Pretender to escape arrest.

"The boy's story may be true as far as it goes," he said to his wife when relating to her the circumstances, "for I have never known him to tell a lie; but I cannot think it was all the truth. A boy does not take such a dreadful leap as that, and risk breaking his neck, simply because he sees two men near the house. He must somehow have known that man was there, and went to give him warning. Now I think of it, he passed through the shop when Peter M'Whirtle was talking to me about it, though, indeed, he did not know then where the loon was in hiding. The boy went

out soon afterwards, and must somehow have learned, if indeed he did not know before. Janet, I fear that you and I have been like two blind owls with regard to the boy, and I dread sorely that my brother Malcolm is at the bottom of all this mischief."

This Mrs. Anderson was ready enough to credit, but she was too much bewildered and horrified to do more than to shake her head and weep.

"Will they cut off his head, Andrew?" she asked at last.

"No, there's no fear of that; but they may imprison him for a bit, and perhaps give him a good flogging–the young rascal. But there, don't fret over it, Janet. I will do all I can for him. And in truth I think Malcolm is more to blame than he is; and we have been to blame too for letting the lad be so much with him, seeing that we might be sure he would put all sorts of notions in the boy's head."

"But what is to be done, Andrew? We cannot let the poor lad remain in prison."

"We have no choice in the matter, Janet. In prison he is, and in prison he has to remain until he is let out, and I see no chance of that. If it had only been a brawl with the watch it could have been got over easily enough; but this is an affair of high treason–aiding and abetting the king's enemies, and the rest of it. If it were in the old times they would put the thumb screws on him to find out all he knew about it, for they will never believe he risked his life in the plot; and the fact that his father before him was in arms for the Chevalier tells that way. I should not be surprised

if an order comes for him to be sent to London to be examined by the king's councillors; but I will go round now and ask the justices what they think of the matter."

His tidings when he returned were not encouraging; the general opinion of the magistrates being that Ronald was certainly mixed up in the Jacobite plot, that the matter was altogether too serious to be disposed of by them, being of the nature of high treason, and that nothing could be done until instructions were received from London. No clue had been obtained as to the whereabouts of the man who had escaped, and it was thought probable that he had at once dropped beyond the walls and made for the west.

Malcolm arrived ten days later from a journey in Lancashire, and there was a serious quarrel between him and Andrew on his presenting himself at the house.

"It is not only that you led the lad into mischief, Malcolm, but that you taught him to do it behind my back."

"You may look at it in that way if you will, Andrew, and it's natural enough from your point of view; but I take no blame to myself. You treated the boy as if he had been your son, and I thank you with all my heart for your kindness to him; but I could not forget Leslie of Glenlyon, and I do not blame myself that I have kept the same alive in his mind also. It was my duty to see that the young eagle was not turned into a barn door fowl; but I never thought he was going to use his beak and his claws so soon."

"A nice thing you will have to tell his father, that owing to your teachings his son is a prisoner in the Tower, maybe for life. But there–there's no fear of that. You will never have to render that account, for there's no more chance of your ever hearing more of him than there is of my becoming king of Scotland. It's bad enough that you have always been a ne'er do well yourself without training that unfortunate boy to his ruin."

"Well, well, Andrew, I will not argue with you, and I don't blame you at being sore and angry over the matter; nor do I deny what you have said about myself; it's true enough, and you might say worse things against me without my quarreling with ye over it. However, the less said the better. I will take myself off and think over what's to be done."

"You had better come up and have your supper with us," Andrew said, mollified by his brother's humility.

"Not for twenty golden guineas, Andrew, would I face Mistress Janet. She has borne with me well, though I know in her heart she disapproves of me altogether; but after this scrape into which I have got the boy I daren't face her. She might not say much, but to eat with her eye upon me would choke me."

Malcolm proceeded at once to the establishment of his friend Macklewain.

"This is a nice kettle of fish, Malcolm, about young Leslie. I have had the justices down here, asking me all sorts of questions, and they have got into their minds that I taught him not only swordplay but treason, and they have been threatening to put me

in the stocks as a vagabond; but I snapped my fingers in their faces, saying I earned my money as honestly as they did, and that I concern myself in no way in politics, but teach English officers and the sons of Glasgow tradesmen as well as those of Highland gentlemen. They were nicely put out, I can tell you; but I didn't care for that, for I knew I was in the right of it. But what on earth made the young cock meddle in this matter? How came he to be mixed up in a Jacobite plot? Have you got your finger in it?"

"Not I, James; and how it happens that he is concerned in it is more than I can guess. I know, of course, his heart is with the king over the water; but how he came to get his hand into the pie is altogether beyond me."

"The people here are well nigh mad about it. I know not who the gallant who has escaped is; but it is certain that his capture was considered a very important one, and that the justices here expected to have gained no small credit by his arrest, whereas now they will be regarded as fools for letting him slip through their fingers."

"I cannot for the life of me make out how he came to be mixed up in such a matter. No one but you and I could have known that he was a lad of mettle, who might be trusted in such a business. It can hardly be that they would have confided any secrets to him; still, the fact that he was in the house with the man they are in search of, and that he drew and risked his life and certain imprisonment to secure his escape, shows that he must have been heart and soul in the plot."

"And what do you think of doing, Malcolm?"

"I shall get him out somehow. I can lay hands on a score or two or more of our old comrades here in Glasgow, and I doubt not that they will all strike a blow with me for Leslie's son, to say nothing of his being a follower of the Stuarts."

"You are not thinking, man, of attacking the jail! That would be a serious matter. The doors are strong, and you would have the soldiers, to say nought of the town guard and the citizens, upon you before you had reached him."

"No, no, James, I am thinking of no such foolishness. I guess that they will not be trying him for withstanding the watch, that's but a small matter; they will be sending him south for the king's ministers to get out of him what he knows about the Jacobite plot and the names of all concerned, and it's upon the road that we must get him out of their hands. Like enough they will only send four troopers with him, and we can easily master them somewhere in the dales."

"It's more like, Malcolm, they will send him by ship. They will know well enough that if the lad knows aught there will be plenty whose interest it is to get him out of their hands. I think they will take the safer way of putting him on board ship."

"Like enough they will," Malcolm agreed, "and in that case it will be a harder job than I deemed it. But at any rate I mean to try. Ronald's not the lad to turn traitor; he will say nothing whatever they do to him, you may be sure, and he may lie for years in an English prison if we do not get him out of their hands

before he gets there. At any rate what we have got to do now is to mark every ship in the port sailing for London, and to find out whether passages are taken for a prisoner and his guard in any of them. I will make that my business, and between times get a score of trusty fellows together in readiness to start if they should send him by land; but I doubt not that you are right, and that he will be taken off by ship."

The days of waiting passed slowly to Ronald, and Andrew Anderson once or twice obtained permission to see him. The bailie wisely abstained from any reproaches, and sought only to persuade him to make a clean breast of the business, and to tell all he knew about a plot which could but end in failure and ruin to all concerned. Although his belief in Ronald's truthfulness was great he could not credit that the story which he had told contained all the facts of the matter. To the bailie it seemed incredible that merely from an abstract feeling in favour of the Stuarts Ronald would have risked his life and liberty in aiding the escape of a Jacobite agent, unless he was in some way deeply involved in the plot; and he regarded Ronald's assurances to the contrary as the outcome of what he considered an entirely mistaken sense of loyalty to the Stuart cause.

