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HONOUR FIRST

A Tale of the 'Forty-five

BY

HERBERT STRANG

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CHAPTER THE FIRST

MR. CAPPLETHWAITE IS EXPECTED

Maurice Nugent awoke to sunshine on his sixteenth birthday,—and sunshine on the fells in March was rare enough to make the morning notable. But as he turned over on his bed, stretched himself, and put his feet to the floor, his gloomy face did not reflect the brightness of the day, nor had his movements the alacrity proper to a celebration. He dragged himself to the window, facing south, threw open the casement, and resting his elbows on the sill, gazed into the distance, where the sunbeams gleamed upon water. For some minutes he leant thus, moody, motionless; then abruptly he drew himself up, sighed, cracked his fingers, and turning back into the room, began the slow process of dressing.

One of his shoelaces snapped.

'Hang old Capplethwaite!' he said explosively, throwing the broken end across the floor.

He sought a new lace, and threaded the eyes with a roughness that threatened another break. Every now and then his lips murmured. Had he uttered his thoughts aloud they would have composed a long tirade against 'old Capplethwaite'. 'Why did my father make him my guardian? What has he ever done for me? Paid my school fees—with my father's money. Paid John Seddon for my keep—with my father's money. What else? Nothing: the old skinflint. Keeps my father's money snug, he says, till my coming of age. I wish I were twenty-one to-day instead of sixteen. He wouldn't keep me here another hour.'

A woman's voice called him from below.

'Coming, coming,' he replied.

Hurrying his toilet, he presently descended the stairs to the large, low living-room. Three persons were already seated at the table beneath the oak-beamed ceiling. They turned smiling faces towards him as he entered.

'Good morrow, lad, and many happy returns o' th' day,' said the broad-faced, broad-shouldered man who held the head of the table, knife and fork in hand. 'It's a grand morning. Mother wouldn't wake you, seeing as it was your birthday.'

The others added their greetings.

'Thank you, John; thank you, Nanette; thank you, Caleb,' said Maurice as he passed to his place. His face was still gloomy. The handsome dark woman at the lower end of the table pressed his hand when he sat beside her.

'Courage, mon chéri,' she murmured.

He threw her a grateful glance. The farmer pushed towards him a platter heaped with steaming meat and vegetables.

'Not so much,' said Maurice. 'I've no appetite.'

'Bless the lad, what ails you?' said the farmer. 'Schooldays cannot last for ever. Every boy must begin to be a man. Come, take a good pull at your pot of ale, and then fall to. It'll brace you up for Mr. Capplethwaite's coming.'

'I wish he weren't coming,' said Maurice gloomily. 'How would you like to spend years of your life in a stuffy office?'

John Seddon laughed.

'Me in an office, with no schooling to my name! Can you see a pen in this 'ere fist? It fair makes me laugh. I'd fashion to drive a plough, but not a pen. But yon Mr. Gilpin's a sound man, they say, and you with your school learning will soon master the law, and I reckon I'll live to see you rich, and happen mayor of Kendal.'

'I don't want to be rich, or mayor of Kendal,' said Maurice, with a grimace. 'Why can't Mr. Capplethwaite let me go to sea?'

'Eh, now! That's what comes of gluing your nose to those books of yours,' said the farmer, shaking his head, and speaking with great deliberateness. 'Books give you notions. Thank God I never had notions. I like the dry land, solid under my feet. A sheep, not a ship, for me. I'd fain have made a farmer of you, but I reckon Mr. Capplethwaite knows best. He's your guardian, and with the money your poor father left I doubt not he'll set you up gradely an' all when you've learnt what Mr. Gilpin can teach you. How't be, lad, eat away, and when you've had your fill we'll go down th' dale, and you can try a fall with Caleb; he's itching to get a grip of you.'

His son grinned. Caleb's chief delight was wrestling. Many a time, in the holidays, when Maurice came home from the grammar-school at Heversham across the bay, the two lads contended in friendly bouts, so evenly matched that neither could claim an absolute superiority. Caleb indeed, would have felt rather sorry if victory had always inclined to him; it would have seemed treason to the relationship that subsisted between him and his playfellow. For generations the

Seddons had been dependents and devoted adherents of the Nugent family, and Caleb cherished what may be called a hereditary admiration for the present owner of that name.

After breakfast they waited awhile, until John Seddon had finished his morning pipe; then they went out of the grey old farmhouse to a little level plot of green sward below. Each wore only a shirt, pants, and stockings. The farmer accompanied them as umpire.

'Now, lads, off with your shirts,' he said. 'Happen it's the last time ye'll wrestle for many a long day.'

They faced each other. A stranger would have been puzzled to forecast the outcome of the contest. Maurice was tall and slim and sinewy; his shoulders were well formed and light, but training had hardened and developed the muscles of his upper arms. Caleb, though a year older, stood three or four inches shorter. His shoulders and arms were thick and a little clumsy, his legs short and massive and slightly bowed. In sheer muscular strength he appeared the better of the two.

The farmer gave the word. The two lads approached each other, chest to chest, each laid his chin on his opponent's shoulder, and throwing his left arm above the other's right, grasped him round the body, the hands clasped behind. Then the play began. Caleb at once tried to make use of his superior weight and strength. He turned his left side to Maurice, clicked his leg in the inside below the calf, and by means of the leverage thus obtained, sought to force him backward. But Maurice knew the 'hank' as well as Caleb. He leant forward and tightened his hold, with the result that after a few seconds' straining the two fell to the ground together.

'A dog fall,' cried the farmer. 'You're side by side. You must to it again.'

They rose smiling, and stood apart to recover their breath. Then they closed again. The next bout was a long one. Each tried all the 'chips' known to him,—the back-heel, the clicks, the outside stroke; but long practice had accustomed them to each other's tricks, and neither could give the fall that would end the match. The farmer encouraged them both impartially; watching them keenly, he had made up his mind that Caleb's greater strength would win in the end unless Maurice could counter it with superior quickness.

Maurice had come to the same conclusion, and at last ventured upon a chip that was attended with considerable risk if it failed. Suddenly slackening his hold, he turned quickly round, drove his back into Caleb's stomach, lifted him off the ground, and tried to throw him over his head. Caleb was taken by surprise. Instead of tightening his grip, and making use of his commanding position on Maurice's back, he for a second allowed his hold to relax. It was enough. Next moment he turned a somersault over Maurice's shoulder, and found himself sprawling on the grass.

'Well done, lad,' cried the farmer, heartily. 'Caleb, my son, your muscles are all right, but your mind works a bit slow. It were a good match, and worth a pot of ale. Run into th' house and rub yourselves dry; bring the mugs here, and we'll drink Maurice's health.'

He watched them fondly as they ran off side by side. They had grown up like brothers under his roof, and though he had known that some day the parting must come, he had not realized until this moment what a gap it would leave in his family life. His thoughts ran back to the day, fourteen years before, when he had brought his French wife, their boy Caleb, and Maurice Nugent from Paris to the little grey farm on the fells: to the day, still more remote, when, himself a mere youth, he had fled with his master, Paul Nugent, to the city on the Seine. The Nugents had always been staunch supporters of the house of Stuart; they had shed their blood and spent their treasure in the service of their kings; and as the Nugents had served the Stuarts, so the Seddons had served the Nugents. When, in the first year of the first George, the son of James II made a bid for his father's throne, Paul Nugent, the young Westmorland squire, flung himself heart and soul into the royal cause, and his groom, John Seddon, rode out with him as a matter of course. At the failure of the ill-starred rising, Nugent, like many a wealthier man, was proscribed; his estate was sequestered; and he fled overseas, taking with him such family treasures as he was able to save, and his faithful servant.

In Paris the two men married mistress and maid; in Paris they remained when the Stuart king was driven to Avignon and to Rome. Nugent obtained a lucrative appointment in the household of King Louis; Seddon continued in his service. A year after Caleb was born, Nugent's young wife died in giving birth to a son, named Maurice after King Charles's nephew. Two years later Nugent himself died, and with his last breath he commended his infant son to the care of John

Seddon and his wife, bidding them take the boy back to England and confide him to the guardianship of Reuben Capplethwaite, a distant relative. Seddon carried out his master's injunctions. The boy's guardian was an old man, a widower, and an invalid, living with an only son, also named Reuben, on a small estate near the Nugent property a few miles west of Kendal. It was arranged that Seddon, who had saved a little money, should rent a small farm and bring Maurice up with his own son until he attained his sixteenth year. Old Capplethwaite dying shortly afterwards, the younger man assumed the guardianship, and it never occurred to Seddon to question his right to do so. The arrangement had subsisted for fourteen years. Capplethwaite had paid Seddon, not too generously, for the boy's keep, sent Maurice to the old grammar-school at Heversham, and let it be understood that he had invested the money left by Paul Nugent in trust for the boy until he came to man's estate. Two days before Maurice's sixteenth birthday he had sent word that he would call at the farm on his return from a sheep auction at Cartmel, and take the lad to Kendal, there to apprentice him to an attorney.

Maurice, ever since he could remember, had longed to go to sea. The waters of Morecambe Bay, dimly visible from the farm windows, fascinated his childhood; seen at closer quarters from his school, they drew him with an irresistible attraction; and he lost no opportunity of slipping away to the little port of Milnthorpe, and watching the white-sailed coasting vessels come and go. Lighting upon the volumes of Hakluyt's Voyages in his master's library, he spent many a leisure hour in conning the records of Drake and Frobisher, Raleigh and John Smith, and other heroes of their adventurous age, and he burned with a feverish desire to sail over unknown seas, into far parts of the earth, and behold marvels like those of which he had read. His guardian's intention of making a lawyer of him turned him cold. He had dreaded the dawn of his sixteenth birthday, and felt a bitter resentment at the thought of spending long years shut up in a lawyer's office. John Seddon and his wife sympathized with him, because they loved him; but the farmer never disguised his landsman's dislike of the sea-faring life, and the dark-eyed Frenchwoman never thought of its perils without a shudder.

Nanette joined her husband while he was still awaiting the return of the boys.

'Maurice is sick in the heart, my John,' she said in her pretty accent. 'Must it be?'

'Why, my dear, you would not have him go to sea after all?' said the farmer.

'Oh, no, no: I hate the sea,' she replied vehemently. 'But I do not like him so sad, and I do not like Mr. Capplethwaite; no, I do not like him. He is—how you say?—*avare*, mean. He is big—ah, big!' She spread out her arms. 'But he has a little heart—ah! so little.'

'He is careful, that's true; so much the better for the lad when he grows to be a man. Money makes money, my lass; and there'll be a plump nest-egg for the lad in five years' time. And look: there's Mr. Capplethwaite himself riding athwart the dale. He'll be here in ten minutes. See that the lad puts on his best coat. He's going into Kendal, you know.'

His wife hastened into the house.

'Queer fancies a woman has,' thought Seddon, rubbing his chin. 'A big man and a little heart! Happen she's right.'

CHAPTER THE SECOND

ELIJAH FOLKARD IS SURPRISED

Mr. Reuben Capplethwaite rode at walking pace up the winding track that led from the dale road to the farmhouse. John Seddon and his wife stood at the door.

'Ah, John, a grand morning for the time of year,' said the horseman. He took off his square hat with an elaborate flourish—a salutation he would not have given to every farmer's wife. 'Bonjour, Madame,' he said. He liked to air his

little French. 'Where is my lad?'

'Getting into his best coat, sir,' replied the farmer.

'Very right and proper. He will not keep me waiting, I trust. My appointment is for twelve o'clock, and punctuality is a virtue.'

'I will bring him,' said Mrs. Seddon, withdrawing into the house.

'And I'll fetch a pot of ale, sir,' added John. 'It'll refresh you after your ride.'

'I'll not say no; you have a famous brew.'

Left alone, he sat complacently back in the saddle, humming a merry tune. He had the air of a man well satisfied with himself. His round, rubicund, shaven face, with its high-arched nose and prominent blue eyes, had won him in Kendal market the sobriquet of 'handsome Reub'. The dome of his head was quite bald, but he cherished with particular care the curly brown locks below. His stout frame seemed too heavy for the pony he bestrode, but she was a sturdy mare, and had carried him for many a year about the countryside.

Reuben Capplethwaite was something of an enigma to the dalesmen and the townfolk of Kendal. He had owned a small estate, but had long since parted with it. He bought land and sold it again; he owned several houses in Kendal, and a 'yard' there was called by his name; he was a well-known figure at the sheep markets for miles around; it was rumoured that he held shares in mines somewhere in the north. In common talk he was a 'warm' man; but he kept no style, living solitary with an ancient housekeeper in a small house in the town. His manner was genial; he would stop in the street and crack a joke with any man; but though his fellow-townsmen paid him outward deference, they did not seek his company. He kept his purse-strings tightly drawn, and no one would have thought of approaching him for a contribution to any charitable object.

He had emptied his pot of ale when Maurice, looking rather pale, came to the door.

'Here you are, my lad,' he called in his big voice. 'How does it feel to be sixteen? My faith, what would I not give to be sixteen again! "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth." All the world's before you. Your future is in your own hands, to make or mar, and with the start I'll give you I don't doubt you'll be a credit to us all. Come now, we'll set off, and I'll give you a few useful hints on the way. Good morning, John; that's prime ale of yours; adieu, Madame, or shall I say au revoir? You look younger than ever.'

Mrs. Seddon's eyes flashed; she made no answer, but turned and murmured a word in Maurice's ear. He gave her a wan smile, gripped her hand, then her husband's, and waving towards Caleb, who had held himself in the background, he set off down the hill beside Mr. Capplethwaite's pony.

No word was exchanged between him and his guardian until they reached the road below. Then Mr. Capplethwaite spoke.

'Put your best foot foremost. We have six miles to go, and I should be sorry to keep Mr. Gilpin waiting. You are lucky, my lad, in coming under such excellent hands. Gilpin is a sound lawyer, and being under some obligation to me, he will in due time give you your articles, if you are diligent. Most people have to pay a good round sum for those same articles, let me tell you.'

'Why shouldn't I pay for mine, sir?' asked Maurice.

'Eh? Pay for yours? Bless my life, where's the money to come from? The little your father left has been drained away by your schooling, my lad, and John Seddon's charges. Not quite, I admit; I know my duty. I must keep something for the years to come. But bear in mind that you must depend mainly on your own exertions. You have a chance that many a young fellow might envy, and I look to you to justify my recommendation to Mr. Gilpin, and make yourself an ornament in the profession I have chosen for you.'

'I'd rather choose for myself, sir,' said Maurice. 'It's very good of you, but I don't think I'm cut out for——'

'Dear me, how time flies?' Mr. Capplethwaite interrupted, drawing a huge watch from his fob. 'We must not dawdle like this. Keep up with me.'

He dug his heels into his pony's flanks; the animal broke into a trot. Maurice could but run alongside, sometimes dropping behind when the road narrowed. Further conversation was impossible. By the time that a rise in the road compelled the horseman to drawn rein, Maurice was too much out of breath to continue his plea. Even when, after a long spell of walking, he had mustered both breath and courage, and was about to tell of his desire to go to sea, Mr. Capplethwaite again kicked the pony into a trot, and kept it up, though he was red and sweating from his exertion.

The road wound between the green hills and crossed one or two brawling becks. Presently, as the travellers came within sight of Scar Foot, some two miles out of Kendal, they saw an odd figure emerge from a bridle track a little ahead of them. It was a short, stocky man, wearing a glazed flat hat, a loose guernsey, and long sea-boots; perched insecurely upon a shaggy pony, he was bumping up and down in the saddle with every movement of his mount, his elbows and toes stuck out in the manner of a seaman ashore. As he came into the road he caught sight of Mr. Capplethwaite, tugged the pony to a standstill, and roared in a deep rough voice:

'Blast my binnacle! 'Tis the very man!'