"It's all very well, Ronald," he said, shaking his head sadly; "but when they get you to London they will find means to make you open your mouth. They have done away with the thumb screws and the rack, but there are other ways of making a prisoner speak, and it would be far better for you to make a clean

breast of it at once. Janet is grieving for you as if you were her own son, and I cannot myself attend to my business. Who would have thought that so young a lad should have got himself mixed up in such sair trouble!"

"I have really told you all, bailie, though you will not believe me, and I am sorry indeed for the trouble I have brought upon you and my aunt"–for Ronald had from the first been taught to address the bailie and his wife as if Malcolm Anderson had been his real father; "anyhow I wish they would settle it. I would rather know the worst than go on from day to day expecting something that never happens."

"You have to wait, Ronald, till word comes from London. If they write from there that your case can be dealt with merely for the assault upon the watch I can promise you that a few weeks in jail are all that you are like to have; but I fear that there is little chance of that. They are sure to send for you to London, and whether you will ever come back alive the gude Lord only knows. We know what came of treason thirty years ago, and like enough they will be even more severe now, seeing that they will hold that folks have all the less right to try and disturb matters so long settled."

"Have you seen Malcolm?" Ronald asked, to change the conversation.

"Ay, lad, I have seen him, and the meeting was not altogether a pleasant one for either of us."

"I hope you have not quarrelled with him on my account!"

Ronald said eagerly.

"We have not exactly quarrelled, but we have had words. I could not but tell him my opinion as to his learning you to take such courses, but we parted friends; but I doubt it will be long before Janet can see him with patience."

The jailer, who was present at the interview, here notified that the bailie's time was up.

"I shall see you again, Ronald, before they take you south. I would that I could do more to help you besides just coming to see you."

"I know you cannot, uncle. I have got into the scrape and must take the consequences; but if I were placed in the same position I should do it again."

A few days afterwards, as he was eating his ration of prison bread, Ronald found in it a small pellet of paper, and on opening it read the words: "Keep up your courage, friends are at work for you. You will hear more yet of M. A."

Ronald was glad to know that his old friend was thinking of him, but, knowing how strong was the prison, he had little hopes that Malcolm would be able to effect anything to help him. Still the note gave him comfort.

Three days later Andrew called again to bid him goodbye, telling him that orders had been received from London that he was to be sent thither by ship.

"I should like to have seen Malcolm before I went, if I could," Ronald said.

"I have not seen him for several days," the bailie said. "I have sent down several times to the house where he lodges, but he is always away; but, whether or no, there would be no chance of your seeing him. I myself had difficulty in getting leave to see you, though a bailie and known to be a loyal citizen. But Malcolm knows that there would be no chance of one with such a character as his getting to see you, and that it would draw attention to him even to ask such a thing, which, if he has a hand in this mad brain plot, he would not wish."

"Malcolm would not mind a straw whether they kept a watch on him or not," Ronald said. "Will you tell him, when you see him next, that I got his message?"

"What message? I have given you no message that I know of."

"He will know what I mean. Tell him, whether aught comes of it or not I thank him, and for all his kindness to me, as I do you and Aunt Janet."

At the same time with the order that Ronald should be sent to London the authorities of Glasgow received an intimation that the ministers felt great surprise at the lukewarmness which had been shown in allowing so notorious and important an enemy of his majesty to escape, and that the king himself had expressed marked displeasure at the conduct of the city authorities in the matter. Greatly mortified at the upshot of an affair from which they had hoped to obtain much credit from government, and believing it certain that there were many greatly interested in getting Ronald out of the hands of his captors, the authorities

took every precaution to prevent it. He was taken down to the river side under a strong escort, and in addition to the four warders who were to be in charge of the prisoner as far as London, they put on board twelve men of the city guard. These were to remain with the ship until she was well out at sea, and then to return in a boat which the vessel was to tow behind her.

Ronald could not but smile when he saw all these formidable preparations for his safety. At the same time he felt that any hope he had entertained that Malcolm might, as the message hinted, make an attempt at rescue were blighted. The vessel dropped down with the tide. The orders of the justices had been so strict and urgent that the whole of the men placed on board kept a vigilant watch.

Just as they were abreast of Dumbarton the sound of oars was heard, and presently a boat was seen approaching. As it got nearer two men were seen to be rowing, and two others seated in the stern; but as the craft was a large one there was room for others to be lying in the bottom. The constable in charge shouted to the boat to keep them off.

"Stop rowing," he cried, "and come no nearer. If you do we fire, and as I don't want to shed your blood I warn you that I have sixteen armed men here."

As his words were emphasized by the row of men, who with levelled muskets ranged themselves along at the side of the ship, the boat ceased rowing.

"What are you afraid of?" one of the men in the stern shouted.

"Cannot a fisherman's boat row out without being threatened with shooting? What are you and your sixteen armed men doing on board? Are you expecting a French fleet off the coast? And do you think you will beat them off if they board you? How long have the Glasgow traders taken to man their ships with fighting men?"

Ronald was in the cabin under the poop; it opened on to the waist, and received its light from an opening in the door, at which two armed men had stationed themselves when the boat was heard approaching. Had the cabin possessed a porthole through which he could have squeezed himself he would long before have jumped overboard and tried to make his escape by swimming under cover of the darkness. He now strove to force the door open, for he recognized Malcolm's voice, and doubted not that his friend had spoken in order to let him know that he was there, that he might if possible leap over and swim to the boat; but it was fastened strongly without, and the guards outside shouted that they would fire unless he remained quiet.

No reply was made to the taunts of the man in the boat, and slowly, for the wind was but just filling her sails, the vessel dropped down the river, and the boat was presently lost sight of.

In the morning the breeze freshened. It was not till the ship was eight miles beyond the mouth of the river that the boat was pulled up alongside, and the guard, taking their places on board, hoisted sail and started on their return to Glasgow.

Once fairly at sea Ronald was allowed to leave his cabin.

Now that he was enjoying the fresh air his spirits soon recovered the tone which they had lost somewhat during his three weeks' confinement in prison, and he thoroughly enjoyed his voyage. The man who was in charge of the guard had at first wished to place some restriction on his going about on board as he chose; but the crew sided with the young prisoner, and threw such ridicule on the idea that four warders and a head constable were afraid, even for a moment, to lose sight of a boy on board a ship at sea, that he gave way, and allowed Ronald free liberty of action, although he warned his subordinates that they must nor relax their caution for a moment.

"The crew are all with him. They think it a shame that a lad like this should be hauled to London as a prisoner charged with treasonable practices; and sailors, when they once get an idea into their head, are as obstinate as Highland cattle. I have told them that he drew a sword and held the staircase against us all while a noted traitor made his escape, and that he ran one of us through the shoulder, and they only shouted with laughter, and said he was a brave young cock. Like as not, if they had a chance, these men would aid him to escape, and then we should have to answer for it, and heavily too; loss of place and imprisonment would be the least of what we might expect; so though, while at sea and in full daylight he can do as he pleases, we must be doubly vigilant at night, or in port if the vessel should have to put in."