He had drawn his pony across the road. Mr. Capplethwaite approached him at a walk, wreathing his face into what seemed to Maurice a rather artificial smile.

'Ah, captain, how d'ye do?' he said genially. 'A grand morning for a ride. But I reckon you'd feel more at home with sea-horses than hill ponies, eh? Ha! ha!'

There was no answering smile on the seaman's swarthy, bearded face. His looks were black. He spat upon the ground, glancing darkly at Maurice, whose amusement at the man's quaint horsemanship was now merged in curiosity.

'Look 'ee here, master, I want a word or two with you—ay, and maybe three or four, and what's more, I'm going to have 'em.'

'Certainly, certainly, but don't bellow, my good captain,' said Mr. Capplethwaite. 'Maurice, my lad, walk on; I'll catch you up very shortly.'

Maurice walked slowly up the rising road, not sorry for the opportunity of getting his breath and cooling himself. The voices of the two men in altercation followed him, but he could make nothing of the confused clamour, and he withstood the temptation to turn until he had gained the top of the ascent. Then, the sounds having ceased, he halted and looked back to see whether Mr. Capplethwaite was riding on. What he saw was no less interesting than surprising. The seaman pitched himself from his saddle, sprang at Mr. Capplethwaite, gripped him round the middle, and hauled him by main force from his pony's back. Next moment the two burly frames were rolling together on the road.

No boy could have refrained from smiling at so grotesque an exhibition. But after a momentary amusement Maurice awoke to the remembrance that the man who was being assaulted was his guardian. That he did not like him was no excuse for withholding help, and he sprinted down the hill. By the time he reached the combatants both had risen to their feet, and the seaman was squaring up to Mr. Capplethwaite, calling on him to fight, and pouring out a torrent of abusive epithets.

Mr. Capplethwaite's ruddy cheeks had turned a sickly hue. The polish of his bald head was dulled with grime and scratches. He backed, protesting, holding up his arms defensively.

'Put up your fists, you onion-eyed lubber!' cried the seaman, pursuing him. 'Put 'em up, I say, before I smash in your figure-head. What, you han't got so much spunk as a scuppered rat! Then here's for ye, you white-livered skunk.'

He drove his great fist full at the bony arch of Mr. Capplethwaite's nose, and sent him staggering back, following him up with the evident intention of repeating the blow. But at this moment Maurice threw himself between the two, and

stood with clenched fists in the seaman's path.

'Ho! What's this!' said the man, surprised. He looked Maurice up and down. 'Out of the fairway, blast ye!' he roared. Maurice stood his ground. 'You won't, won't ye? You'll set yourself agen Elijah Folkard? Avast there!'

He hurled himself forward, lowering his big head like a butting goat.

Now Maurice had borne his part in many a merry mill at Heversham Grammar School. In that little commonwealth no one could hold his footing without some skill in sparring. He had acquitted himself with credit in these petty duels; indeed, there were some who would willingly have backed him against Miles Winthrop, the cock of the school. But Winthrop and he were such good friends that all attempts to embroil them in the cause of sport had come to nothing, and they had never met in the ring. His little battles and his friendly bouts with Caleb had hardened his muscles and quickened his eye, and he met the irate seaman's onslaught with only a passing tremor.

He took the opening blow on his left arm, and countered with his right.

'So ho, my cockerel!' cried the seaman, grinning. 'Are ye moulting your feathers?' And he shot out his right fist with force enough to fell an ox. But Maurice skipped adroitly back, and got home a blow on the man's thick neck. For a while they dodged and circled, and Maurice discovered that his opponent, though possessed of any amount of strength and pluck, had little or no science. If his reach had been a trifle greater he would probably have prevailed in the first exchanges by the sheer weight and drive of his onslaught. But his powerful arms were short; Maurice, quicker on his feet and nimbler in dodging, managed to parry the hurricane of blows showered on him, content for some few seconds to remain on the defensive.

It was not long before the seaman realized that most of his energy was wasted on thin air, and a good deal of his breath in clamant oaths. Surprise at this discovery caused him to pause for a moment, opening his guard. Maurice was quick to mark his opportunity. While the seaman still hesitated, he gathered all his strength for a smashing upper-cut. He landed his knuckles full on his opponent's jaw. The seaman spun round, toppled, and next moment was sitting on the road, looking up with a comical expression of innocent amazement.

He was not long upon the ground. Scrambling to his feet, he rubbed his jaw, and gazed at Maurice, who stood awaiting a renewal of the attack. But it did not come. The seaman stood silent, hands on hips; the look of surprise gradually faded from his face; his lips twitched, his eyes blinked; presently he opened his mouth and let out a great roar of laughter.

'Blast my binnacle!' he cried. 'To think that Elijah Folkard ha' been downed by a bit of a boy!'

He laughed again.

'Give us your flipper, lad,' he said heartily. 'You be a rare young pug for your years. Dang me if I bain't right well punished for going at ye like a blind dumbledore. And I dunno how ye did it! There's no bad blood atwixt us, eh?'

'Not a drop,' said Maurice, accepting the offered hand, and wincing as his bruised knuckles were squeezed in the mighty fist. 'You gave me an opening, you know.'

'That's a fact,' said the seaman, with conviction. Suddenly he appeared to remember Mr. Capplethwaite, who had stood inactive during the fight, and was now in the saddle again, gingerly rubbing his swollen nose.

'Ah, you white-livered son of a scab,' cried Folkard. 'That'll keep ye out of market for a week. This young sprig ha' saved ye from worse, but only for a time, I warn ye. If I run across your course when there's no consort standing by, I'll give ye what ye deserve, you fat-chapped, whey-blooded, blowed-out bladder of a miser, you!'

Turning his back, he caught his pony, which had been placidly browsing on the grassy roadside, scrambled on to the saddle, and set off at a bumping trot on the way to Kendal.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

CAPPLETHWAITE'S YARD

Left alone with his guardian, Maurice felt a touch of embarrassment. Clearly he had saved Mr. Capplethwaite from very rough handling; but no doubt Mr. Capplethwaite would much rather there had been no need to save him. For a few moments there was an awkward silence, the elder man gazing after the broad jogging figure of the seaman with an expression of deep resentment and animosity. Maurice turned his head away, and began to walk on slowly, to be overtaken after a few yards by the ambling pony.

'Hot temper, my lad,' said Mr. Capplethwaite, smiling faintly. 'Hot temper—and no sense of humour. Beware of hot temper: never lose your sense of humour. The man lost his temper at an innocent jest of mine, which I was endeavouring to explain to him when you took matters into your own hands—a little hastily, perhaps. You handled him well, very well—I admit that: and saved me, possibly, the necessity of trouncing him myself; but I am sure in another moment he would have seen the point of my jest, and laughed as heartily as he did when—you floored him.'

Maurice did not reply. It struck him that Mr. Capplethwaite's explanation was rather laboured: he remembered the expression on that gentleman's face as the seaman squared up to him. Silence fell between them for a while. Mr. Capplethwaite kept his pony at a slow walk, and Maurice had no difficulty in keeping pace with him. Presently Mr. Capplethwaite hemmed, ha'ed, delicately felt his nose, looked uneasily at Maurice, then said, with many a pause:

'Tell me, my lad, is my—er—my nose very much—er—disfigured?'

Maurice threw a rapid glance up at that normally handsome organ.

'It's a little discoloured,' he said, 'and I'm afraid——'

'What?' demanded his guardian, as he hesitated.

'I'm afraid it's—it's swelling,' Maurice replied.

'The insolent scoundrel!' cried Mr. Capplethwaite, furiously. 'That he should dare to assault me! I'll—I'll—— Wet my handkerchief in the beck yonder, my lad. Cold water, I believe, is good for—for superficial injuries.'

He halted while he dabbed his bruised nose.

'A magistrate would inflict a heavy sentence on the ruffian,' he said, 'but—but he's had his punishment, my lad. Ha! ha! Thank heaven I haven't lost my sense of humour. I laugh again when I think of the fellow's surprise. It was a comical sight when he sat upon the ground. Ha! ha!'

The jocularity, Maurice thought, was a little forced, and he tramped on without speaking. Mr. Capplethwaite said nothing more until they had nearly reached the town. Then, instead of pursuing the direct course, he turned to the right, and struck into the bridle path through Gilling Grove.

'We will cross by the Nether Bridge, my lad,' he said. 'It is high market now, and the streets will be thronged.'

'Won't that make us late for our appointment, sir?' asked Maurice.

'Gilpin must wait,' snapped the elder man.

Maurice did not show his amusement. The round would lengthen the journey by twenty minutes; he understood that Mr. Capplethwaite desired to avoid observation in the crowded streets. At the lower end of the town they passed almost

unnoticed, crossed the bridge to the fields beyond, turned along by the bank of the river, and recrossing at the northern end came into Stramongate. At this hour most of the townsmen were engaged at the market. By taking discreet short cuts Mr. Capplethwaite reached his house in Stricklandgate without meeting any of his particular acquaintances. He dismounted, gave his pony into the hands of the ostler who had been for some time awaiting him, then led Maurice across the street to the unpretentious office of Mr. Gilpin, almost opposite.

'A thousand apologies, my dear sir,' he said, on entering the dark, dusty room. 'I fear we keep you from your dinner, but we were delayed by—by unforeseen circumstances. This is my young friend, my ward, Maurice Nugent, the son of a gentleman whom I daresay you remember.'

'I do remember him, sir, though it is thirty years since I saw him,' said the lawyer, in a dry toneless voice.

Maurice looked curiously at the man who was to be his master. He saw a small, pale, timid-looking person, with hollow shaven cheeks, sunken eyes, and a scratch-wig set somewhat askew upon his head. Mr. Gilpin rubbed his hands together nervously; he appeared to be in some awe of the hearty Mr. Capplethwaite.

'Ay, this is the lad I spoke to you about,' Mr. Capplethwaite went on. 'He has a passable good character from his master at Heversham, and I have impressed upon him that his future course in life depends on his diligence and application. No career is more respectable, more honourable, than that of the law, and I tell the lad he should count himself lucky in having so good a preceptor as Mr. Gilpin.'

'You are too kind, sir,' said the lawyer. 'I am proud to have in my care the son of a father so much respected, and proud that he has chosen a profession of which——'

'I have not chosen it, sir,' Maurice put in quickly. 'What I have always longed to do is to go to sea. Ever since I was ——'

'Come, come,' said Mr. Capplethwaite, cutting him short, 'don't spoil your welcome. Never heed the foolish lad, Mr. Gilpin. Nine out of ten youngsters have these mad moments when they want to be sailors or soldiers or tinkers—I myself, I remember, thought nothing was finer than to mend pots and kettles with a peddling tinker. Those fancies fade—especially if the lads are lucky enough to have parents or guardians to guide them aright. No more of this foolishness, my lad. You will start your work with Mr. Gilpin on Monday next. At what hour, Mr. Gilpin?'

'I open my office at nine, sir,' replied the lawyer.

'Then you must be up betimes, my lad. And you close?'

'At four, sir.'

'Early enough for him to get home before it is dark—for the present. A strong lad can easily walk six miles in little more than an hour.'

'Twelve miles every day is perhaps a little far,' the lawyer suggested mildly.

'No, no,' said Mr. Capplethwaite. 'Exercise is good. One must look after the body as well as the mind, you know. The lad has a very comfortable home with the Seddons; and lodgings are expensive in Kendal. Now, everything is arranged; we will no longer detain you from your dinner, Mr. Gilpin. You will see the lad again at nine o'clock on Monday morning.'

The lawyer again rubbed his hands together, bowed, and showed his visitors out, giving Maurice an inscrutable look as he passed.

'You will come and have a bite with me,' said Mr. Capplethwaite. 'Then you will take Seddon his monthly remittance; it is a few days early, but will save another messenger.'

Maurice felt decidedly glum as he accompanied Mr. Capplethwaite back to his house. It had not occurred to him

that he would be expected to walk to and from Mr. Gilpin's office, and though he was pleased enough with the prospect of living still with his friends at the farm, the thought of the long tramp in all weathers made his new calling even less attractive. 'Skinflint,' he said to himself wrathfully. Nor was his opinion of Mr. Capplethwaite's meanness altered when he sat at that gentleman's table. Hungry after his journey, he found little to satisfy his appetite in the thin slice of cold fat mutton and the wedge of dry bread which, with a mug of very thin ale, was all that was given him. Mr. Capplethwaite, it was true, had nothing better himself, and Maurice wondered how he kept himself so fat and florid on fare so scanty.

They were still at the table when Mr. Capplethwaite, who sat facing the window, started up suddenly.

'Go into the back room, lad,' he said: 'along the passage: it is rather dark: the door at the farther end. I'll come to you presently.'

Maurice got up, and as he moved round the table, he cast an involuntary glance aside. He saw, peering in at the window, the face of a man whom he knew only by sight, and yet disliked intensely. Years before, when his father's estate had been sequestrated, it was bought by Matthew Spurr, the owner of a small farm a few miles on the other side of Kendal. That was before Maurice was born, and what he knew about the man was derived from gossip picked up by John Seddon in the markets. It was a standing wonder among the dalesfolk and townsmen how Spurr had found the money to purchase a property that appeared to be beyond his means. He had been known as a slovenly farmer, living almost from hand to mouth: yet he had boldly run up the bidding when the Nugent estate was auctioned; he had paid for it; and had lived for more than twenty-five years in the house which generations of Nugents had inhabited. His life was somewhat of a mystery. He rarely appeared at the markets. Few people ever visited the great lonely house tucked away in a fold of the fells. It was reported that most of the rooms remained unfurnished; and there were whispers that Spurr supported himself, not on the proceeds of his farming, but on the fruits of secret dealings with smugglers who on dark nights ran their cargoes into the sandy recesses of Morecambe Bay.

He was now a widower, past sixty years of age, and lived alone, with no tendance but that of a hag of a housekeeper older than himself. Maurice had now and again seen his tall, gaunt figure shambling along, dirty, shabby; an ugly, nondescript dog at his heels. It was natural enough that the boy should feel a certain resentment against the man who had entered into the heritage of a long line of Nugents.

'Why has he come to see old Capplethwaite?' he thought, as he groped his way along the dark passage to a small room at the back of the house.

He sat down at the window, and looked idly out, into Capplethwaite's Yard. The yards are a quaint feature of the old town of Kendal. At short intervals along the principal streets one comes upon an opening, leading through a covered alley to a narrow, short, stone-paved street, perhaps fifteen feet broad, with small houses on either side. Here, in the days when raiding bands poured across the Border from the Lowlands of Scotland, the people sought refuge from the marauders; the confined spaces, closed at the further end, being easily barricaded against attack.

The window of Mr. Capplethwaite's back room overlooked the rear end of the alley from Stricklandgate, and the first house or two on the opposite side of the yard. There was a door that apparently opened into the alley.

Maurice had been seated only a few minutes when a man passed the window. Immediately afterwards there was a discreet tap on the door. Before Maurice could rise the latch was silently lifted, the door opened, and the man entered. The room was gloomy, and at his first glance at the stranger Maurice guessed him to be one of the sheep-drovers who tramped from farm to farm and from market to market, driving large flocks of sheep by well-known tracks over the fells. The man's weather-tanned face was almost concealed by a thick black beard and moustache. He wore a close-fitting woollen cap, a loose tunic and breeches of a coarse drugget, leather gaiters, and thick-soled shoes.

He started on seeing Maurice. There was a moment's pause, during which he noiselessly closed the door behind him. Then, in a thick, husky voice, and the broadest of north-country accents, he asked whether Mr. Capplethwaite was at home.