Accordingly, to the great disgust of the sailors the watch by turns stood sentry outside Ronald's door at night, thereby

defeating a plan which the sailors had formed of lowering a boat the first night they passed near land, and letting Ronald make his escape to shore.

The wind was favourable until the vessel rounded the Land's End. After that it became baffling and fickle, and it was more than three weeks after the date of her sailing from Glasgow that the vessel entered the mouth of the Thames. By this time Ronald's boyish spirits had allayed all suspicion on the part of his guards. He joked with the sailors, climbed about the rigging like a cat, and was so little affected by his position that the guards were convinced that he was free from the burden of any state secret, and that no apprehension of any serious consequence to himself was weighing upon him.

"Poor lad!" the head warder said; "he will need all his spirits. He will have hard work to make the king's council believe that he interfered in such a matter as this from pure love of adventure. He will have many a weary month to pass in prison before they free him, I reckon. It goes against my heart to hand over such a mere laddie as a prisoner; still it is no matter of mine. I have my duty to do, and it's not for me to question the orders I have received, or to argue whether a prisoner is innocent or guilty."

As the vessel anchored off Gravesend to wait for the turn of the tide to take her up, a boat rowed by a waterman, and with a man sitting in the stern, passed close by the ship. The head warder had now redoubled his vigilance, and one of the guards with loaded musket was standing on the deck not far from

Ronald, who was standing on the taffrail. As the boat passed some twenty yards astern of the ship the man who was not rowing turned round for a moment and looked up at Ronald. It was but a momentary glance that the lad caught of his face, and he suppressed with difficulty a cry of surprise, for he recognized Malcolm Anderson. The rower continued steadily to ply his oars, and continued his course towards another ship anchored lower down the river. Ronald stood watching the boat, and saw that after making a wide sweep it was rowed back again to Gravesend.

Ronald had no doubt that Malcolm had come south in hopes of effecting his escape, and guessed that he had taken up his post at Gravesend with the intention of examining every ship as she passed up until the one in which he knew he had sailed made its appearance. What his next step would be he could not tell; but he determined to keep a vigilant lookout, and to avail himself instantly of any opportunity which might offer.

As the captain did nor care about proceeding up the river after dark it was not until the tide turned, just as morning broke, that the anchor was weighed. There was a light breeze which just sufficed to give the vessel steerage way, and a mist hung on the water. Ronald took his favourite seat on the taffrail, and kept a vigilant watch upon every craft which seemed likely to come near the vessel.

Greenwich was passed, and the vessel presently approached the crowded part of the Pool. It was near high tide now, and the captain was congratulating himself that he should just reach a

berth opposite the Tower before it turned. Presently a boat with two rowers shot out from behind a tier of vessels and passed close under the stern of the Glasgow Lass. A man was steering whom Ronald instantly recognized.

"Jump!" he cried, and Ronald without a moment's hesitation leaped from the taffrail.

He came up close to the boat, and was instantly hauled on board by Malcolm. Just at that moment the guard, who had stood stupefied by Ronald's sudden action, gave a shout of alarm and discharged his piece. The ball struck the boat close to Ronald. It was already in motion; the men bent to their oars, and the boat glided towards the Surrey side of the river. Loud shouts arose from on board the vessel, and four bullets cut the water round the boat; but before the muskets could be reloaded Malcolm had steered the boat through a tier of vessels, whose crews, attracted by the firing, cheered the fugitives lustily.

A minute later they had reached some landing steps. Malcolm tossed some money to the rowers, and then sprang ashore with Ronald, and handed the latter a long coat which would reach to his heels and conceal the drenched state of his clothing from notice.

"We have tricked them nicely, dear boy," he said; "we are safe now. Long before they can lower a boat and get here we shall be safe in shelter, and our five Glasgow bodies will have something to do to look for us here."

Moderating his pace so as to avoid attracting attention,

Malcolm proceeded along several streets and lanes, and presently stopped at the door of a little shop.

"I am lodging here," he said, "and have told the people of the house that I am expecting a nephew back from a cruise in the Mediterranean."

As he passed through the shop he said to the woman behind the counter:

"Here he is safe and sound. He's been some days longer than I expected, but I was nor so very far wrong in my calculations. The young scamp has had enough of the sea, and has agreed to go back again with me to his own people."

"That's right," the woman said. "My own boy ran away two years ago, and I hope he will have come to his senses by the time he gets back again."

When they were together in their room up stairs Malcolm threw his arms round Ronald's neck.

"Thank God, my dear boy, I have got you out of the clutches of the law! You do not know how I have been fretting since I heard you were caught, and thought that if ill came to you it would be all my fault. And now tell me how you got into this scrape, for it has been puzzling me ever since I heard it. Surely when I saw you last you knew nothing about any Jacobite goings on?"

Ronald related the whole particulars of his adventure, and said that even now he was absolutely ignorant who was the man whom he had aided to escape.

"I know no more than you do, Ronald, but they must have

thought his capture an important one by the fuss they made over his escape. And now, to think that you have slipped out of their hands too!" and Malcolm broke into a loud laugh. "I would give a month's earnings to see the faces of the guard as they make their report that they have arrived empty handed. I was right glad when I saw you. I was afraid you might have given them the slip on the way, and then there would have been no saying when we might have found each other again."

"The sailors would have lowered a boat at night and let me make for the land," Ronald said, "but there was a good guard kept over me. The door was locked and a sentry always on watch, and I had quite given up all hope until I saw you at Gravesend. And now, what do you intend to do? Make our way back to Scotland?"

"No, no, lad, that would never do. There will be a hue and cry after you, and all the northern routes will be watched. No, I shall make a bargain with some Dutch skipper to take us across the water, and then we will make our way to Paris."

"But have you got money, Malcolm?"

"I have got your purse, lad. I went to Andrew and said that I wanted it for you, but that he was to ask no questions, so that whatever came of it he could say that he knew nothing. He gave it me at once, saying only:

"'Remember, Malcolm, you have done the boy some harm already with your teaching, see that you do him no further harm. I guess you are bent on some hare brained plan, but whatever it be I wish you success.'"

CHAPTER IV: In France

The next day Malcolm went out alone, and on his return told Ronald that there were placards on the walls offering a reward of a hundred pounds for his apprehension.

"You don't think the people below have any suspicion, Malcolm?"

"Not they," Malcolm replied. "I was telling them last night after you had gone to bed all about the places you have been voyaging to, and how anxious your father, a snug farmer near Newcastle, was to have you back again. I had spoken to them before so as to prepare them for your coming, and the old woman takes quite an interest in you, because her son at sea is a lad just about your age. I have brought you in a suit of sailor clothes; we will go down and have a chat with them after the shop is closed of a night. You will remember Newcastle and the farm, and can tell them of your escape from Greek pirates, and how nearly you were taken by a French frigate near the straits."

The consternation of the watch at Ronald's escape was extreme. The shot which the man on guard had fired was their first intimation of the event, and seizing their muskets they had hastily discharged them in the direction of the fugitive, and had then shouted for a boat to be lowered. But never was a boat longer getting into the water than was that of the Glasgow Lass upon this occasion. The captain gave his orders in a leisurely way, and

the crew were even slower in executing them. Then somehow the fall stuck and the boat wouldn't lower. When at last she was in the water it was found that the thole pins were missing; these being found she was rowed across the river, the five constables undergoing a running fire of jokes and hilarity from the sailors of the ships they passed near. In answer to their inquiries where the fugitives landed, some of the sailors shouted that she had pulled up the river behind the tier of vessels, others insisted that she had sunk with all hands close by.