'He is at present engaged,' replied Maurice, wondering why the man had not applied at the front door.

'Eh then, ah'll bide a bit,' said the man, and seated himself in a chair opposite Maurice.

No further speech passed between them. Maurice more than once caught a keen, scrutinizing glance thrown at him from a pair of very intelligent blue eyes—a glance that by and by made him vaguely uncomfortable. It was with relief that he heard the footsteps of Mr. Capplethwaite in the passage. The door opened.

'What now, who's this?' exclaimed Mr. Capplethwaite, entering.

'It's me, Mr. Capplethwaite,' the stranger drawled. 'Ah's coom to tell ya t' sheep 're penned all reet in meadow beyond Far Cross Bank.'

'Oh, it's you, Ducket. How long have you been here?'

Maurice thought he detected a note of anxiety in the question.

'Nobbut a minute or two.'

'Well, well, I'll hear your news directly. Maurice, my lad, here's the money to take to Seddon. Count it over, and sign your name here.' He handed him a sheet of paper. 'I never pay away money without taking a receipt. There's a pen on the table.'

Maurice bent over the table and signed the receipt under the eye of the drover, sitting near the corner. He did not notice the man's start and quick look up at Mr. Capplethwaite as the pen traced his full name.

'Hand the money to Seddon,' Mr. Capplethwaite continued. 'And be sure you reach Mr. Gilpin's office punctually at nine on Monday morning. At the end of the week I shall inquire about your diligence, and I trust I shall not be disappointed. Good-bye.'

Maurice buttoned up the money in his pocket, took his leave, and went out into the alley.

'I hate him!' he thought. 'So mean that he won't trust me with a few miserable pounds without a receipt. And I'd rather be anything than a lawyer. I'd rather be that drover.'

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

MAURICE MAKES A DISCOVERY

A twelve-mile walk was in itself nothing to a lad of Maurice's vigour; but his indignation, nursed on the homeward way, had on him the wearing effect of physical fatigue. His friends at the farm exclaimed at his worn appearance, and Mrs. Seddon, when she heard that Mr. Capplethwaite expected him to trudge the journey twice a day, gave rein to her feelings and spoke her mind very frankly.

'Come, lass,' said the farmer, good-humouredly, 'hard words won't help the lad. Happen Mr. Capplethwaite will change his mind when the winter weather comes. Tell us about Mr. Gilpin, lad.'

'He's a quiet, timid little man,' said Maurice, 'and I think I should like him better if he weren't so much afraid of Mr. Capplethwaite. By the bye, Mr. Capplethwaite has strange friends. While I was there Matthew Spurr came to see him, and a drover named Ducket.'

'Eh now, what did Ducket say to you?' the farmer asked, eagerly.

'Nothing,' said Maurice. 'What should he say? Do you know him?'

'I've seen him,' was the short reply. 'Go on with your story, lad.'

Maurice smiled. If he had had any liking for Mr. Capplethwaite he would no doubt have held silence on the strange incident of the morning; but he had no reason for concealing it, and indeed he felt some curiosity about the seaman. He described the quarrel and its outcome, to the amusement of John Seddon and Caleb, and the delight of Mrs. Seddon.

'That was 'Lijah Folkard, sure enough,' said the farmer. 'He's a rough fellow of his hands and his tongue. He's not often seen in these parts nowadays; I reckon he has some grudge against Mr. Capplethwaite over the free-trading.'

'You believe the stories, then?' said Maurice.

'I don't say that,' replied the farmer, cautiously. 'But if Mr. Capplethwaite makes a few guineas that way, I don't blame him. It's no secret that he thinks, like many more, that folk's money should go to the rightful king over the water, and not to these strangers from Hanover. I think so myself, though I'm not the man to set myself against the powers that be.'

'But you fought for King James,' said Maurice.

'Ay, but in the way of duty to your father. A Seddon would always follow a Nugent. And I was young then. I's settled down now. Best bide quiet; that's what I say. And so you downed 'Lijah Folkard! And he took it well! He's a good honest soul, though roughish in his temper.'

They sat talking around the supper-table until bed-time. When Maurice went up to his room, he sat on the bedside, trying to reconcile himself to the distasteful occupation upon which he was so soon to enter. For the present he must dismiss his dream of an adventurous life on the sea. He glanced regretfully at his father's sword hanging on the wall: how often he had imagined himself wielding that well-tried blade in heroic combats with buccaneers, or Spaniards, or dusky warriors in the Indies! He groaned at the thought of the dull round of a lawyer's office; but recognizing that it was no good repining, he made up his mind to endure it until some opportunity offered of following his bent.

Next day was Saturday. It would be his last free day before he began his service with Mr. Gilpin, and he resolved to make the most of it. The morning was mild; masses of broken cloud hovered over the fells; it was weather favourable to fishing, and after breakfast he set off with Caleb for a hill-stream from which he had more than once returned with a full basket. It lay some miles southward across the fells, and the lads carried, besides their fishing-tackle, a wallet well stuffed with food from Mrs. Seddon's larder.

The direct route to their destination ran through the ancestral property of the Nugents, now held by Matthew Spurr; but when they came to the low stone dyke that bounded its northern extremity, they struck off to the right, by a winding sheep track that would lengthen their journey by more than a mile. Spurr was a saturnine person, notorious all over the neighbourhood for his savage objection to trespassers; he had even threatened to shoot any one he found straying upon his lands. Maurice, in his childhood, had more than once taken a fearful joy in risking discovery, but of late years he had felt curiously reluctant to set foot as a stranger on ground that had once belonged to his family. He paused for a moment and gazed at the distant house, a grey spot among the surrounding green, and at the still more distant pele tower, lonely on its frowning crag. There, no doubt, in days long past, his ancestors had defended themselves and their flocks and herds against the attacks of Scots forayers from the Border. If only he could have won fortune upon the sea, he might some day have bought back the estate which his father's loyalty had lost. Not a word of this secret ambition had ever passed his lips; it was locked up within his own breast.

The lads arrived at the stream about midday, and ate their simple dinner of cheese and oatcake on the bank. Then they started work; the trout rose well, and within a couple of hours Caleb's basket was half full.

'A storm is blowing up,' said Maurice, presently, watching the clouds that scudded, ever blacker and more dense, across the fells.

'Ay,' returned Caleb; he was always a boy of few words.

'But we'll fill the creel if we can before it breaks,' Maurice went on. 'The fish bite well to-day.'

'Ay, gradely well.'

'There's a spot of rain,' said Maurice, after a few minutes.

'Ay.'

'We had better get back. We've a long road to go, and I don't want a drenching.'

They packed up their tackle; Caleb slung the basket on his back; they started to return. Before they had gone far the raindrops fell more closely.

'Reckon we'll get wet,' said Caleb.

Maurice looked up at the darkening sky.

'We had better take the short cut,' he said, after a little hesitation. 'It will save us twenty minutes.'

They scrambled over the dyke, and hastened their steps. Every moment the downpour increased; there was no shelter on the bare, rolling country. Presently they came within sight of the pele tower: under its overhanging crag they might take refuge until the worst of the storm was over. They ran on, waded the beck that flowed in swift current past the foot of the crag, and climbing up, found a little niche where they were protected from the driving wind. Side by side they sat there, watching the rain, now falling in sheets, and the stream that bubbled and eddied below them.

'It's too hard to last long,' said Maurice.

'Ay,' said his taciturn companion.

Disinclined for talking, Maurice sat for a while in silence, meditating, dreaming. By and by he began idly to pluck at a tuft of grass at his side, casting handfuls into the air. Something caught his attention. He looked hard at the spot of ground from which the grass was now almost entirely torn away.

'Look here, Caleb,' he said.

He pointed to what appeared to be a round patch, a little different in colour from the ground about it.

'A fairy's table,' said Caleb.

'Let us see,' said Maurice.

Opening his knife, he scratched around the circumference of the green patch, which was scarcely larger than the palm of his hand.

'There's something hard here,' he said; 'it's round like a plate; perhaps it's a trencher that has been here for ages.'

Fired with curiosity, he set to work energetically, scraping the soil away, Caleb watching in silence. In a few minutes a round, dark, flat object was revealed.

'It's not a trencher. Look, here's a little hollow in the middle, with a bar across it—like a lid with something to lift it by.'

He scraped the soil from beneath the bar, and placing his knife beneath it, tried to lever up the metal plate. But he could not move it; evidently it had been long embedded in the earth. The difficulty only whetted his determination. Thrusting his blade deeper into the soil around the rim of the plate, he dug it out bit by bit. Still the metal refused to budge.

'We need something longer than my knife,' he said.

'The rod?' Caleb suggested.

'No; it would snap; it might; I don't want to break it. See if you can find something else.'

The downpour, unnoticed until now by the lads, had ceased. Caleb went out and looked around. But there was nothing except grass, and the stones in the bed of the stream.

'Then the rod it must be,' said Maurice. 'I must see what is under this plate.'

He took the short bottom section of his fishing rod, and found that its thin end passed easily under the bar. Placing a stone beneath the rod, a few inches from the end, he pressed on the butt. This improvised lever served his purpose. The metal slab suddenly started from its socket, disclosing a hole in the ground.

The two boys bent over it eagerly. They saw a small cup-like cavity, with a stout iron ring, much rusted, in the centre, apparently mortared into the solid rock.

'What's it for?' said Maurice. 'It's not here for nothing, hidden away so carefully. You've a stronger pull than I, Caleb; tug at the ring.'

Caleb tugged until he was red in the face, but nothing moved.

'I wish we had a rope; we could then pull both together,' said Maurice.

'There's the strap,' said Caleb.

'Of course; take it off the basket.'

But even when both tugged at the doubled strap with all their strength, the stone in which the ring was set remained immovable as before.

'This is baffling,' said Maurice, kneeling down and peering into the cavity. 'But I won't give in.'

Stretching himself flat on the ground, he gave, by accident rather than design, a sideways pull upon the ring.

'It moves!' he cried.

As he continued to pull steadily, the stone slowly moved forward, sticking every now and then, but moving again when he pulled harder. Presently it stopped altogether, revealing a dark hole between it and the wall of the niche in which the boys were sheltering.

'Strange!' said Maurice, in some excitement. Even Caleb's stolidity was stirred. On opposite sides of the hole they lay peering into it. For a few moments they could distinguish nothing in the black depth. Then Caleb cried:

'A step in the rock!'

Maurice thrust his arm down.

'You are right,' he said. 'There's a shallow hole cut out of the rock; no doubt a step. Perhaps there is another below it; but it's too dark to see, and my arm isn't long enough to reach lower.'

'Ay, but you're long in the leg.'

'True,' said Maurice, smiling, 'and you are strong in the arm. Catch hold of me while I let myself down. Don't let go; goodness knows how deep the hole is. I'll kick about and see if I can find another step. If there is one, it will be easy after that.'

Caleb clasped him tightly under the armpits as he lowered himself. After a little groping with his feet against the

wall, he discovered a second step.

'Hold one hand now while I get the other on the first step,' he said.

Sticking his feet into the second opening, he released his hand from Caleb's grasp, and hung on to the first opening while he groped for one still lower down.

'Are you all reet?' said Caleb, anxiously.

'Quite safe,' came the hollow answer. 'I'm going right down.'

Only a few seconds later his feet touched solid earth.

'There are only four steps,' he called. 'Stay where you are. I'll come up again presently.'

It was pitch dark at the bottom. Maurice thrust out his arms, moving carefully to right, to left, forward. On either side he touched a wall, but forward there appeared to be empty space. Only the extreme slowness of his movement prevented him from knocking his head; but at the level of his arms there was still emptiness, and he guessed that he was at the entrance to a sort of tunnel. He bent his head, groped onward, and after a few yards struck his feet against a step. There was room for him now to stand erect. He stretched his arms on both sides, and knocked his elbows.

'It's very narrow and very stuffy,' he thought, as he mounted, cautiously feeling his way.

The stairs were narrower at one end than at the other. Clearly it was a spiral staircase. Where did it lead to? To the pele tower on the crag? Maurice, as he climbed step by step, wondered how many of his ancestors had trodden those stones before him during the Border raids. Guiding himself by the wall, he went round, and round again, up and up, and presently, coming to the topmost step, saw a streak of daylight before him. He took a step onward; there was no footing; he fell sprawling, and found himself, rather shaken than hurt, clutching straw.

He picked himself up and looked about him. Daylight came through long slanting slits in a thick wall. He had fallen down a wide chimney on to the hearth. Around him were bundles of straw, boxes, barrels, ropes, iron hooks. Clambering over these into the room, he saw that it was a lofty chamber, lit only through the wall slits, but with a window, heavily shuttered, at one side. Below this lay a stout rope ladder, with strong hooks at the end. Round the walls were ranged a number of cases, bales, flat boxes, canvas sacks. He sniffed: surely he smelled tobacco. Thrusting his hand into a hole in a corner of one of the bales, he drew out a packet of thin brown leaves tightly pressed together. It was certainly tobacco. He untied the cord about the mouth of one of the sacks, which emitted a smell strange to him. Out of it he took a length of some dark fibrous substance; though he did not know it, it was Spanish liquorice. He opened one of the flat boxes; it contained pieces of finely worked lace, and around some of the cases he saw scatterings of what was unmistakably tea.

'A smuggler's storehouse!' he exclaimed. 'That old rascal Spurr.'

A slate hanging on the wall caught his eye. Examining it, he found it scrawled with a rough tally of goods. At the foot were the initials R.C.

'Reuben Capplethwaite?' he thought. 'There are many people with initials R.C., but——'

There was a thundering crash somewhere below. Maurice jumped, considered for a moment, then hurried back to the chimney, intending to climb to the step from which he had fallen, and re-enter the spiral staircase. But just before he reached the hearth, a dark object hurtled from above on to the straw.

'You fell into the trap, too,' said Maurice, smiling.

'Ay,' said Caleb.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

ELIJAH FOLKARD MAKES A RAID

'Why did you come? What's that hullabaloo below?'

Maurice spoke in an undertone, though in truth a shout could hardly have been heard above the clamorous din from the lower quarters. Mingled with men's voices came recurrent crashes as though from the wielding of some mighty hammer: the floor shook with the force of the blows.

'It were nobbut a minute you'd been gone,' Caleb began—

'Tell me presently,' Maurice interrupted. Caleb's stories were slow. 'I must see for myself. Stay here; there's no way up to this room from below except through that closed window—and the chimney: that hasn't been used for years. I'm going up higher.'

He had noticed in one corner of the room a narrow upward stairway. Like the one that had ended in the chimney it was a winding stair. Mounting it as quickly as he could without noise, he found himself on the roof of the battlemented tower, fifty or sixty feet above the ground. He looked over. At the foot of the tower stood a group of about a dozen men; four, grasping a huge balk of timber, were in the act of employing it as a battering ram. In former days, the ground floor of the pele tower was a large, open vaulted chamber, into which, when raiders threatened, the owner's cattle were driven for safety, being defended by arrows, stones, and musket-fire from the inaccessible stronghold above. But when Matthew Spurr came into possession of the place, he had the vault closed with a stout wall of oaken planks, and it was the door in this wall that the assailants were now attacking.

It is difficult to distinguish persons from a great height above them, and for a time Maurice recognized none of the party. Presently it struck him that they had the appearance of seamen, and the one who was giving directions seemed a familiar figure. But he was not certain until the rammers drew back to rest for a moment. Then he heard a loud voice that he had good cause to remember.

'Drive at the lock, I tell ye; shiver that, and the job's done.'

There was no mistaking Elijah Folkard's roar. Maurice began to feel a personal interest in the scene. The men took up their battering ram again. With a 'Yo heave ho!' they drove it at the door. There was a sound of splintering wood, an encouraging cry from Folkard.