Completely bewildered, the chief of the party told the sailors to put them ashore at the first landing. When the party gained the streets they inquired eagerly of all they met whether they had seen aught of the fugitives. Few of those they questioned understood the broad Scotch in which the question was asked, others laughed in their faces and asked how they were to know the man and boy they wanted from any others; and after vainly looking about for some time they returned to the stairs, only to find that the boat had returned to the ship.

A waterman's boat was now hired, and the rower, who had heard what had happened, demanded a sum for putting them on board which horrified them; but at last, after much bargaining, they were conveyed back to the ship. An hour later the chief of the party went ashore, and repairing to the Tower, where he had been ordered to conduct the prisoner, reported his escape. He was at once taken into custody on the charge of permitting the escape of his prisoner, and it was not until three days later, upon

the evidence of his men and of the captain and officers of the ship, that he was released.

His four men were put on board a ship returning to Glasgow next day, while he himself was kept to identify the fugitive should he be caught.

A week later Malcolm told Ronald that he had made arrangements with the captain of a Dutch vessel to take them over to Holland.

"We are to go on board at Gravesend," he said, "for they are searching all ships bound for foreign ports. It is not for you especially, but there are supposed to be many Jacobites going to and fro, and they will lay hands on anyone who cannot give a satisfactory account of himself. So it is just as well for us to avoid questioning."

Accordingly the next day they walked down to Gravesend, and taking boat there boarded the Dutch vessel when she came along on the following day. The Dutch captain received them civilly; he had been told by Malcolm that they wished to leave the country privately, and guessed that they were in some way fugitives from the law, but as he was to be well paid this gave him no concern. There were no other passengers, and a roomy cabin was placed at their disposal. They passed down the river without impediment, and anchored that night off Sheerness.

"These Dutch traders are but slow craft," Malcolm said as he walked impatiently up and down the deck next morning, watching the slow progress which they made past the shore. "I

wish we could have got a passage direct to France, but of course that is impossible now the two nations are at war."

"What is the war about, Malcolm? I heard at home that they were fighting, but yet that somehow the two countries were not at war."

"No, I don't know how that comes about," Malcolm said. "England has a minister still at Paris; but for all that King George is at the head of a number of British troops in Germany fighting against the French there."

"But what is it about, Malcolm?"

"Well, it is a matter which concerns Hanover more than England; in fact England has no interest in the matter at all as far as I can see, except that as France takes one side she takes the other, because she is afraid of France getting too strong. However, it is a German business, and England is mixed up in it only because her present king is a Hanoverian and not an Englishman. This is the matter as far as I can make it out. Charles VI., Emperor of Germany, died in October, 1740. It had been arranged by a sort of general agreement called the Pragmatic Sanction–"

"What an extraordinary name, Malcolm! What does it mean?"

"I have not the least idea in the world, lad. However, that is what it is called. It was signed by a lot of powers, of whom England was one, and by it all parties agreed that Charles's daughter Maria Theresa was to become Empress of Austria. However, when the emperor was dead the Elector of Bavaria

claimed to be emperor, and he was supported by France, by Spain, and by Frederick of Prussia, and they marched to Vienna, enthroned the elector as Duke of Austria, and drove Maria Theresa to take refuge in Hungary, where she was warmly supported.

"The English parliament voted a large sum to enable the empress to carry on the war, and last year sixteen thousand men under the Earl of Stair crossed the seas to cooperate with the Dutch, who were warm supporters of the empress, and were joined by six thousand Hessians and sixteen thousand Hanoverians in British pay; but after all nothing was done last year, for as in the last war the Dutch were not ready to begin, and the English army were in consequence kept idle."

"Then it seems that everyone was against the empress except England and these three little states."

"That is pretty nearly so," Malcolm said; "but at present the empress has bought off the Prussians, whose king joined in the affair solely for his own advantage, by giving him the province of Silesia, so that in fact at present it is England and Hanover, which is all the same thing, with the Dutch and Hessians, against France and Bavaria, for I don't think that at present Spain has sent any troops."

"Well, it seems to me a downright shame," Ronald said indignantly; "and though I have no great love for the English, and hate their Hanoverian George and his people, I shouldn't like to fight with one of the Scotch regiments in the French service in

such a quarrel."

Malcolm laughed.

"My dear lad, if every soldier were to discuss the merits of the quarrel in which he is ordered to fight there would be an end of all discipline."

"Yes, I see that," Ronald agreed; "if one is once a soldier he has only to obey orders. But one need not become a soldier just at the time when he would be called upon to fight for a cause which he considers unjust."

"That is so, Ronald, and it's fortunate, if your feelings are in favour of Maria Theresa, that we are not thinking of enlisting just at present, for you would be puzzled which side to take. If you fought for her you would have to fight under the Hanoverian; if you fight against the Hanoverian you are fighting against Maria Theresa."

"Well, we don't want to fight at all," Ronald said. "What we want to do is to find out something about my father. I wish the voyage was at an end, and that we had our faces towards Paris."

"It will not be so easy to cross from Holland into France," Malcolm said. "I wish our voyage was at an end for another reason, for unless I mistake there is a storm brewing up."

Malcolm's prediction as to the weather was speedily verified. The wind rose rapidly, ragged clouds hurried across the sky, and the waves got up fast, and by nightfall the sea had become really heavy, dashing in sheets high in the air every time the bluff bowed craft plunged into it. Long before this Ronald had gone

below prostrate with seasickness.

"It's just like the obstinacy of these Dutchmen," Malcolm muttered to himself as he held on by a shroud and watched the labouring ship. "It must have been clear to anyone before we were well out of the river that we were going to have a gale, and as the wind then was nearly due south, we could have run back again and anchored in shelter till it was over. Now it has backed round nearly into our teeth, with every sign of its getting into the north, and then we shall have the French coast on our lee. It's not very serious yet, but if the wind goes on rising as it has done for the last four or five hours we shall have a gale to remember before the morning."

Before the daylight, indeed, a tremendous sea was running, and the wind was blowing with terrible force from the north. Although under but a rag of canvas the brig was pressed down gunwale deep, and each wave as it struck her broadside seemed to heave her bodily to leeward. Malcolm on coming on deck made his way aft and glanced at the compass, and then took a long look over the foaming water towards where he knew the French coast must lie. The wind was two or three points east of north, and as the clumsy craft would not sail within several points of the wind she was heading nearly east.

"She is making a foot to leeward for every one she forges ahead," he said to himself. "If she has been at this work all night we cannot be far from the coast."

So the Dutch skipper appeared to think, for a few minutes

afterwards he gave orders to bring her about on the other tack. Three times they tried and failed; each time the vessel slowly came up into the wind, but the heavy waves forced her head off again before the headsails filled. Then the skipper gave orders to wear her. Her head payed off to the wind until she was nearly before it. Two or three great seas struck her stern and buried her head deeply, but at last the boom swung over and her head came up on the other tack. During the course of these manoeuvres she had made fully two miles leeway, and when she was fairly under sail with her head to the west Malcolm took another long look towards the south.