'Once more, my hearties.'

At the next blow there was a tremendous crash. The men staggered and dropped their ram. Then the whole party trooped into the opening. Maurice noticed that all carried cudgels, and some had ropes. They disappeared, for a moment or two he heard their scuffling feet; then there was complete silence.

'What are they doing?' thought Maurice. 'Is there a way up to the room after all? I'd better get back to Caleb.'

He hurried down the staircase. Caleb was sitting on a box, looking worried.

'They've broken in below,' said Maurice.

'Ay. I heard 'em.'

'All's quiet now. They don't seem to be coming here, but I think we had better get outside.'

'Ay, I'm thinking the same.'

They had barely reached the hearth when they heard sounds of movement below, and voices in the open.

'Get into the chimney,' said Maurice. 'I'll go up again and see what's doing. I'll join you in a minute or two.'

He darted up the staircase. Looking cautiously over the battlements he saw two or three men moving away from the broken doorway, each bent under the burden of a couple of kegs slung across his shoulders. A shout from some point to the left of the tower diverted his attention. What he saw there caused him to skip down behind the parapet. Half a dozen men, farm hands in appearance, were running up the steep path that led to the summit of the crag. They bore flails, spades, and other implements. Their mien was warlike.

Careful to keep out of sight, Maurice peered over again. The seamen had dropped their kegs and stood waiting, cudgel in hand. Their shouts brought Folkard and others of their comrades hurriedly from the tower, and by the time the newcomers reached the spot the parties were equal. There was no parley. The countrymen rushed straight at the seamen, and the open chamber rang with the din of the mella that ensued. Cudgel rattled on cudgel, or thudded on body or skull. Fierce cries broke from both sides. For a few moments the countrymen had the advantage. The weight of their attack drove the seamen back towards the entrance of the tower. But meanwhile the rest of Folkard's party swarmed out in response to their leader's cry. Now they outnumbered their opponents; the tide of battle turned; the countrymen gave ground; one wheeled about and ran; another followed; soon the whole band were in full flight down the hill.

'After them, lads,' cried Folkard. 'Catch every man of them, and we'll learn 'em a lesson as they won't forget in a month.'

The nimble seamen sped down the path. Maurice almost forgot his precautions in the excitement of watching the chase. The countrymen, for the most part heavy fellows, were outrun by their pursuers. Some of them showed fight on being overhauled, but not a man escaped. The stoutest resistance was made by a tall shambling figure which Maurice did not recognize until, in the course of the struggle, the man's hat was knocked off. The face, no longer shadowed, was that of Matthew Spurr. Dragged up the path between two seamen, Spurr poured out a torrent of shrill curses upon them and their leader. It was redoubled when Folkard ordered him to be tied up like his men. Maurice could not distinguish his words, but he heard Folkard's answer.

'I'll cut your comb, my gamecock. Stuff a gag into his jaws, lads. I don't hold with such brimstone language.'

It was the work of but a few minutes to the practised hands of the seamen to truss up the whole party. Folkard appeared to consider how he should dispose of them. Presently he gave an order; each couple of his men seized one of the countrymen, and carried him down the crag and up the grassy slope opposite. Then the prisoners were laid side by side on their backs, facing the tower, so that their rage might be fed by the sight of what went on there.

The seamen finished their interrupted task. Some of them disappeared into the vaulted entrance, and returned laden with kegs. Soon the whole twelve passed down the path in single file. Folkard remained to the last, to make some shift to close the entrance with the battered door. This done, he gazed at the six helpless figures on the hill-side opposite.

'Hey, you lubbers there,' he shouted, 'don't ye make a sound while I'm in earshot. If I hear any of ye bleat, I'll come back and quiet you for good. Mark ye that.'

He followed his men down the path in the direction of Morecambe Bay. The mist of evening was already creeping over the fells, and the trudging seamen were soon lost to sight. Looking at the prone figures on the hill side, Maurice thought how easily they might be mistaken for dead men.

A good deal bewildered by the scenes he had witnessed, Maurice returned to the room where he had left Caleb.

'You saw Folkard and his gang coming?' he said.

'Ay, and I coom to tell you.'

'Well, the tower is a smuggler's storehouse, that's clear, and Folkard brought his men to remove some kegs. But whose property are they? Spurr brought up a gang to prevent the removal, but they were beaten and are now lying trussed

on the hillside.'

At this Caleb smiled.

'And now we had better get back,' Maurice went on. 'It's getting dark. Perhaps we shall learn more about the mystery by and by.'

They clambered into the chimney, gained the winding stairway, and were soon in the open air. While Maurice was collecting his tackle, Caleb of his own accord smoothed away the traces of their entry, replaced the stone slab in its socket, and covered it with earth and turf in such a way as to conceal it from any but instructed eyes.

'That's right,' said Maurice. 'I don't believe either Folkard or Spurr knows anything about this entrance. Nobody comes here. It's our secret, and we'll keep it to ourselves.'

Instinctively he spoke in low tones, though Spurr and his men were out of hearing on the other side of the tower.

'I don't like to leave those men all night on the sopping ground,' he continued. 'Nobody will find them; it may kill them.'

'Ay,' said Caleb, with a grin of satisfaction.

'That's all very well; we've no reason to love Spurr, but—you know, Caleb, his quarrel with Folkard is no concern of ours. And he put up a good fight: the seamen outnumbered his men; he hadn't a chance; we must release him.'

'I say we'd best not let him see us,' said Caleb.

'No, I can't agree. Come along. I'll say nothing of having seen the fight. You didn't see it. We'll pretend to find them by accident.'

They took up their burdens, went down stream for some distance, then turned about and made their way back along the base of the crag. Opposite the tower they began to climb the hillside towards the spot where the men lay bound. It was now so nearly dark that Caleb might have been excused for stumbling rather heavily across an obstacle on the ground, but the grin of mischievous amusement on his face suggested that he had hardly stumbled by accident.

'Eh, what's this?' he cried, stopping short, with well-feigned surprise.

Several husky voices made a rather confused response.

'Men tied up!' exclaimed Maurice. 'Whose doing is this?'

'Undo us, undo us,' said the men in chorus.

'To be sure I will,' said Maurice. 'The quickest way will be to cut you free.'

He set down his tackle, opened his knife, and slit the cords of the men one after another, coming last to Matthew Spurr. The men rose stiffly, stretched themselves, and rather surlily expressed their relief. But Spurr had a way of his own. As soon as he was released from his bonds he sprang up, tore the gag from his mouth, and gave expression to his pent-up feelings in a sputtering stream of curses. Maurice stooped to lift his tackle. Spurr turned upon him with a hoarse cry of rage.

'What are you doing here—on my ground? I know you—you and that limb there. You're spies—that's what you are; and I'll learn you——'

'What should we spy?' asked Maurice innocently. 'We've been out for a day's fishing.'

'Ay, in my waters; poachers, that's what you are, and I'll——'

'We haven't fished your streams,' said Maurice, interrupting.

'Don't tell me. You're on my land. I've warned you off before. I won't have it. You'll keep off my land. If I catch you again, as sure as life I'll skin you, so mind you that.'

'The lads have freed us, master,' one of the men ventured to say, with murmurs of approval from his mates.

'Stop that growling!' cried Spurr, turning savagely towards the men. 'I won't have no curs barking at me. If I hear any more of it, there'll be more broken heads, mark my words.'

'Ay, there will,' said a burly countryman, pushing forward. 'We ain't all your servants, and I won't take a cursing from any man. So if there's to be broken heads——'

He raised his fist. Maurice nudged Caleb, and they slipped away and were soon swallowed up in the darkness. Angry voices followed them.

'Let them fight among themselves,' said Maurice.

'Ay, I'd fain see it,' Caleb replied.

It was late when they arrived at the farm.

'Why, lads, I was afeard you were lost on the fells,' said John Seddon greeting them. 'What has kept you so late?'

But his wife would not allow them to relate their experiences until they had changed their wet clothes and begun their supper.

'Eh, now, that's a queer story,' said the farmer, when Maurice had told of their discovery of the staircase, the store of smuggled goods, and the fight at the base of the tower. 'Things come clear now. There's truth in folk's whispers. Everybody guessed that Spurr was thick with the free-traders, and some said that Mr. Capplethwaite had a finger in the pie. It seems to me as Spurr and Capplethwaite and 'Lijah Folkard be all in it, and Folkard and Capplethwaite have fallen out. There was that fight on the road th' other day. Well, my lads, you'd best say nowt o' the matter. The smugglers are ill folk to cross, and Spurr was too mad to be thankful to ye for setting him free. I reckon Folkard might bear ye a grudge if he knew what you'd done, so keep a still tongue; the less said the better.'

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

MAURICE IS INTRODUCED TO THE LAW

At seven o'clock on Monday morning Maurice set off on his six-mile walk to Kendal. It was a raw and misty morning; black clouds hovered low over the fells; and Mrs. Seddon was voluble in her denunciation of the hard-hearted guardian who had condemned his ward to so long a tramp twice a day.

'It will rain,' she cried. 'You will take chill, you will die, and the wretch will be a murderer.'

'Come, come, lass,' said her husband, 'the lad mustn't be afeard of a drop of water. He's a good coat, and as to the walk, it's nowt. Good luck, lad: will look for you about six o'clock.'

Caleb accompanied him for a mile on his way. Never talkative, the boy was to-day more than usually silent until they parted. Then he spoke out.

'T's right sorry, I am. There's ill to come o't. I'd fain come wi' you; happen I'd fight for you. Yon men don't mean you

well.'

'What men?'

'Capplethwaite and Spurr.'

'I'm not afraid of them,' said Maurice laughing. 'I'm more afraid of Mr. Gilpin, or rather his law-books. But it won't be for ever.'

'Happen not,' said Caleb.

Maurice stepped out briskly. He had started betimes, in order that he should give no occasion for complaint on his first morning. About half-way to the town he overtook a drover who, staff in hand, was slowly trudging behind a flock of black-faced sheep. As he came level with him, he recognized the man whom he had met in Mr. Capplethwaite's house a few days before. His recent experiences inclined him to distrust any associate of Capplethwaite, and he was passing on, with a bare return of the drover's civil greeting. But a word from the man detained him.

'You're over early, lad.'

He glanced at the speaker in some surprise. The man's keen blue eyes were regarding him whimsically.

'Mr. Gilpin doesn't open his door till nine,' the drover went on.

'You know where I am going?'

'Ay, that's one of the things I know. Gilpin's a good lawyer, they say; but I've little opinion of him as a man.'

Maurice felt something puzzling about the drover. His accent was the rough broad-vowelled burr of the north country; but his phrases were not those of his class, and there was a certain refinement in his manner.

'I suppose Mr. Capplethwaite told you I was going to Mr. Gilpin's,' said Maurice.

'There you're wrong. But it matters nowt how I know. You don't like your job?'

'Who told you that?'

'If I didn't know it, your answer and the look on your face would have told me enough. You'd rather go to sea, I reckon.'

More and more puzzled, Maurice replied that his inclination ran that way, but his guardian would not hear of it.

'Eh, but I daresay he has his reasons,' said the drover, with a strange smile. 'None of your family ever went to sea that I heard of. The Nugents have always been good men with the sword. Your father——'

'You knew him?' asked Maurice eagerly.

'I saw him once and again when I was a lad—when he lived in yon house on the fells. Ay, he was a good swordsman. There's always a use for a good sword.'

'Well, I suppose there is, if one is a soldier,' said Maurice.

'And I reckon you'd rather use a sword than a pen; most lads would, and all Nugents. But a Nugent only fights in a good cause.'

Maurice was again conscious of a quick, keen, searching look.

'Did my father fight in a good cause?' he said. 'Does a good cause always lose?'

'Many a good apple falls into a pig's trough,' replied the drover. 'Your father lost his property, but saved his honour: any Nugent, you yourself, would do the same.'

'I wonder!' said Maurice. 'I'm for the rightful king, but the Hanoverians are firm in the saddle these thirty years, and it seems there's no one strong enough to unseat them. Folk talk of the king coming to his own again, but he never comes!'

'Never's a long word, lad. If—when—the king comes, I reckon there'll be a Nugent standing by. Now, we're dawdling behind these sheep; Mr. Gilpin opens his door at nine: you had better step out.'

They parted, and Maurice pushed on.

'A queer drover,' he thought. 'I wonder what he has to do with Mr. Capplethwaite? What with smugglers and drovers and lawyers—heigh ho!'

On entering the town he timed himself by the church clock so that he arrived at Mr. Gilpin's office in Stricklandgate on the stroke of nine. A lank grizzled man was at that moment taking down the shutter from the door. He gave the lad a hard look.

'You're Maurice Nugent?' he said. 'Go in; first door to right; Mr. Gilpin's coming up the street.'

Maurice went into a small stuffy room. A high desk stood against the wall. A shelf above it held an array of musty-looking books. There were two large inkhorns, a sheaf of quills, two tall stools. The lower half of the window was covered with a wire blind, through which Maurice saw the entrance to Capplethwaite's Yard almost opposite. As he waited he noticed Matthew Spurr go into the alley. Then Mr. Gilpin came in, followed by his elderly clerk.

'Good morning, my lad,' said the lawyer, rubbing his hands together, a nervous mannerism habitual with him. 'I hope we shall be good friends and—yes, good friends. My clerk Dawson will begin your instruction; a valuable man, Dawson. Er—good morning.'

He went away to his own room across the passage. Dawson pulled out a drawer, took from it a bundle of parchments tied with tape, and set one of these before Maurice.

'Copy that,' he said. 'Yon's your stool. You'll find paper in the drawer. It's a deed of conveyance, let me tell you. You must make yourself familiar with the terms used in the transfer of landed estate. I hope you write a good hand.'

He perched himself on his own stool, buried his head in his papers, and left Maurice to his own devices.

About an hour later, when Maurice was half through his task, a bell sounded and Dawson left the room. Returning immediately, he said:

'Mr. Capplethwaite has sent for you. It's irregular: ought to be no interruptions in business hours; but he's your guardian. Hope it won't occur again. Be back soon.'

Maurice was glad enough of a little respite from his mechanical task. He crossed the street, wondering why Mr. Capplethwaite had sent for him.

'You were in good time?' were his guardian's first words.

'I arrived as the clock struck,' replied Maurice.

'That's well. Be punctual, be diligent. I've sent for you to give you a word of warning. I learn that you have been trespassing on Spurr's land. Don't let it occur again. I understand your dislike of being warned off land that has belonged to your family, but the law is the law. Ask Mr. Gilpin to instruct you in the law of trespass. What were you doing on Mr. Spurr's land?'

'I took a short cut home to get out of the storm,' said Maurice. He was on the point of relating the circumstances in

detail, but he pulled himself up.

'Very natural, but unwise,' said Mr. Capplethwaite. The answer seemed to have given him relief. 'This man Spurr is a strange fellow, rough-tempered, suspicious, apt to resent any infringement of his rights. I have had some dealings with him, and know his peculiarities. Being responsible for you as your guardian, I advise you—nay, I bid you—to keep out of his way. That is all; go back to your work.'

Maurice flushed at the tone in which he was addressed; but he preserved his self-control and returned to the lawyer's office. He found himself writing mechanically; his thoughts were busy, not with the phraseology of the law, but with the relations between Mr. Capplethwaite and Matthew Spurr. How much had Spurr told? What was the bond between the two men? Remembering the memorandum bearing Capplethwaite's initials, that he had seen in the tower, Maurice suspected that the warning he had just received had another cause than fear of Spurr's resentment. But Mr. Capplethwaite need not imagine that he would spread abroad any tale of his dealings with smugglers. Nobody except the revenue officers thought any the worse of people who had a hand in that adventurous trade; nobody would dream of playing an informer's part.