"Just as I thought," he said. "There is white water there and a dark line behind it. That is the French coast, sure enough."

It would have been useless to speak, but he touched the arm of the skipper and pointed to leeward. The skipper looked in this direction for a minute and then gave the order for more sail to be put on the ship, to endeavour to beat out in the teeth of the gale. But even when pressed to the utmost it was evident to Malcolm that the force of the waves was driving her faster towards the coast than she could make off it, and he went below and told Ronald to come on deck.

"I would rather lie here," Ronald said.

"Nonsense, lad! The wind and spray will soon knock the sickness out of you; and you will want all your wits about you, for it won't be many hours before we are bumping on the sands, and stoutly built as the craft is she won't hold together long in

such a sea as this."

"Do you really mean it, Malcolm, or are you only trying to get me on deck?"

"I mean it, lad. We are drifting fast upon the French coast, and there is no hope of her clawing off in the teeth of such a gale as this."

The news aroused Ronald effectually. He had not suffered at all on the voyage down from Glasgow, and he was already beginning to feel better when Malcolm went down to call him. He was soon on deck holding on by the bulwark.

"There it is, that long low black line; it looks a long way off because the air is full of spray and the coast is low, but it's not more than three or four miles; look at that broad belt of foam."

For some hours the Dutch skipper did his best to beat to windward, but in vain, the vessel drove nearer and nearer towards the shore; the anchors were got in readiness, and when within a quarter of a mile of the line of breakers the vessel's head was brought up into the wind, and the lashings of the two anchors cut simultaneously.

"Will they hold her, do you think?" Ronald asked.

"Not a chance of it, Ronald. Of course the captain is right to try; but no cables were ever made would hold such a bluff bowed craft as this in the teeth of such a wind and sea."

The cables ran out to the bitts. Just as they tightened a great sea rolled in on the bow. Two dull reports were heard, and then her head payed off. The jib was run up instantly to help her round,

and under this sail the brig was headed directly towards the shore. The sea was breaking round them now; but the brig was almost flat bottomed and drew but little water. All on board hung on to the shrouds and bulwarks, momentarily expecting a crash, but she drove on through the surf until within a hundred yards of the shore. Then as she went down in the trough of a wave there was a mighty crash. The next wave swept her forward her own length.

Then there was another crash even more tremendous than the first, and her masts simultaneously went over the side. The next wave moved her but a few feet; the one which followed, finding her immovable, piled itself higher over her, and swept in a cataract down her sloping deck. Her stern had swung round after the first shot, and she now lay broadside to the waves. The Dutch skipper and his crew behaved with the greatest calmness; the ship lay over at such an angle that it was impossible to stand on the deck; but the captain managed to get on the upper rail, and although frequently almost washed off by the seas, contrived to cut the shrouds and ropes that still attached the masts to the ship there. Then he joined the crew, who were standing breast high in the water on the lee side, the floating masts were pulled in until within a few yards of the vessel, and such of the crew as could swim made towards them.

The skipper cut the last rope that bound them, and then plunged in and joined his men. The distance was little over fifty yards to the shore, and the wreck formed a partial shelter. A crowd of people were assembled at the edge of the beach with

ropes in readiness to give any assistance in their power. Malcolm and Ronald were among those who had swum to the masts, but when within a short distance of the shore the former shouted in the latter's ear:

"Swim off, lad, the masts might crush us."

As soon as they neared the shore a number of ropes were thrown. Most of the sailors, seeing the danger of being crushed, followed the example of Malcolm, and left the masts. Malcolm and Ronald swam just outside the point where the waves broke until a line fell in the water close to them. They grasped it at once.

"Give it a twist round your arm," Malcolm shouted, "or the backwash will tear you from it."

The sailors on shore watched their opportunity, and the instant a wave passed beneath the two swimmers ran up the beach at full speed with the rope. There was a crash. Ronald felt himself shot forward with great rapidity, then as he touched the ground with his feet they were swept from under him, and so great was the strain that he felt as if his arm was being pulled from the socket. A few seconds later he was lying at full length upon the sands, and before the next wave reached him a dozen men had rushed down and seized him and Malcolm, and carried them beyond its influence. For a minute or two Ronald felt too bruised and out of breath to move. Then he heard Malcolm's voice:

"Are you hurt, Ronald?"

"No; I think not, Malcolm," he replied, making an effort to sit up. "Are you?"

"No, lad; bruised a bit, but no worse."

One by one the sailors were brought ashore, one with both legs broken from the force with which he was dashed down by the surf, and one man who stuck to the mast was crushed to death as it was rolled over and over on to the beach. The captain and three sailors were, like Malcolm and Ronald, unhurt. There still remained four men on the wreck. Fortunately she had struck just at high tide, and so stoutly was she built that she held together in spite of the tremendous seas, and in an hour the four sailors were able to wade breast high to the shore.

They found that the spot where the vessel had struck was half a mile west of Gravelines. They were taken to the town, and were hospitably entertained. A small body of soldiers were quartered there, and the officer in command told the Dutch skipper, that as the two nations were at war he and his crew must be detained until he received orders respecting them. On learning from Malcolm that he and Ronald were passengers, and were Scotsmen making their way from England to escape imprisonment as friends of the Stuarts, and that he had for twelve years served in one of the Scotch regiments of Louis, and was now bound for Paris, the officer said that they were free to continue their journey at once.

It was two or three days before they started, for they found the next morning that they were both too severely bruised to set out at once on the journey. As Malcolm had taken care to keep the purse containing Ronald's money securely fastened to a belt under his clothes they had no lack of funds; but as time was no

object they started for Paris on foot. Ronald greatly enjoyed the journey. Bright weather had set in after the storm. It was now the middle of May, all nature was bright and cheerful, the dresses of the peasantry, the style of architecture so different to that to which he was accustomed in Scotland, and everything else were new and strange to him. Malcolm spoke French as fluently as his own language, and they had therefore no difficulty or trouble on the way.

They arrived at Paris without any adventure. Malcolm went to a cabaret which had at the time when he was in the French service been much frequented by Scotch soldiers, being kept by a countryman of their own, an ex-sergeant in one of the Scottish regiments.

"Ah! Sandy Macgregor," Malcolm exclaimed as the proprietor of the place approached to take their order. "So you are still in the flesh, man! Right glad am I to see you again.

"I know your face," Sandy replied; "but I canna just say what your name might be."

"Malcolm Anderson, of Leslie's Scotch regiment. It's fourteen years since I left them now; but I was here again four years later, if you can remember, when I came over to try and find out if aught had been heard of the colonel."

"Ay, ay," Sandy said, grasping Malcolm's outstretched hand warmly. "It all comes back to me now. Right glad am I to see you. And who is the lad ye have brought with you? A Scot by his face and bearing, I will be bound, but young yet for the service

if that be what he is thinking of."

"He is the colonel's son, Sandy. You will remember I told you I had carried him back to Scotland with me; but I need not tell ye that this is betwixt ourselves, for those who have so badly treated his father might well have a grudge against the son, and all the more that he is the rightful heir to many a broad acre here in France."

"I give you a hearty welcome, young sir," Sandy said. "Many a time I have seen your brave father riding at the head of his regiment, and have spoken to him too, for he and his officers would drop in here and crack a cup together in a room I keep upstairs for the quality. Well, well, and to think that you are his son! But what Malcolm said is true, and it were best that none knew who ye are, for they have an unco quick way here of putting inconvenient people out of the way."

"Have you ever heard aught of my father since?" Ronald asked eagerly.

"Not a word," Sandy replied. "I have heard it talked over scores of times by men who were in the regiment that was once his, and none doubted that if he were still alive he was lying in the Bastille, or Vincennes, or one of the other cages where they keep those whose presence the king or his favourites find inconvenient. It's just a stroke of the pen, without question or trial, and they are gone, and even their best friends darena ask a question concerning them. In most cases none know why they have been put away; but there is no doubt why Leslie was

seized. Three or four of his fellow officers were in the secret of his marriage, and when he had disappeared these talked loudly about it, and there was sair grief and anger among the Scottish regiment at Leslie's seizure. But what was to be done? It was just the king's pleasure, and that is enough in France. Leslie had committed the grave offence of thwarting the wishes of two of the king's favourites, great nobles, too, with broad lands and grand connections. What were the likings of a Scottish soldier of fortune and a headstrong girl in comparison! In Scotland in the old times a gallant who had carried off a daughter of a Douglas or one of our powerful nobles would have made his wife a widow ere many weeks were over, and it is the same thing here now. It wouldna have been an easy thing for his enemies to kill Leslie with his regiment at his back, and so they got an order from the king, and as surely got rid of him as if they had taken his life."

"You have never heard whether my mother has married again?" Ronald asked.

"I have never heard her name mentioned. Her father is still at court, but his daughter has never been seen since, or I should have heard of it; but more than that I cannot say."

"That gives me hopes that my father is still alive," Ronald said. "Had he been dead they might have forced her into some other marriage."

"They might so; but she was plainly a lassie who had a will of her own and may have held out."

"But why did they not kill him instead of putting him in prison

if he was in their way?"

"They might, as I said, have done it at once; but once in prison he was beyond their reach. The king may grant a lettre de cachet, as these orders are called, to a favourite; but even in France men are not put to death without some sort of trial, and even Chateaurouge and De Recambours could not ask Louis to have a man murdered in prison to gratify their private spite, especially when that man was a brave Scottish officer whose fate had already excited much discontent among his compatriots in the king's service. Then again much would depend upon who was the governor of the prison. These men differ like others. Some of them are honourable gentlemen, to whom even Louis himself would not venture to hint that he wanted a prisoner put out of the way; but there are others who, to gratify a powerful nobleman, would think nothing of telling a jailer to forget a fortnight to give food to a prisoner. So you see we cannot judge from this. And now what are you thinking of doing, Malcolm, and why are you over here?"

"In the first place we are over here because young Leslie took after his father and aided a Jacobite, whom George's men were in search of, to escape, and drew his sword on a worshipful justice of Glasgow and the city watch."

"He has begun early," Sandy said, laughing; "and how did he get away?"

"They brought him down a prisoner to London, to interrogate him as to the plot. I had a boat in the Thames and he jumped over

and swam for it; so here we are. There are rumours in Scotland that King Louis is helping Prince Charlie, and that an army is soon going to sail for Scotland."

"It is talked of here, but so far nothing is settled; but as King George is interfering in Louis's affairs, and is fighting him in Germany, I think it more than likely that King Louis is going to stir up a coil in Scotland to give George something to do at home."

"Then if there's nothing to be done here I shall find out the old regiment. There will be many officers in it still who have fought under Leslie, and some of them may know more about him than you do, and will surely be able to tell me what has become of the lad's mither."

"That may well be so; but keep a quiet tongue, Malcolm, as to Leslie's son, save to those on whose discretion you can rely. I tell you, if it were known that he is alive and in France his life would not be worth a week's purchase. They would not take the trouble to get a lettre de cachet for him as they did for his father; it would be just a pistol bullet or a stab on a dark night or in a lonely place. There would be no question asked about the fate of an unknown Scotch laddie."

"I will be careful, Sandy, and silent. The first thing is to find out where the old regiment is lying."

"That I can tell you at once. It is on the frontier with the Duc de Noailles, and they say that there is like to be a great battle with English George and his army."

"Well, as we have nothing else to do we will set out and find them," Malcolm said; "but as time is not pressing we will stop a few days here in Paris and I will show the lad the sights. I suppose you can put us up."

"That can I. Times are dull at present. After '15 Paris swarmed with Scotsmen who had fled to save their heads; but of late years but few have come over, and the Scotch regiments have difficulty in keeping up their numbers. Since the last of them marched for the frontier I have been looking after empty benches, and it will be good news for me when I hear that the war is over and they are on their way back."

For some days Malcolm and Ronald wandered about the narrow streets of Paris. Ronald was somewhat disappointed in the city of which he had heard so much. The streets were ill paved and worse lighted, and were narrow and winding. In the neighbourhood of the Louvre there were signs of wealth and opulence. The rich dresses of the nobles contrasted strongly indeed with the sombre attire of the Glasgow citizens, and the appearance and uniform of the royal guards filled him with admiration; but beyond the fashionable quarter it did not appear to him that Paris possessed many advantages over Glasgow, and the poorer class were squalid and poverty stricken to a far greater degree than anything he had seen in Scotland. But the chief points of attraction to him were the prisons. The Bastille, the Chatelet, and the Temple were points to which he was continually turning; the two former especially, since, if he were in Paris, it

was in one of these that his father was most probably lying.

The various plans he had so often thought over, by which, in some way or other, he might communicate with his father and aid his escape, were roughly shattered at the sight of these buildings. He had reckoned on their resembling in some respect the prison in Glasgow, and at the sight of these formidable fortresses with their lofty walls and flanking towers, their moats and vigilant sentries, his hopes fell to zero. It would, he saw at once, be absolutely impossible to open communication with a prisoner of whose whereabouts he was wholly ignorant and of whose very existence he was doubtful. The narrow slits which lighted the cell in which he was confined might look into an inner court, or the cell itself might be below the surface of the soil. The legend of the troubadour who discovered King Richard of England's place of captivity by singing without the walls had always been present in his mind, but no such plan would be practicable here. He knew no song which his father, and his father only, would recognize; and even did he know such a song, the appearance of anyone loitering in the open space outside the moat round the Bastille singing at intervals at different points would have instantly attracted the attention of the sentries on the walls. Nor, even did he discover that his father was lying a prisoner in one of the cells facing outwards in the fortress, did he see any possibility of compassing his escape. The slits were wide enough only for the passage of a ray of light or the flight of an arrow. No human being could squeeze himself through them, and even if he could

do so he would need a long rope to descend into the moat.

One day Ronald talked over his ideas with Malcolm, who declared at once that they were impossible of execution.

"There is scarcely a case on record," he said, "of an escape from either the Bastille or the Chatelet, and yet there have been scores of prisoners confined in them with friends of great influence and abundant means. If these have been unable, by bribing jailers or by other strategy, to free their friends, how could a stranger, without either connection, influence, or wealth, hope to effect the escape of a captive were he certain that he was within the walls. Do not waste your thought on such fancies, Ronald. If your father is still in prison it is by influence only, and influence exerted upon the king and exceeding that of your father's enemies, that his release can be obtained.