A whole day spent in copying crabbed documents did not dispel Maurice's distaste for his new occupation. The succeeding days only confirmed it. When there was no copying for him to do, Dawson gave him some of the law books to study—*Coke upon Littleton, or the First Institute, The Complete Copyholder, Reading on Fines*. He could not take any interest in them. How dry and barren they were compared with the entrancing volumes of *Hakluyt's Voyages*! His attention often wandered, and by and by he found himself watching, at first almost unconsciously, things that went on in the street, and particularly the comings and goings in Capplethwaite's Yard nearly opposite.

The yard seemed to harbour strange characters. The regular inhabitants of the little houses were men and women of a rough coarse type, and dirty ill-kept children. Apparently the men had no settled occupations: they went in and out at all hours.

'I wonder Mr. Capplethwaite lives in such a noisy place,' Maurice said one afternoon to Dawson.

'So do many more,' Dawson replied. 'The yard has a bad name. You are not here at night: the brawling that goes on! There's often one or two of the folk up before the justices. The townsfolk don't care to walk by the entrance after dark.'

'There's a rough-looking fellow loitering there now.'

'I daresay; get on with your work.'

But Maurice's eyes turned again and again, he knew not why, to the thick ungainly figure that lolled against the wall of the entry. The man was dirty and unkempt; he leant with his legs crossed and his hands in his pockets, mouthing a short pipe, looking up and down the street. Suddenly he straightened himself and slipped back up the yard, as though wishing to avoid observation by some passer-by. Maurice watched with idle curiosity. Presently Elijah Folkard came along. In passing he threw a glance at the door of Capplethwaite's house. A few moments later the man who had slipped away reappeared. At the corner of the entrance he stood for a little, cautiously peering after the seaman; then he came out into the street and followed, slinking along by the walls of the houses.

Maurice's first impulse was to leave his stool, go to the street door, and satisfy himself whether Folkard was in truth being stalked—warn him, if necessary. But a summons to Mr. Gilpin's room frustrated his half-formed intention, and when he was free again, both the men had disappeared. Thinking over the incident, he reflected that the seaman's quarrels were no affair of his; and besides, Elijah Folkard seemed very well able to take care of himself.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

MAURICE RENEWS AN ACQUAINTANCE

At the end of his first week with Mr. Gilpin, Maurice was greatly surprised at not being summoned to an interview with his guardian. That gentleman had announced his intention of calling for a report from the lawyer on his new clerk's conduct, and Maurice had expected that as the report could scarcely be satisfactory, he would have to endure reproof and warning. But he received no message from Mr. Capplethwaite; Mr. Gilpin said nothing about the matter; and Maurice came to the conclusion that either he was to be given a longer period of probation, or that Mr. Capplethwaite had been too much occupied to think any more about him.

It was in fact some weeks before he saw his guardian again. Meanwhile he had settled down to a regular way of life without becoming reconciled to it. He walked in and out between the farm and Kendal; he copied the documents set before him by Dawson, and filled up intervals with listless poring over the law books; the only interesting moments were those he spent in attendance upon Mr. Gilpin or his clerk in the magistrates' court, and then he was interested rather in the litigants than the law. He was a little amused when a tradesman was summoned for allowing his donkey to stray on the highway, or when Mr. Gilpin had to defend a peppery grocer against the charge of using false weights, and he admired the resolution with which the quiet little lawyer held his own against a more boisterous brother attorney or a loud-voiced justice who tried to browbeat him.

His relations with Mr. Gilpin were pleasant but not cordial. The lawyer gave him no formal lessons, but every now and then he dropped a quiet word about some point of law or some detail of procedure, and Maurice felt that he might have learnt a good deal if his heart had been in his work. But as time went on his distaste for it grew more pronounced. One day he ventured to say frankly that he was sure he would never make a lawyer. Mr. Gilpin rubbed his hands and looked at him over the rims of his horn spectacles.

'You are young,' he said gently. 'You will outgrow your dislike. Many good lawyers when they were boys have wished to be admirals or marshals. I myself at one time would have liked above all things to be a captain in the army of the great Duke of Marlborough. But I should not have made a good captain.'

Looking at the quiet nervous little man, Maurice thought that that was probably true.

Mr. Gilpin had a large connexion among the landowners around Kendal, and now and then in Maurice's first month at the office it happened that he was sent, rather late in the day, to carry a letter or a legal document to a country house at some distance, in a direction away from his home. Sometimes he went on foot, sometimes on horseback. On such occasions, to spare him the long journey back at night to the farm, Mr. Gilpin gave him the key of the outer office, and had a shake-down prepared for him there, his own house being out of the town on the Milnthorpe road.

'You are not afraid of being alone?' said the lawyer, when he first suggested this arrangement.

Maurice's answer was a smile.

'You will find some supper ready for you,' Mr. Gilpin added, 'and in the morning you can go to the 'Angel' for your breakfast, at my expense.'

One night, Maurice was returning on foot from an errand to a house some miles north of the town. It had been an unpleasant journey. He was drenched by heavy showers of rain, and though the rain had now ceased, and the moon shone out of a clear sky, a high wind swept across the fells, chilling him to the marrow.

He walked wearily down the rutty road towards the bridge. A few lights twinkled in the town rising beyond; within a few minutes he would be seated by a roaring fire, easing his stiff limbs, and heating a pot of soup for his supper.

While he was still half-way down the descent he saw in the moonlight a group of men come hurriedly on to the further end of the bridge from Stramongate. There was a sudden stifled cry, the sounds of a struggle; one of the men was lifted in the arms of the others, poised for a moment on the parapet, then hurled over into the river beneath. The splash of his fall came plainly to Maurice's ears. In an instant, it seemed, the bridge was clear. The men had rushed back into the town, and disappeared, no doubt into one of the yards.

Maurice ran quickly on to the bridge, and looked over the parapet. The moonlight shone upon the rippling water: swollen by the recent rains, the river was in flood, swirling under the arches. For a few moments Maurice saw no sign of the victim; there had been no repetition of his cry. Then suddenly, several yards downstream, a dark shape emerged; two arms beat the air; Maurice thought he heard a choking gurgling cry; then the form disappeared and all was silent.

'He can't swim!' thought Maurice.

He rushed round the end of the bridge, down the slope to the waterside, and along the bank, stripping off his coat as he ran. There was still no further sign of the drowning man. Having gone far enough downstream, as he thought, to get ahead of him, Maurice dived into the river and struck out towards the middle. When he had swum as far from the shore as the man had been, he trod water, glancing from side to side in the hope of seeing the figure rise again. Presently he caught sight of a dark mass on the surface a few yards to his left. Half a dozen vigorous strokes brought him within grabbing distance. He shot out his left hand, and got a firm grip of a thick knotted pigtail. Remaining at arm's length to avoid being dragged down, he turned on his back and struck out for the shore. There was no bank: a fortunate circumstance, for he realized that the man was heavy, and it would have been no easy matter to drag him up a steep ascent. The river bed shelved gradually upward; Maurice soon felt his feet on the stones, and in a few moments more he was able to drag the unconscious form through the shallows on to dry land.

He was now in a quandary. He dared not call for help; a cry might bring to the spot the very men who had flung their victim into the river. Yet he felt that he must have help, for though the man was clearly unconscious he might not be dead; a surgeon would know how to resuscitate him: Maurice himself was quite ignorant of the means to adopt. While he was still hesitating, the problem was solved by the man himself. There was a long gasp, a gurgling sigh, a prolonged spluttering, a heaving of the arms. Looking down upon the prostrate figure, and taking stock of him for the first time, Maurice felt a quickening interest. Surely that black-bearded face upturned to the moonlight was the face of Elijah Folkard. He stooped and called him by name.

'Ay, blast ye,' spluttered the seaman, raising himself on one elbow, while with the other hand he wrung the water from his beard and hair. 'What d'ye mean——' He gurgled and spat. 'Waterlogged. All hands to pump.' He turned face downwards and heaved; then staggered to his feet. Maurice lent him an arm. 'Thank 'ee, mate; I'm a trifle unsteady.'

He began to totter up the slope towards the bridge-end, muttering indistinctly. Suddenly he became suspicious and swung round upon Maurice, who had just stopped to recover his coat.

'Who are you, by cripes?' he spluttered out, staring at him vacantly. 'Why, bless my eyes, bain't you the lad that downed me? Capplethwaite's lad? Ay, I know your figurehead. Thank'ee, my lad.'

'Don't talk: you're hardly recovered yet,' said Maurice. 'Tell me what I can do for you.'

'That's friendly. Convoy me to my lodging, lad: Finkle Street. A mouthful of brandy will set me to rights. Ay, I'm not quite myself.'

Arm in arm the two marched up Stramongate into Finkle Street, turned into a yard, and came to the door of one of the small houses.

'Come in, lad,' said the seaman. 'You're well soused, like me. Come in and dry your togs, and have a bit of supper. I reckon the old woman's got it ready. Something hot'll comfort ye. I won't take no. You've saved my life; I can't let ye go cold.'

He lifted the latch and drew Maurice after him into a small room where a good fire blazed and the table was laid for supper.

'Another plate and glass, gammer,' roared the seaman, thrusting Maurice into a chair beside the fire. 'Strip off your things; I'll lend ye some while they're drying; and we'll fill our insides and get shipshape inside and out.'

All through supper Folkard was silent except for private mumblings and mutterings; and Maurice, curious though he was about the identity of the seaman's assailants, did not care to ask a direct question. Every now and again the big man

gave expression to his thoughts by a thump on the table or a prod in the air with his knife, and once he eyed Maurice with an ogreish glare that might have alarmed a more timid person. It was not until he had eaten a hearty meal, and his old landlady had cleared the table, and he was comfortably settled with a pipe by the fire, that he became conversible. Shooting a keen look at Maurice he said:

'What's your line of life, lad?'

The question was unexpected, but Maurice saw no reason for not answering it.

'I'm supposed to be learning law.'

'That's bad, very bad. Lawyers is worms. A lad of your mettle bain't called to that creeping trade.'

'So I think myself,' said Maurice. 'I want to go to sea.'

'Of course you do; what lad of spirit doesn't? But that trade ain't all beer and skittles. I've been at sea nearer fifty years than forty, and I know. But it's better than the law. What made your father put you to that?'

'My father's dead. It was my guardian, Mr. Capplethwaite.'

'Oho! So Capplethwaite's your guardian. I wondered what your truck was with him. Me and him don't agree, as maybe you've guessed.' Maurice smiled. 'We had a little argument on the road, you remember.'

'Argument?' repeated Maurice, smiling again.

'More like the first round of a bruising-match, eh! Well, Capplethwaite won that round, thanks to you. But I got square in the second.'

'Was that when you took away the tubs?' asked Maurice in a flash.

Folkard stared. Then he burst into a laugh.

'So he told you!' he cried. 'I'd never have thought it. Ha! ha! He must have felt it bad.'

'No, he didn't tell me.'

'Then how the blazes did ye know?'

'I saw it. I saw the fight at the tower.'

'Ah! How much did you see?'

'All.'

'And you told Capplethwaite?'

'No, I said nothing about it. But I released the men you tied up.'

'Seems to me you're an interfering young rascal. A night on the fells would have done the lubbers a power of good. I don't thank ye, my lad.'

'They didn't either,' said Maurice laughing. He related how Matthew Spurr had behaved. The seaman shook with amusement.

'Spurr's a rank swab,' he said. 'You'd better have let him bide.' Then his face grew dark. 'Ay, you'd better have let him bide. 'Cos why? I've lost the third round.' He puffed vigorously for a few moments. 'But not done for yet, thanks to you. Queer, when you come to think of it. Twice you came in on t'other side; to-night you come in on mine. Without you

I'd now be down along with Davy Jones, if Davy has a locker in rivers, 'cos I can't swim.'

'Yet you're a seaman.'

'Bless your eyes, seamen can't swim, leastways not many. 'Cos why? If they're wrecked in the deep sea, the sooner it's over the better. Thank 'ee, my lad. Did ye see those rascals that heaved me overboard?'

'I saw them, but I wasn't near enough to recognize any of them. Otherwise you might have charged them with attempted murder, and I'd have been a witness.'

'No, no. I'm not on good terms with the law. The law and me ain't been on speaking terms, so to say, since I started as a free-trader. Anyhow, I couldn't swear to 'em. They came up behind me. I must keep a better look-out, and carry a pistol. Anyhow, I'll be leaving the town in a week or two.'

'Hadn't you better leave at once?'

'What, cut my cable? Not me, not Elijah Folkard. Why, if I slipped my moorings now I'd never be able to look myself in the face again. No, I'll go when I'm ready. And you keep a still tongue, lad. If you talk you'll raise a blast about my ears.'

'I'll say nothing,' Maurice declared. Remembering that some weeks before he had seen the seaman followed by a man from the entrance of Capplethwaite's Yard, he could not help conceiving an uneasy suspicion that Mr. Capplethwaite might have been concerned with Spurr in arranging the attack on the bridge. His dislike of his guardian for the first time was mixed with fear. The seaman seemed to guess at what was passing in his mind.

'Rest easy, lad,' he said, 'You've done me a good turn; maybe I'll do you one some day. I've weathered many a storm in my time. I went to sea when I was younger than you, and after knocking about for wellnigh thirty years I'd put by enough to become part owner of a ship trading to the Levant. She was lost in a storm off Cyprus; everything I owned went to the bottom; I worked my way home, and being on my beam ends I took to the free-trade. Many's the cargo I've run in from the Isle of Man yonder. I could tell you some stories—ay, and I will, if you'll come and see me again. I've made near enough now to buy a share in another vessel, and in a week or two I'm off to Glasgow to look for one. Perhaps—who knows?—but I'll say no more now. It's time you went home. Your clothes are dry; I'll go with you, in case there's any pirates in the offing.'

Soon afterwards they set off, each carrying a stout cudgel, and the seaman also a pistol. The streets were silent and deserted, but as they crossed the road near Capplethwaite's Yard Maurice noticed a movement in the entry and warned his companion in a whisper.

'I'll keep my weather eye lifting,' the seaman replied.

He stood by as Maurice unlocked the door of Mr. Gilpin's office, then gave him a hearty handgrip, and went on up the street.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

MR. CAPPLETHWAITE SAYS 'NO'

Hitherto Maurice had been accustomed to reach the farm in the evenings with unfailing punctuality, except on those rare occasions when he was detained in Kendal for the night. John Seddon said to him once, jocularly, that he was as good as a clock, but after his meeting with Captain Folkard (he found that the seaman was known by that name in the town) he began to be less regular. When the office closed for the day, he sometimes dropped in at the captain's little

house, and passed a pleasant hour in listening to stories of voyages and foreign adventure, shipwreck and mutiny, affrays with pirates and buccaneers, tricks by which revenue officers had been deceived. Folkard always greeted him with the same hearty welcome, and took an evident pleasure in spinning yarns for a listener so appreciative. Maurice was not naturally secretive, but he never told his friends at the farm why, as the evenings lengthened, the hour of his return was sometimes nearer seven than six. The truth was that an idea was slowly germinating in his mind, and he felt that he would rather say nothing about it until it was fully grown.

Captain Folkard put off his departure from day to day. He told Maurice frankly that his business was proceeding more slowly than he had hoped. He still needed a certain sum of money to make up the minimum amount that he considered necessary to the success of his project. After a while he confessed that he was checked by the lack of the last hundred pounds. Maurice gathered from hints rather than explicit statements that but for the quarrel with Mr. Capplethwaite that hundred pounds would now be in his possession.