"Such influence there is no possibility of our exerting. Your father's comrades and countrymen, his position and services, availed nothing when he was first imprisoned; and in the time which has elapsed the number of those who know him and would venture to risk the king's displeasure by pleading his cause must have lessened considerably. The only possibility, mind I say possibility, of success lies in your mother.

"So far it is clear that she has been powerless; but we know not under what circumstances she has been placed. She may all this time have been shut up a prisoner in a convent; she may be dead; but it is possible that, if she is free, she may have powerful connections on her mother's side, who might be induced to take

up her cause and to plead with the king for your father's liberty. She may have been told that your father is dead. She is, no doubt, in ignorance of what has become of you, or whether you are still alive. If she believes you are both dead she would have had no motive for exerting any family influence she may have, and may be living a broken hearted woman, firm only in the resolution to accept no other husband."

"Yes, that is possible," Ronald agreed. "At any rate, Malcolm, let us lose no further time, but set out tomorrow for the frontier and try to find out from my father's old comrades what has become of my mother."

CHAPTER V: Dettingen

After walking two or three miles Malcolm and Ronald came upon the rear of a train of waggons which had set out from Paris an hour earlier. Entering into conversation with one of the drivers they found that the convoy was bound for the frontier with ammunition and supplies for the army.

"This is fortunate," Malcolm said; "for to tell you the truth, Ronald, I have looked forward to our meeting with a good many difficulties by the way. We have no passes or permits to travel, and should be suspected of being either deserters or thieves. We came down from the north easy enough; but there they are more accustomed to the passage of travellers to or from the coast. Going east our appearance if alone would be sure to incite comment and suspicion. It is hard if among the soldiers with the convoy I do not know someone who has friends in the old regiment. At any rate we can offer to make ourselves useful in case of any of the drivers falling ill or deserting by the way."

As they walked along towards the head of the long line of waggons Malcolm closely scrutinized the troopers who formed the escort, but most of them were young soldiers, and he therefore went on without accosting them until he reached the head of the column. Here two officers were riding together, a captain and a young lieutenant. Malcolm saluted the former.

"I am an old soldier of the 2d Regiment of Scottish Calvary,

and am going with my young friend here, who has relations in the regiment, to join them. Will you permit us, sir, to journey with your convoy? We are ready, if needs be, to make ourselves useful in case any of your drivers are missing, no uncommon thing, as I know, on a long journey."

The officer asked a few questions about his services, and said: "What have you been doing since you left, as you say, fourteen years ago?"

"I have been in Scotland, sir. I took this lad, who was then an infant, home to my people, having had enough of soldiering, while my brother, his father, remained with the regiment. We do not know whether he is alive or dead, but if the former the lad wants to join as a trumpeter, and when old enough to fight in the ranks."

"Very well," the officer said. "You can march along with us, and if any of these fellows desert you shall take their places, and of course draw their pay."

It was a short time indeed before Malcolm's services were called into requisition, for the very first night several of the drivers, who had been pressed into the service, managed to elude the vigilance of the guard and slipped away.

The next morning Malcolm, with Ronald as his assistant, took charge of one of the heavy waggons, loaded with ammunition, and drawn by twelve horses.

"This is better than walking after all, Ronald. In the first place it saves the legs, and in the second one is partly out of the dust."

"But I think we should get on faster walking, Malcolm."

"Yes, if we had no stoppages. But then, you see, as we have no papers we might be detained for weeks by some pig headed official in a little country town; besides, we are sure to push on as fast as we can, for they will want the ammunition before a battle is fought. And after all a few days won't make much difference to us; the weather is fine, and the journey will not be unpleasant."

In fact Ronald enjoyed the next three weeks greatly as the train of waggons made its way across the plains of Champagne, and then on through the valleys of Lorraine and Alsace until it reached Strasbourg. Malcolm had speedily made friends with some of the soldiers of the escort, and of an evening when the day's work was over he and Ronald sat with them by the fires they made by the roadside, and Malcolm told tales of the campaigns in which he had been engaged, and the soldiers sang songs and chatted over the probabilities of the events of the war. None of them had served before, having been but a few months taken from their homes in various parts of France. But although, doubtless, many had at first regretted bitterly being dragged away to the wars, they were now all reconciled to their lot, and looked forward eagerly to joining their regiment, which was at the front, when the duty of looking after the convoy would be at an end.

Little was known in Paris as to the position of the contending armies beyond the fact that Lord Stair, who commanded the English army, sixteen thousand strong, which had for the last year been lying inactive in Flanders, had marched down with

his Hanoverian allies towards the Maine, and that the Duc de Noailles with sixty thousand men was lying beyond the Rhine. But at Strasbourg they learned that the French army had marched north to give battle to Lord Stair, who had at present with him but twenty-eight thousand men, and was waiting to be joined by twelve thousand Hanoverians and Hessians who were on their way.

The convoy continued its journey, pushing forward with all speed, and on the 26th of July joined the army of De Noailles. The French were on the south side of the river, but having arrived on its banks before the English they had possession of the bridges. As soon as the waggons had joined the army, Malcolm obtained from the officer commanding the escort a discharge, saying that he and Ronald had fulfilled their engagement as drivers with the waggons to the front, and were now at liberty to return to France.

"Now we are our own masters again, Ronald," Malcolm said. "I have taken part in a good many battles, but have never yet had the opportunity of looking on at one comfortably. De Noailles should lose no time in attacking, so as to destroy the English before they receive their reinforcements. As he holds the bridges he can bring on the battle when he likes, and I think that tomorrow or next day the fight will take place."

It was known in the camp that evening that the English had established their chief magazines at Hanau, and were marching up the river towards Aschaffenburg. In the early morning a

portion of the French troops crossed the river at that town, and took up a strong position there. Ronald and Malcolm climbed a hill looking down upon the river from the south side, and thence commanded the view of the ground across which the English were marching. On the eastern side of the river spurs of the Spessart Mountains came down close to its bank, inclosing a narrow flat between Aschaffenburg and Dettingen. At the latter place the heights approached so closely to the river as to render it difficult for an army to pass between them. While posting a strong force at Aschaffenburg to hold the passage across a stream running into the Maine there, De Noailles marched his main force down the river; these movements were hidden by the nature of the ground from the English, who were advancing unconscious of their danger towards Dettingen.

"De Noailles will have them in a trap," Malcolm said, for from their position on the hill they could see the whole ground on the further bank, Hanau lying some seven miles beyond Dettingen, which was itself less than seven miles from Aschaffenburg.

"I am afraid so," Ronald said.

"Afraid!" Malcolm repeated. "Why, you should rejoice, Ronald."

"I can't do that," Ronald replied. "I should like to see the Stuarts instead of the Hanoverians reigning over us; but after all, Malcolm, England and Scotland are one nation."

"But there are Scotch regiments with the French army, and a brigade of Irish."

"That may be," Ronald said. "Scotchmen who have got into political trouble at home may enter the service of France, and may fight heartily against the Germans or the Flemings, or other enemies of France; but I know that I should feel very reluctant to fight against the English army, except, of course, at home for the Stuarts."

"It will benefit the Stuarts' cause if the English are defeated here," Malcolm said.