At last, one evening when Captain Folkard was less cheerful than usual, Maurice suddenly made up his mind to propound the plan that he had been meditating.

'Captain,' he said, 'Mr. Capplethwaite holds some money of my father's in trust until I come of age. I will ask him to put a hundred pounds into your venture. It is really my money, and it will be a good investment.'

'That's an uncommon generous offer,' said the captain, 'and I take it kind. But bless my buttons, there's not the ghost of a chance that Capplethwaite will agree to it. It's a real pain to him to part with a sixpence, and I reckon he'll take to his bed when you're twenty-one, and he has to hand over.'

'But the money's mine,' Maurice insisted. 'It's invested for me, and if I show my guardian that with luck the hundred pounds may become three hundred——'

'Ah, there it is. With luck! There's no certainty about it. True, in all my forty years of seafaring I've only had that one bit of rank bad luck, and bad enough it was, and I'm ready to risk again what I've managed to scrape together; but I'm bound to say it's a risk a prudent man of business might look shy at. Besides, it's me, you see.'

'What do you mean?'

'Why, you'll have to tell Capplethwaite the name of the man you want the money for, and as soon as he hears that, there'll be a sort of a hurricane, I warrant you. Reuben Capplethwaite ain't the man to overlook an injury, though the truth of it is that the boot's on the other leg.'

'Well, I can at least try. And I shall tell him that I want to go with you: perhaps he'll be glad to be rid of me.'

Next morning Maurice obtained leave of absence from the office for half an hour, and crossed the street to his guardian's house. He had not met Mr. Capplethwaite since the day when he had been warned to avoid Matthew Spurr, and he could not help thinking that his guardian showed a surprising lack of interest in his law studies.

'Well, my lad,' said Mr. Capplethwaite as Maurice entered, 'd'you feel ready to take the Lord Chancellor's place at short notice? I hear that you have a positively voracious appetite for your books.'

Maurice was annoyed at what seemed to him to be mere irony. But he was equally surprised when Mr. Capplethwaite continued without pause:

'Mr. Gilpin speaks very well of you. I confess that I had my doubts, but it is now clear that I made a wise choice for you, and I am delighted that you have abandoned those foolish notions of yours.'

'But I haven't,' exclaimed Maurice impetuously, with a fleeting astonishment. 'I'll never make a lawyer. I don't like it. I hate it. Mr. Gilpin must know that quite well.'

'Do you suggest that Mr. Gilpin is a liar, sir?' demanded Mr. Capplethwaite angrily.

'You may have misunderstood him.'

'On the contrary. I have more than once had from him the explicit statement that you are a promising pupil. I believe him; you are a promising pupil, and I insist that you fulfil that promise.'

For all his amazement, Maurice could not help laughing at his guardian's angry insistence.

'I assure you that it is all a most extraordinary mistake, sir,' he said. 'I loathe and detest my occupation, and I want to be released from it.'

Mr. Capplethwaite gazed darkly at him for a few moments without speaking: then he said, in a cold sneering tone:

'And pray, what profession is to have the honour of embracing you?'

'I want to go to sea. You know that. You have money that will be mine some day. Give me a hundred pounds; I ask no more; and I will engage not to trouble you again until my twenty-first birthday.'

There was a gleam in Mr. Capplethwaite's eyes that gave Maurice hope that his cause was won. But it passed quickly.

'It is impossible, preposterous,' he said. 'A hundred pounds! Do you realize that as your guardian and trustee I am responsible for the small sum, the very small sum, that will come to you at your majority? I am doing my best to increase it, and I could not reconcile it with my conscience—indeed, I might be called to account by the law—if I risked a hundred pounds in so highly speculative a venture as you propose. It is out of the question. The money would be lost. Your imagination plays tricks with you. Or perhaps some plausible adventurer has deluded you. With whom, may I ask, have you hatched this ridiculous scheme?'

'With an experienced seaman; you know him: Captain Folkard.'

'That wretch! That scoundrel!' cried Mr. Capplethwaite, in a fume of indignation. 'That low, ill-conditioned, quarrelsome reprobate! The man who dared to assault me on the high road! I am amazed, I am affronted. To think that my ward, whose interests I so carefully nurture, should even dream of casting in his lot with such a desperate and abandoned villain!'

'Captain Folkard does not deserve——' began Maurice warmly. Mr. Capplethwaite cut him short.

'Silence, sir! Not another word! Come with me, at once.'

Seizing Maurice's arm, he marched him across the street and into the lawyer's office.

'This headstrong youth is mad,' he cried, bursting into Mr. Gilpin's private room. 'You allow him too much liberty. He is associating with low characters. He is hobnobbing with a rascally seaman—a—a notorious smuggler, who is filling his immature mind with wild fantastic notions. It must be stopped. It shall be stopped. You must keep a tighter hand upon him. You must keep him more fully occupied.'

'Indeed, sir, I was not aware ... during office hours ... when the office is closed...'

Maurice looked with contempt at the stammering lawyer. Why was he in such fear of Mr. Capplethwaite?

That gentleman changed his tone. Apparently he had realized that Mr. Gilpin could not be held responsible for Maurice's doings outside the office; the boy must have consorted with Folkard when the day's work was done. Turning to Maurice he said persuasively:

'Come, my lad, you have been led away. We must make excuses for you. Give me your word that you will see this fellow Folkard no more and I will overlook your indiscretion.'

'I can't do that,' said Maurice shortly.

'Then I forbid you to see him,' cried Mr. Capplethwaite in a heat. 'I will take care that you do not see him. Gilpin, when you shut your door you will send your clerk to see my ward safely out of the town. Seddon shall report to me if he does not reach his home in good time. I will not have my careful plans for the lad's welfare upset by a rogue. See to it!'

'Certainly, sir,' said the lawyer, rubbing his hands deprecatingly.

Mr. Capplethwaite marched out of the room.

'You should not anger your excellent guardian,' said Mr. Gilpin mildly.

Maurice was too furious to reply. He went into the other room, mounted his stool, and buried his head in his hands.

For some days he made no attempt to evade the escort of Dawson. He did not wish to get the clerk into trouble. Dawson accepted his irksome charge so equably that Maurice suspected he was well paid for it. When John Seddon asked him what he had done to offend Mr. Capplethwaite he passed the matter off with a laugh. But his mind was working in a ferment.

One very wet afternoon he prevailed on Dawson to leave him before he had completed the mile out of the town that was his stipulated distance. When the man was out of sight he doubled back, took a short cut across the fields, entered the town at the lower end, and made his way by a devious course to Captain Folkard's house.

'Eh, my hearty,' cried the seaman, 'I was hoping I'd see you again before I go. I'm packing up, as you see. My lad, I've got the money. I've found a man that's good for the money, and I'm off to Glasgow to-morrow.'

'Take me with you,' said Maurice. 'I can't stand it any longer. I'll come as cabin-boy—anything to escape from this hateful life.'

'Why now, if you're set on it, I'll take you, though I warn you it's a dog's life. But you'll be as well with me as with Capplethwaite, or better. I can't take you to-morrow. It will be a month or so before I'm ready. You can't buy and fit a ship in a day. But I'll send for you, and, please the Powers, we'll make our fortunes together.'

Maurice chafed at the delay, and began to count off the days that must pass before he won his freedom. He debated with himself whether he should confide in Mr. Gilpin or his foster-parents. For the lawyer he felt a somewhat contemptuous and unrespectful liking, pitying him for his strange subjection to Mr. Capplethwaite. It would not be safe to trust him; he might feel bound to betray the secret. He would have liked to open his heart to the Seddons, but resolved in the end to keep his design dark from them also. John, he knew, would protest against his throwing away an honourable profession and becoming a common seaman. Nanette would dilate upon the perils of the sea, the dangers he would meet with among unknown peoples in unknown parts of the world. But the principal reason for his reticence was the certainty that Caleb would insist on accompanying him. In such a venture he could not tempt Caleb to leave his parents. It would be an unworthy return for all their kindnesses. He must keep his own counsel, and make his preparations in secret.

The days dragged themselves away. Never had he been so diligent in the office. Dawson ceased to be a watch-dog: no doubt Mr. Capplethwaite had learnt that Folkard was no longer in the town. At last, not quite a month after the captain's departure, Maurice was accosted one day on the road home by a stranger, who handed him a note. It was scrawled by Folkard from an address at the Gorbals in Glasgow. The ship was purchased; he was busy fitting her out; she would be ready for sea by the time Maurice arrived; let him start at once.

'To-morrow!' Maurice cried within his heart as he sped homeward. A little bundle would contain all that he valued, all that he needed for the way. He would pack that before he went to bed and conceal it somewhere outside the house. Then next morning he would leave at his usual time, but instead of following his customary route he would turn aside, enter the town at the lower end, cross the Nether Bridge, and so gain the long road to Penrith and the north.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

PRINCE CHARLIE CROSSES THE WATER

Maurice went early to his bedroom that August night, and gave the last hour of daylight to the making of his bundle. A few necessary articles of clothing, an antique watch, a seal, a keen-bladed dagger: these were all that he cared to burden himself with. He looked at his father's sword hanging on the wall: that was too large to be concealed: it would betray him. He searched his drawers: they contained a few things he treasured—a miniature of his mother, trinkets that had belonged to her, old family parchments: these he must leave to the safe custody of his friends. And then he came upon something that was to alter the whole course of his life. It was not a discovery, but it had lain there for years unseen, or at least unnoticed—a letter, addressed to him, and sealed with the Nugent seal. He had broken that seal four years before, on his twelfth birthday, when John Seddon, fulfilling a sacred charge, had laid the letter solemnly in his hand.

'It is from your father, lad,' said the farmer. 'I promised him to give it you this day. There it is.'

He had then gone from the room. The boy, wondering, broke the seal. Why had his father written to him? Why had the letter been kept all these years? Slowly he read the difficult writing.

MY DEAR SON,

I am not long for this world, nor shall I grieve the quitting it save for that I shall not see you grow up. But I leave you to the care of my faithful John Seddon and his wife, who will take you to my own dear country and nourish you as their own. I pray that in fullness of time you will attain an honourable manhood and restore, if it please God, the fortunes of your fallen house. One charge I lay upon you. The Nugents have ever done loyal service to their King, to whom they have cleaved through all his adversities. They have spared neither their blood nor their treasure, holding ever before them their immemorial motto, 'Honour First'. I have spent myself in the royal cause, which, though it now dwindles in eclipse, will one day emerge from the shadow and shine full-orbed. My word is pledged that, when that day shall dawn, a Nugent shall stand forth, following the example of his ancestors, and lay his sword and his life at the feet of his lawful sovereign. In full confidence that you, should the occasion befall, will honour this solemn undertaking, I now commend you to the merciful protection of Almighty God.

Your loving father,
PAUL NUGENT.

Maurice, young as he was, had been impressed at the time by this message from the dead, but he had not understood its full import, and in the succeeding years of his schooldays it had almost passed from his mind. There had been talk sometimes of the Stuarts returning to claim their kingdom; rumours had lived a brief space and died unconfirmed; the fortunes of dynasties had little interest for lusty schoolboys. But as he read the letter now for the second time, Maurice became thoughtful. A duty had been laid upon him, and though there seemed to be no immediate prospect of his being called upon to fulfil that duty, he felt that it must never be allowed to fall into oblivion. He folded up the letter, placed it in his bundle, knotted this firmly, and when all was quiet, stole downstairs, out of the house, and laid it under a holly bush near the foot of the path below the farm.

Next morning he set out at his usual time. For all his pains to disguise his feelings, he feared lest his friends, his foster-mother in particular, should detect something strange in his manner. But the dangerous moment passed; he smiled as he made his farewell, and turned with a throbbing heart to foot forth into a world of adventure.

The church clock was striking half-past eight when he came in sight of the Nether Bridge. He saw the cassocked figure of Dr. Simmonds, the vicar, returning to his parsonage from early service. He saw too a group of townsmen gathered about the end of the bridge, discussing, with evidence of excitement, a placard that was pasted there. They were unknown to him, and curiosity impelled him to halt and discover what interested them so greatly.

'A gradely bit of brass that,' he heard one man say.

'True; it would make you a gentleman,' laughed another.

'And leave summat over,' said a third.

Maurice quietly passed them and stood in front of the placard. The royal arms was displayed at the top. Below he read a proclamation by the Lord Justices in the name of King George the Second, then absent from the kingdom, offering a reward of £30,000 to any person or persons who should seize and secure the Pretender's eldest son, who, they were informed, had embarked in a French ship for Britain.

'Does it make your mouth water, lad?' asked one of the group.

Maurice flushed and turned aside without replying.

'Happen the lad's a Jacobite.'

The words, catching his ear, startled him. Of course, he was a Jacobite. All the Nugents had been adherents of the Stuarts—and now Prince Charles had set out to regain his father's throne; his landing was imminent; a price had already been set upon his head. Maurice burned with indignation: was his prince a criminal to be advertised thus? And then it came upon him with a shock that this news must upset his plans. The recollection of his father's letter was fresh. His service was pledged. He was no longer a free agent. The Cause claimed him. The motto of his house gleamed before him: 'Honour First'.

He had gone half-way across the bridge, but he now turned, walked as in a dream past the placard, past the church, up the hill towards Highgate. Knots of people stood about, talking with animation. Men were flocking out of the yards, thronging in at the inn doors. Business for the nonce was suspended. The Stuart prince was on the sea. When would he land? Where would he land? Was he accompanied by a French army? Would there be fighting on British soil? These questions, which crowded into Maurice's mind, were no doubt the topics of eager discussion in every ale-house and tavern.

More than once, on his way to Mr. Gilpin's office, Maurice was tempted to turn back and pursue the course upon which he had set out. Perhaps it was only a rumour: perhaps the Prince had been driven back by a storm, or by King George's ships; was it not folly to give up his plan until the news was confirmed? Why not go on to Glasgow? Scotland was the home of the Stuarts; there the Prince would find his best friends; if the call to service came, he could serve there. But something held him back, a strange feeling that he must take no step hastily. He went on, reached the office before nine o'clock, and waited restlessly until Dawson arrived to open the door.

'You've heard the news?' asked the clerk.

'I saw the placard,' replied Maurice. 'It may not be true.'

'It's true enough.'

'The Prince has really embarked?'

'Ay, embarked and landed. A messenger rode in from the north half an hour ago. The foolish lad has landed somewhere in the Highlands.'

'With a French army?'

'Nay, with a handful of Scotch gentlemen as daft as himself. So it's said. The lad's fair daft.'

'He's brave enough,' said Maurice, rather hotly.

'Brave! Daft, I tell you. Suppose all Scotland rises for him, what then? The Scotch may make his father king if they

like, but we're settled down, in this country, and I reckon we won't stop business to set up James in place of George. You come of a Jacobite stock, to be sure; put all foolishness out of your head and stick to your work.'

Maurice was not in the mood for argument or altercation. The Prince had landed! The news set him tingling. All the morning he was in a state of suppressed excitement. The office was a cage. He did mechanically the tasks given him by Dawson, but his eyes were often lifted from his desk, his thoughts far away. Through the window he watched the passers-by, noticed how eagerly they talked. He saw his old acquaintance the drover step briskly into the entry of Capplethwaite's Yard: no doubt he would discuss the news with Mr. Capplethwaite. Maurice wished to be out in the street, to hear what men were saying. Were all the men of Kendal, he wondered, as sceptical and contemptuous as Dawson? He wished Captain Folkard were still in the town; what would the captain have to say?