"That may be or it may not," Ronald replied. "You yourself told me that Louis cared nothing for the Stuarts, and would only aid them in order to cripple the English strength at home. Therefore, if he destroys the English army here he will have less cause to fear England and so less motive for helping the Chevalier."

"That is true enough," Malcolm agreed. "You are fast becoming a politician, Ronald. Well, I will look on as a neutral then, because, although the English are certainly more nearly my countrymen than are the French, you must remember that for twelve years I fought under the French flag. However, there can be no doubt what is going to take place. See, the dark mass of the English army are passing through the defile of Dettingen, and the French have begun to cross at Seligenstadt in their rear. See, they are throwing three or four bridges across the river there."

In utter ignorance of their danger the English marched on along the narrow plain by the river bank towards Aschaffenburg.

"Look at their cavalry scouting ahead of them," Malcolm said.

"There, the French are opening fire!" And as he spoke puffs of musketry rose up from the line of the stream held by the French.

The English cavalry galloped back, but the columns of infantry still advanced until within half a mile of the French position, and were there halted, while some guns from the French lines opened fire. The bridges at Seligenstadt were now completed, and masses of troops could be seen pouring over. King George and the Duke of Cumberland had joined the Earl of Stair just as the army passed through Dettingen, and were riding at the head of the column when the French fire opened. A short time was spent in reconnoitring the position of the enemy in front. The English believed that the entire French army was there opposed to them, and that the advance of the army into Franconia, which was its main objective was therefore barred. After a short consultation it was resolved to fall back at once upon the magazines at Hanau, which, from their ignorance of the near proximity of the French, had been left but weakly guarded. Believing that as they fell back they would be hotly pursued by the French army, the king took the command of the rear as the post of danger, and the columns, facing about, marched towards Dettingen.

But the French had been beforehand with them. De Noailles had sent 23,000 men under his nephew the Duke de Grammont across the river to occupy Dettingen. He himself with his main army remained on the south side, with his artillery placed so as to fire across the river upon the flank of the English as they

approached Dettingen; while he could march up and cross at Aschaffenburg should the English, after being beaten back at Dettingen, try to retreat up the river.

De Grammont's position was a very strong one behind a swamp and a deep ravine hollowed out by a stream from the hill. There seemed no possibility of escape for the English army, who were as yet absolutely in ignorance of the position of the French. As the head of the column approached Dettingen, Grammont's artillery opened upon them in front, while that of De Noailles smote them in flank. As soon as the king found that his retreat was cut off he galloped from the rear of the column to its head. His horse, alarmed by the fire of the artillery and whistling of balls, ran away with him, and was with difficulty stopped just as he reached the head of the column. He at once dismounted and announced his intention of leading his troops on foot.

There was a hasty council held between him, Lord Stair, and the Duke of Cumberland, and it was agreed that the only escape from entire destruction was by fighting their way through the force now in front of them. This would indeed have been impossible had De Grammont held his position; but when that officer saw the English troops halt he believed he had only the advanced guard in front of him, and resolving to overwhelm these before their main body arrived, he abandoned his strong position, led the troops across the swamp, and charged the English in front.

De Noailles, from the opposite bank, seeing the error his nephew had made, hurried his troops towards the bridges in order

to cross the river and render him assistance; but it was too late.

The English infantry, headed by the king in person, hurled themselves upon the troops of De Grammont.

Every man felt that the only hope of escape from this trap into which they had fallen lay in cutting their way through the enemy, and so furiously did they fight that De Grammont's troops were utterly overthrown, and were soon in full flight towards the bridges in the rear, hotly pursued by the English. Before they could reach the bridges they left behind them on the field six thousand killed and wounded. King George, satisfied with his success, and knowing that the French army was still greatly superior to his own, wisely determined to get out of his dangerous position as soon as possible, and pushed on that night to Hanau.

Although Malcolm and Ronald were too far off to witness the incidents of the battle, they made out the tide of war rolling away from them, and saw the black masses of troops pressing on through Dettingen in spite of the French artillery which thundered from the opposite bank of the river.

"They have won!" Ronald said, throwing up his cap. "Hurrah, Malcolm! Where is the utter destruction of the English now? See, the plain beyond Dettingen is covered by a confused mass of flying men. The English have broken out of the trap, and instead of being crushed have won a great victory."

"It looks like it certainly," Malcolm said. "I would not have believed it if I had not seen it; their destruction seemed certain. And now let us go round to the camp again."

On their way down Malcolm said:

"I think, on the whole, Ronald, that you are perhaps right, and the French defeat will do good rather than harm to the Stuart cause. Had they conquered, Louis would have been too intent on pushing forward his own schemes to care much for the Stuarts. He has no real interest in them, and only uses them as cat's paws to injure England. If he had beaten the English and Hanoverians he would not have needed their aid. As it is, it seems likely enough that he will try to create a diversion, and keep the English busy at home by aiding the Stuarts with men and money to make a landing in Scotland."

"In that case, Malcolm, we need not grieve over the defeat today. You know my sympathies are with the brave Empress of Austria rather than with her enemies, and this defeat should go far towards seating her securely on the throne. Now, what will you do, Malcolm? Shall we try and find my father's friends at once?"

"Nor for another few days," Malcolm said. "Just after a defeat men are not in the best mood to discuss bygone matters. Let us wait and see what is done next."

The next morning a portion of the French army which had not been engaged crossed the river and collected the French and English wounded, for the latter had also been left behind. They were treated by the French with the same care and kindness that was bestowed upon their own wounded. De Noailles was about to advance against the English at Hanau, when he received the

news that the French army in Bavaria had been beaten back by Prince Charles, and had crossed the Rhine into Alsace. As he would now be exposed to the whole brunt of the attack of the allies he decided to retreat at once.

The next day the retreat recommenced. Many of the drivers had fled at the first news of the defeat, and Malcolm without question assumed the post of driver of one of the abandoned teams. For another week the army retired, and then crossing the Rhine near Worms were safe from pursuit.

"Now, Ronald, I will look up the old regiment, and we will see what is to be done."

The 2d Scotch Dragoons were posted in a little village a mile distant from the main camp which had now been formed. Malcolm did nor make any formal transfer of the waggon to the authorities, thinking it by no means improbable that they would insist upon his continuing his self adopted avocation as driver; but after seeing to the horses, which were picketed with a long line of transport animals, he and Ronald walked quietly away without any ceremony of adieu.

"We must not come back again here," he said, "for some of the teamsters would recognize me as having been driving lately, and I should have hard work to prove that I was not a deserter; we must take to the old regiment now as long as we are here."

On reaching the village they found the street full of troopers, who were busy engaged in cleaning their arms, grooming their horses, and removing all signs of weather and battle. Ronald felt

a thrill of pleasure at hearing his native language spoken. He had now so far improved the knowledge of French as to be able to converse without difficulty, for Malcolm had from his childhood tried to keep up his French, and had lately always spoken in that language to him, unless it was necessary to speak in English in order to make him understand.

These occasions had become more and more rare, and two months of constant conversation with Malcolm and others had enabled Ronald by this time to speak with some fluency in the French tongue. None of the soldiers paid any attention to the newcomers, whose dress differed in no way from that of Frenchmen, as after the shipwreck they had, of course, been obliged to rig themselves out afresh. Malcolm stopped before an old sergeant who was diligently polishing his sword hilt.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.