Presently the drover came hurriedly out of the yard and struck up the street towards the Windermere road. A little later a gentleman's groom rode up to the door of the office, alighted, and was closeted with Mr. Gilpin for a few minutes. When he had gone, Mr. Gilpin stepped quickly across the street and entered Mr. Capplethwaite's house by the front door. Returning in a little, he rang for Dawson, and for the rest of the morning Dawson was writing as hard as if his life depended on it. Maurice noticed these incidents, and could not help connecting them with the news that stirred the town.

In the afternoon, after Dawson had been closeted awhile with Mr. Gilpin, the lawyer sent for Maurice.

'I've a little errand for you, my lad,' he said, with his habitual twisting of the hands. 'Get a horse from the Angel, and ride over to Mossend with this packet for Mr. Langworthy. It contains a deed which Mr. Langworthy will sign. You will witness his signature, and bring the document back in the morning.'

Maurice returned to the clerk's room with the packet. Dawson smiled a little grimly.

'You'll like that better than scribbling,' he said. 'It's the deed I wore out two pens over this morning: you'll have to copy it to-morrow—a mortgage, though what in the world old Langworthy wants with a mortgage fair puzzles me. I believed him a warm man. He sent instructions a day or two ago for the deed to be drawn; no word of a hurry; but this morning his groom came demanding its immediate completion. Capplethwaite's providing the money, by the bye. You know the way?'

'Part of it,' Maurice replied. 'I'm not sure of it beyond the fork.'

'Well, when you come to Whin Gap, take the left-hand track. There's plenty of daylight, but you'll have to make haste to get home before dark.'

When he was some miles out of the town, following the winding track across the fells, Maurice overtook the drover, trudging along in the same direction. There was no flock of sheep. The drover had turned at the sound of a trotting horse, and continued his way, it seemed to Maurice, more slowly.

'Eh, lad, you've a good seat in the saddle,' he said, in his broad accent. 'It's a grand day, and will be a grand night, I reckon.'

'I hope so. I've a long journey before me.'

'There's a stir in the town to-day. I wouldn't wonder if the news is true.'

'You mean the Prince's landing?'

'Ay, I mean that. Guid faith, it will sift the wheat from the chaff, or I might say, separate the sheep from the goats.'

'I know what you mean.'

'Ay, you're a Nugent.'

'Well, I make no secret of it. My family has always been loyal, and I hope the Prince will succeed.'

'Many a man has said the same; now we'll see who'll stand by their words.'

'Every true Jacobite——'

'Ay, lad,' the drover interrupted, 'and who are the true Jacobites? We'll see afore long. But you've an errand, I reckon: I won't detain you.'

Maurice rode on, again puzzled by something incongruous between the man and his mode of life. In due course he reached his destination, and was shown into a room where Mr. Langworthy, a typical north-country squire, was confined to his couch by an attack of gout. He broke the seal of Maurice's packet eagerly, unfolded the deed and began to read it. His broad red face presently darkened.

'Good life! Reuben Capplethwaite!' he exclaimed testily. 'Couldn't your master find some other mortgagee?'

'I know nothing about it, sir,' replied Maurice.

'I suppose not. A lad like you! But Gilpin ought to have known better. Capplethwaite's politics are sound enough, but if I'm any judge the man himself is a——'

'Mr. Capplethwaite is my guardian, sir,' said Maurice, in haste.

'Eh? What? You're young Nugent? Well, I was going to call your guardian a—— Never mind; I don't want to make an apology. You're a Nugent. You are in with us? You don't understand, I see. Well, well: there's time enough. Give me the pen there; I'll scrawl my name, and you'll witness. Take my thanks to Mr. Gilpin, and tell him from me——no, I'll tell him myself when I see him. They'll give you a mug of ale below, my lad.'

It was drawing towards six o'clock when Maurice started for home, a fifteen-mile ride across the fells. He followed a faintly-defined bridle-track which, though it was unknown to him, appeared to lead in the right direction. After a few miles it forked, and he reined up, doubting which branch to take. A glance at the position of the westering sun seemed to indicate the left-hand path as the nearer. It descended rather steeply to a hollow, then wound up a gentle slope on the opposite side. A light evening mist hung over the ground, and Maurice sat well back on his saddle as the horse picked his way among the loose stones that lay upon the track, then urged him to a quicker pace as the ground ascended.

He had just reached the top of the fell when he saw, indistinctly in the mist, a man on horseback riding at a walk some distance to his left, a little ahead of him, and on a course parallel with his own. The fact that the horseman was not following a beaten path seemed to show that he was well acquainted with the country, and Maurice urged his horse to a trot, to inquire of the stranger whether his direction was right. But when he came within a few yards of the horseman, he noticed with something of a shock that he was masked, and swerved aside, hoping that the highwayman, as he supposed him to be, had not heard his approach on the soft turf.

To his surprise, almost consternation, his change of direction brought in sight the figure of another masked horseman, riding, also at walking pace, across the fell, and converging towards the other. Maurice felt uneasy; he was unarmed, his horse was a hired hack, he would have no chance if attacked by highwaymen. His impulse was to break away at right angles, and trust to the protection of the deepening mist, reluctant though he was to leave the beaten track; but he had no sooner wheeled his horse than he saw still another rider, in that direction, masked like the others. And this man must have seen him!

Maurice was less alarmed now than mystified. Surely these barren fells did not breed highwaymen! Nor was it the way of highwaymen (as he had heard or read of them) to ride in company. Then who were these horsemen? Why were they masked? Why, riding in the same direction, did they ride apart? Loth to accost any of the strangers, he rode at a walk, parallel with them, watchfully, prepared to make a dash at any moment if they showed signs of closing in upon him.

But they took no notice of him, or of one another. Each rode on at the same quiet regular pace. Presently a fourth horseman came trotting round the shoulder of a hill. On sighting the others he drew rein, fell into a walk, and rode on as silently as they, a little apart. He too was masked. Still more came on from various directions, all masked, all silent,

every one negligent of the rest.

For a mile or more Maurice rode alone in the midst of this strange company. He had no longer any fear of molestation; indeed, he was astonished that none of the horsemen appeared to pay the least attention to him, the only unmasked man among them. It was the sense that they were proceeding to some rendezvous that withheld him from addressing one and inquiring his way. What was their mysterious errand? Why did they keep apart? From distrust? Had any of them recognized him? If so, they must know that he had no part or lot with them; why then did they not drive him away?

He was puzzling over these questions when he saw, looming just ahead, the tall jagged shape of a solitary rock, a landmark of the fells, known as the Druid Stone. It stood in a remote and lonely situation, miles off his proper course; he was farther from home than he had supposed. But what surprised him most was to see a group of horsemen halted in a rough semicircle around the stone. His companions as they approached reined up and edged their way into the ring. Maurice halted. This was the rendezvous; plainly it was a concerted meeting; he had no place there. He turned to go.

But he had gone scarcely twenty paces when there was a shout of 'Stop that man!' He kicked his horse's flanks; his first feeling of alarm had returned; but the animal had barely got into its stride when half a dozen men, better mounted than himself, closed in upon him. One seized his bridle and brought him up with a jerk. He was helpless. Surrounded by his captors, who had uttered no word, he was led back to the rock and into the midst of the ring.

CHAPTER THE TENTH

DROVER DUCKET MAKES A RECRUIT

And now Maurice became aware for the first time of a man standing close against the stone—the only unmounted man among the company. It was with a start of surprise and pleasure that he recognized the features of Drover Ducket. The sturdy figure stood straight and still; one would have said that he was waiting.

The horsemen led Maurice directly towards him. At two yards' distance they halted. There was a brooding silence all around.

'What are you doing here?' said the drover. His utterance was short and crisp and stern; there was not a trace of the peasant's drawl and burr.

Maurice smiled. The transformation scarcely surprised him; but he wondered, in an amused way, why the man addressed him so stiffly.

'I hardly know,' he said. 'I was on my way home, and lost myself.'

'What brings you then into these parts, unknown to you?'

'I had been on an errand to——'

He paused: the errand was Mr. Gilpin's business.

'Well?' said the drover.

'I had been on an errand.'

'What errand?'

Maurice was beginning to feel nettled.

'Really, I don't know why I should be detained and questioned,' he said. 'The errand is my own affair: what right have you?'

'The right of capture, my lad. Come, we have no time to waste. Will one of you gentlemen lend me a pistol?'

The horseman at Maurice's right hand instantly provided the weapon. With great deliberation the drover examined its priming. For a few moments the silence remained unbroken. The very atmosphere seemed tense. Maurice long remembered the scene: the tall grey stone, the dark figure beneath it, the mist creeping up the fells behind.

The drover raised a stern-set face. He lifted the pistol breast high.

'Now, I count three,' he said. 'If at the word three you have not begun to answer my question—well, it will no longer matter.'

He looked Maurice straight in the face, and slowly raised his arm.

'One!'

Maurice's brain was in a whirl. There was no time for consecutive thought: surprise, indignation, resentment...

'Two!'

Yield to a brutal threat?—an unjust demand?—

'Three!'

Maurice felt a cold shiver; a drawn dullness upon his cheeks. He faced the drover: his lips did not move.

'A Nugent!' murmured the drover, lowering the pistol. There was an audible stir among the horsemen as he turned to them. 'You will agree, gentlemen,' he said aloud, 'that we have here a young man of some courage, and strict upon the point of honour. I know the nature of his errand; I can vouch for his sympathy with the cause we all have at heart. It will be sufficient, I think, if we give him a choice between joining us and leaving us now with the promise to preserve complete silence as to this our meeting. You agree?'

There was a chorus of 'Ays'.

'Make your choice, lad.'

Maurice had not recovered from the strain of suspense and mental conflict. He was hot with resentment at the ordeal to which he had been put. It was unfair.

'I won't blab about your meeting,' he said, huskily; his lips were parched; 'but as to joining you—who are you? I haven't a pistol.'

Some of the horsemen chuckled and laughed; one cried, 'That's one for your nob, Ducket.'

The drover held silence for a moment; then he said frankly:

'I make you an apology, my lad. I had no right to put you to such a probation. My motive does not excuse me: which was, to prove to these gentlemen that they might admit you to their company in full assurance of your courage and fidelity. I crave your pardon, and I make no conditions if you wish now to leave us.'

'I would prefer to hear a reason why I should stay,' said Maurice.

Murmurs of approval ran round the ring.

'Then I will speak,' said Ducket. 'The Prince of Wales has landed in Scotland: that you already know. You do not know, perhaps, that his loyal Highlanders have flocked to his standard; he is marching South; the Lowlands will rally to him; he will cross the Border, and call upon all honest supporters of his House to assist him in his gallant enterprise to regain the crown for our lawful King James. In this little company you see a band of gentlemen who are linked by a common bond of loyalty and devotion. We await the moment for joining our Prince. I now ask you to throw in your lot with us, and uphold the cause of Right.'

'I shall be proud to be numbered among you,' said Maurice.

'And in the name of Prince Charles I welcome you.'

He gripped Maurice by the hand.

'You and I,' he continued, 'have the distinction of being the only members of the company whose features are not concealed. By the wish of certain among us it was deemed best to hold our meeting under the protection of masks—a wish to which I deferred, reluctantly, but recognizing that in times like these a measure of precaution is justified. Yet now I think the time has come for all loyal subjects of his Majesty to rally to the flag regardless of consequences. It cannot be long before the call to action comes, and it is my opinion that we shall serve the King best by throwing off all disguise. However, that is a matter on which every man must consult his own conscience.'

'Before proceeding, I will call the roll. There is one, absent unavoidably, for whose good faith I can vouch—Number Three. Our newly enrolled member is Number Eighteen. Now, gentlemen, answer to your numbers.'

Maurice was now much interested. The masks, the allocation of numbers, the avoidance of all names, gave the meeting an atmosphere of mystery and romance. He listened as the horsemen, one after another, answered 'Here!' when their numbers were called, remarking the differences in their voices, and seeking with a natural curiosity to identify the speakers. But the utterance of a single word was a poor clue, and he recognized none of the voices until Ducket came to Number Seventeen. Then the gruff rasping 'Here' caused him to look hard at the speaker—a tall gaunt man whose hat was drawn low over his head. 'What's *he* doing here?' thought Maurice.

'Now, gentlemen,' Ducket proceeded, 'I have brought you together for the first time in order that you may realize the strength of King James's party in this district. You will take my word that every man among us is a man of weight and consideration. Individually I know you all, and I have long awaited this happy occasion of our meeting in a body. I propose now to put it to the vote to ascertain how many are prepared to throw off all disguise and don the white cockade, our Prince's badge. If the majority are willing, I will invite them to do so at once. Those who are unwilling will of course withdraw, though I hope, and have little doubt, that they will come out into the open before many weeks are past. Gentlemen, give me your views.'

There was a brief silence. It appeared that no one was eager to speak first. But presently a clear youthful voice declared in favour of unmasking. The ice being broken, four or five others took the plunge. Two of those agreed in a word with the first speaker, the others expressed dissent, and the last of them gave his opinion forcibly and at length.

'I am dead against premature action,' he said. 'I was in Kendal to-day, and I was surprised and disappointed at the town's cold reception of the great news. There was excitement, it is true, but no enthusiasm for the royal cause—no sign whatever of any disposition on the part of any one, high or low, to support the Prince. I am ready for my part to join in any reasonable enterprise; but as matters are at present, to come out in open revolt would spell ruin for ourselves and our families and do the Cause no service. When Prince Charles is actually upon English soil, and we see for ourselves the composition and equipment of his army, then will be the time for us to throw off all restraint and join him openly at the head of such forces as we can gather.'

Amused at the hard-headed common sense of this gallant Jacobite, Maurice waited curiously for Ducket's answer. He had watched the drover's kindling eyes, and expected an outburst. But Ducket kept silence for a little. He looked searchingly around the company.

'Gentlemen, we will now vote,' he said coldly. 'In favour of unmasking?'

Six hands shot up as if moved by one spring. After a momentary hesitation a seventh was raised. Not a word was spoken.

Ducket counted the uplifted hands aloud. At the seventh he paused, and again swept the circle with his eyes.

'Against unmasking?'

Seven arms were raised.

'The votes are equal,' said Ducket in the same level tone, devoid of feeling. 'Two gentlemen have not declared their mind. "He that is not with us is against us." You will all remain masked, gentlemen. Our meeting will break up. At no distant date, I trust, I shall communicate with you individually. Gentlemen, I thank you, and bid you farewell.'

Maurice looked on with lively interest as the company dispersed. Two or three rode away together, having evidently recognized one another. One approached Ducket as with the intention of speaking to him.

'Let there be no distinctions,' said the drover, waving him back.

He watched with a grave sadness as the horsemen moved off in their several directions over the fells. When the last had vanished into the mist he turned to Maurice.

'Come, my lad, let us go. I shall beg a night's lodging from Mrs. Seddon.'

'Will you ride?'

'No. Your horse is tired. I am rather heavy. And I am used to tramping. I will keep pace with you.'

They set off side by side, at first in silence.

'It was a gambler's throw,' said the elder man presently. 'I hoped this meeting might inspire a general rally to the Cause. Is there nothing, nothing of the old spirit left?' He seemed to be speaking to himself. "'Thou art neither cold nor hot: I will spew thee out of my mouth.'"

Maurice glanced at his sombre face. For some minutes no word was uttered.

'Was it for this I have tramped the fells these ten years past?' He addressed himself directly to Maurice. 'My lad, for ten years I have gone to and fro as a drover, with the sole aim of holding together and encouraging the loyalists of these parts. The old spirit, the spirit of our fathers, has died out among our gentlemen. The years of waiting have quenched their faith, slain their hope. They do not trust one another. They are suspicious, timid, vacillating, full of fire one day, shivering in doubt the next. Those who are most highly placed and should give a bold lead to the rest, hang back. These masks, this anonymity! And yet I will not despair. Surely, surely when the gallant-hearted Prince comes among us he will disperse all doubts and hesitations, as to-morrow's sun will scatter this cloying mist. There is still ground for hope. You would be surprised to find in what unexpected quarters the Cause finds support.'

'Yes, I *am* surprised,' said Maurice.

'How? What do you mean?' inquired Ducket sharply.

Maurice regretted his impulsive words.

'Come, my lad, let there be no reserves between us. You have something in your mind. In God's name speak it out, for the sake of the Cause.'

'I was surprised to find Number Seventeen among the gathering.'

'Number Seventeen! You saw him? A large round man?'

'No, a tall thin man. He held himself in the background. He voted against unmasking.'

'You recognized his voice?'

'And his figure. I have reason to know him.'

'Who was it?'

'I am doing no wrong in telling you?'

'No. I alone know the names of all. They are numbers only to one another. Who was it?'

'It was Matthew Spurr.'

'You are sure?'

'I am quite sure.'

Ducket said nothing more. Even in the fading light Maurice marked his look of surprise and anxiety. The silence remained unbroken until they reached John Seddon's farm.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

MR. CAPPLETHWAITE FACES BOTH WAYS

At breakfast next morning Ducket announced that having business with Mr. Capplethwaite he would accompany Maurice into Kendal.

'It is due to your guardian that we should acquaint him of your definite adhesion to the Cause,' Ducket said. 'For the present, of course, you will continue your attendance at Gilpin's office. When the time is ripe you will answer to the call: both the lawyer and Mr. Capplethwaite, I have no doubt, will be satisfied with my explanations.'

They set off early, Maurice riding the hired horse, Ducket on foot. On nearing the town they parted company, Ducket saying it were well they should not be seen together. Maurice would leave his horse at the inn, then proceed to Mr. Capplethwaite's, where Ducket would meet him. There would be time for a conversation with Mr. Capplethwaite before nine o'clock.

It was a quarter to nine when Maurice reached his guardian's house. Having been delayed at the inn, he expected to find Ducket there before him; but when he was admitted, Mr. Capplethwaite was alone, at his breakfast.

'Ah, my lad, well met,' said he genially. 'You set me a good example. Early rising is a virtue. I plead guilty; affairs kept me up late; I overslept. Can I offer you breakfast? Of course not: you broke your fast while I was still lapt in slumber. And my simple fare would not tempt a rising young lawyer who lives on the fat of the land.'

Maurice detested his guardian in his genial moods. He had already noticed the ill-spread table, the meagre fare. Mr. Capplethwaite appeared to thrive on miserliness.

'But what brings you so early?' he continued. Maurice had been conscious of curiosity behind his affability. 'Not that matter of Langworthy? There was no hitch? You got his signature?'

'Yes. It was not that. I expected to find Drover Ducket here.'

'Ducket!' exclaimed Mr. Capplethwaite. In his surprise he suspended his fork halfway between the plate and his mouth. 'What have you to do with Ducket? And why choose my house for a rendezvous?'

Maurice felt uneasiness as well as surprise in his guardian's manner.

'Ducket himself will explain,' he said. 'That was understood between us. I am here at his wish. Shall I wait outside until he comes?'

'No, stay where you are,' snapped the other. He went on with his meal for a while in silence, but his appetite seemed to have deserted him. His brow was contracted; now and then he shot Maurice a glance in which curiosity was mingled with patent annoyance. 'Where did you meet him?' he said at last.

'On the fells.'

'Another friend of yours, eh?'—this with a sneer.

'Rather an acquaintance, at present.'

'You won't learn much law from seamen or drovers. Your taste in—acquaintances seems rather low.'

'I met Ducket first here.'

'He was here on a matter of business. If he is a business acquaintance of yours—Well, well; hold your tongue.'

Maurice spent an uncomfortable five minutes. Mr. Capplethwaite got up, opened the door leading into the passage, returned to his chair, got up again and paced the floor restlessly. Presently there was a discreet tap on the yard door. Mr. Capplethwaite hurried along the passage to open it himself. Maurice heard the greeting.

'You are early afoot,' said Mr. Capplethwaite, aggressively.

'I have been later,' was the reply. 'Has Maurice Nugent arrived?'

'Ay, he is within. Drover no longer, eh?'

'Before friends I wear my true colours. Shall we go along to the other room?'

'I don't understand this, but——'

'We will waste no time, if you please. I have much to do. I will follow you.'

There was a note of authority in his voice. Maurice was surprised at Capplethwaite's silent submission. The two men entered the room and remained standing.

'My business is brief,' said Ducket. 'You are Maurice Nugent's guardian. I come to assure myself that his enrolment among our association has your entire approval.'

'His enrolment! What do you mean? This is the first I have heard of it.' Mr. Capplethwaite was indignant.

'Indeed!' said Ducket drily. 'That is a point we must discuss later. Meanwhile let me explain. The lad inadvertently stumbled upon a meeting of loyal gentlemen' (Capplethwaite started; he looked from one to the other guiltily), 'who might have been inclined to resent his intrusion, accidental though it was. For his safety's sake, no less than for the common good, I deemed it well to invite him to join us, and I did so the more readily, knowing the traditional loyalty of his family.'

'Then let me tell you that you have gone beyond your book,' cried Capplethwaite furiously. The half deference of which Maurice had been conscious in his manner towards Ducket had now disappeared. 'He is too young. To involve a mere lad in such—in such——'

'In so good a cause,' prompted Ducket.

'In such dubious matters is monstrous unfair—monstrous, I say. And see how it compromises me! As the lad's guardian I shall be held responsible for his actions. People will accuse me of—of——'

'Of loyalty? of making good your professions? Is that a damaging accusation?'

'But—but—it is premature,' stuttered the man, agitated and embarrassed. He walked up and down between the table and the wide open hearth, unconsciously jostling Maurice. 'The lad is in honourable employment; I will not have him disturbed: I will suffer no check in his progress towards a useful career. I will not have it. I forbid him—I say I forbid him to mix himself up in—in outside affairs.'

'Then I tell you flatly I deny your right to interfere. There are claims higher than yours or Mr. Gilpin's. He acknowledges those claims. I accept his service. Your authority as guardian I should not question in normal circumstances: the circumstances are not normal. But' (he glanced at Maurice, who stood flushed and uncomfortable) 'we shall do well to discuss this matter in private. It places the lad in an embarrassing position. We can inform him of the result of our discussion by and by.'

Capplethwaite made a gesture of angry impatience, and Maurice took up his cap and departed. He was glad to get away.

The lawyer's office had just been opened. Maurice hurried to Mr. Gilpin's room and handed him the signed mortgage.

'Thank you, my lad,' said the lawyer, unfolding the deed. 'I see it is properly executed and witnessed. Mr. Langworthy was satisfied?'

'He wished the mortgagee had been some one else, sir,' said Maurice reluctantly.

'Ah! He gave me no time. You had a safe and pleasant journey?'

'I lost my way for a while, but I was lucky enough to find a guide.'

Maurice hoped that he would not be plied with more questions; he began to feel the irksomeness that attaches to the part of conspirator. Mr. Gilpin did not pursue his inquiries.

'Very well,' he said. 'I will inform Mr. Capplethwaite.'

'I have seen him already, sir.'

'Then he will bring me the money in due course. Did Mr. Langworthy give any instructions in regard to its dispatch?'

'He asked that it might be sent in gold, and by direct messenger, not through the bank.'

'That shall be done. You have acquitted yourself very well, Nugent.'

Maurice went into the clerk's room. Dawson looked up, bade him a curt good morning, and went on with his work. For the moment Maurice had nothing to do. Perched on his high stool he gave himself up to rumination. Where did Mr. Capplethwaite stand? Not a word of the conversation between him and Ducket had escaped Maurice's attention. Why had Ducket assumed that Capplethwaite already knew of his enrolment in the association? Why had Capplethwaite started so guiltily when the meeting on the fells was mentioned? Suddenly Maurice remembered Ducket's surprise and anxiety on hearing that Number Seventeen was Matthew Spurr. A solution flashed upon his mind. Was Capplethwaite Number Seventeen? Had Spurr attended the meeting in his place?—in fact, personated him? What was the meaning of it all?

While he was still pondering these perplexities, he saw Ducket emerge from the yard entry and hasten along the

street. Immediately afterwards, Capplethwaite came out by the front door and hurried in the opposite direction. In a few minutes he returned, bearing a large canvas bag, entered Mr. Gilpin's office and walked straight into the private room. There Dawson was summoned by the lawyer's bell. When he came back he had the Langworthy mortgage in his hand. Mr. Capplethwaite was at his heels, and called to Maurice through the still open door: 'You have decided to meet my wishes?'

'My word is pledged, sir,' Maurice answered, quite respectfully. 'And I had thought that I should meet your wishes in serving——'

'Tuts!' Capplethwaite interrupted, with a side look at Dawson. 'There's a time for action and a time for caution. Of that I must be the judge, for myself and, as your guardian, for you. Now, once for all, will you obey me?'

'In everything possible, sir, but not in that.'

'Then I wash my hands of you as an ungrateful unmannerly whelp,' cried Capplethwaite angrily. 'If you come to the gallows or the plantations you will only have your stubborn folly to blame. You may hang, for me!'

He flung out of the room, slammed the door, and stalked across the street to his own house.

'Daft—fair daft!' said Dawson. 'You, I mean. What truck has a young gomeril like you with the follies of adventurers! Bless me if you're not all like the swine that ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished in the waters. Here, take this mortgage and copy it. That'll keep you out of mischief for an hour or two.'

Maurice bent over his task, but the mechanical act of writing still left his thoughts free. It seemed to him that his guardian was a Mr. Facing-both-ways. Apparently he was a member of Ducket's hitherto secret association, but he feared openly to espouse the Jacobite cause and was in terror of being compromised by his ward's action. 'He's a jelly-fish,' thought Maurice, 'and I despise him.' Ardent youth easily scorns the prudence of its elders.

In the afternoon, as he was copying the last folio of the deed, he became aware that a man who had been for some time lounging in the entry to Capplethwaite's Yard appeared to be intently watching Mr. Gilpin's door. With his back to the wall and his hands in his pockets he scarcely shifted his position, and when, for ease, he did so, he placed himself so that no one could enter or leave the office without his knowledge. He was still there when Maurice carried the original deed and his completed copy into Mr. Gilpin's room.

'I believe that's the same fellow as dogged Captain Folkard,' thought Maurice. 'What's his game now?'

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

MAURICE AND CALEB CHANGE COATS

Mr. Gilpin put on his spectacles, slowly compared Maurice's copy with the original deed, locked the one in his cabinet and tied up the other with red tape.

'Very well done, my lad,' he said.

Maurice turned to go.

'Wait,' said the lawyer.

He took off his spectacles, wiped them, and restored them to their case. Then he placed the copy in a leather wallet that lay half-open on the table, buckled the strap, and sitting back in his chair, looked searchingly at Maurice.

'This is to go at once to Mr. Langworthy,' he said. 'You rode there yesterday: I want you to make the journey again to-day.'

'Certainly, sir,' said Maurice.

'I place great trust in you,' the lawyer continued. 'Besides this deed, I have to send to Mr. Langworthy seven hundred pounds in specie, the sum, you remember, that is named in the mortgage. It is important, of course, that so considerable a sum should reach its destination safely; it is equally important that it should be conveyed secretly. There are reasons—you may guess them—why it should not be so much as breathed in the town that the money withdrawn by Mr. Capplethwaite from his bank is transferred to Mr. Langworthy.'

He paused. It flashed upon Maurice that Mr. Langworthy had raised the money as a contribution to the finances of Prince Charles.

'I should certainly not mention it, sir,' said Maurice.

'That was not my meaning. Let me be more explicit. In ordinary circumstances, from ordinary motives of prudence, I should ensure the safety of the money by engaging an escort of stout and trustworthy men. To do so now would imperil the secrecy of the transaction. The circumstances are not ordinary. Certain of the town officials are keenly interested in the comings and goings of certain gentlemen. Need I say more on that head?'

'I understand, sir.'

'Very well. Now I have no doubt that your journey to Mossend yesterday is common property. A second journey to the same destination would excite remark. That we must avoid. How can we do so? The only persons who are aware of this transaction besides the principals and myself are Dawson and yourself, and I do not wish to enlarge the circle. Dawson, as my trusted clerk, might be expected to be chosen as my messenger, but he is not strong, and he is a very indifferent horseman. For that reason I have selected you.'

Maurice wondered what was coming.

'I have devised a little stratagem,' Mr. Gilpin proceeded, rubbing his hands. 'A horse will be brought to the door here. Dawson will mount it, carrying a counterfeit package, and will set off as if for Mossend. If he is observed by interested parties, and followed, they will find in point of fact that he goes no farther than the Craggs. But while he is thus drawing the hounds off the scent you will leave on foot, with the real packages; you will hire a mount at the Dun Horse in Stramongate, ride over the bridge, along the riverside, recross by the Nether Bridge, and proceed as though going to your own home. Indeed, it will be well for you to go by Seddon's farm, though you thereby lengthen your journey. By this means we make doubly sure. What do you think of it?'

Maurice thought privately that Mr. Gilpin's precautions were needlessly elaborate, but he was tactful enough to keep his opinion to himself.

'Your plan ought to succeed, sir,' he said.

The old lawyer showed an artless pleasure. He rang his bell. Dawson appeared, and took his instructions in his usual taciturn way. Maurice heard him murmur, 'Daft—all daft,' as he went out at the door.

Half an hour later, Maurice, watching through the wire blind, smiled as Dawson stiffly scrambled to his saddle. The clerk was certainly no horseman. He rode at a walk up the street. As Maurice turned away, he noticed that the man who had, a minute before, been lounging at the entry of Capplethwaite's Yard had now disappeared.

Shortly afterwards Maurice left the office and walked carelessly along in the direction of Finkle Street. The deed was buttoned in his breast pocket. Four leather bags were strapped to his belt under his coat. He came to the Dun Horse Inn, followed Mr. Gilpin's instructions point by point, and in ten minutes was trotting across the Milnthorpe Road, on his way to the farm.

Mr. Gilpin's choice of the route pleased him. There would be no breach of secrecy in getting Caleb's company for the ride; he would not mention the nature of his errand, and Caleb was not inquisitive. Mounted on the lightest of the farm horses, the lad would enjoy a gallop over the fells, and his companionship would shorten the journey.

On arriving at the farm, Maurice was disappointed to find that Caleb was absent. The Seddons did not know where he was; he had not been seen since dinner-time. Maurice left a friendly message for him, and rode on.

Trotting round the shoulder of a hill about a mile from the farm, he caught sight of the well-known sturdy figure moving along by a thick hedge far below. He checked his horse, made a trumpet of his hands, and sent a resonant cry rolling down. Caleb looked up, waved the crooked stick he carried, and struck into a slanting path that would meet the bridle track a little farther on.

'I were looking if the blackberries are ripe,' he said, when he met Maurice.

'And are they?' Maurice asked.

'No, they're green.'

'Well, jump up behind me. I'm going to Mossend. The horse will carry us both.'

It was not the first time the boys had ridden pillion. Caleb vaulted up, and put his arms lightly round Maurice's waist. The horse trotted on.

Maurice did not feel himself entitled to divulge the nature of his errand, even to Caleb. Confident that Mr. Gilpin's plan had averted danger, he rode on without misgiving, talking about indifferent matters, and presently about the stirring news from the north. Even this topic he discussed impersonally. Very little was known except the fact of the Prince's landing. The friends of the House of Stuart indulged a soaring hope that loyalists would flock to the Prince's standard, that he would gather a large army and march rapidly across the Border, and that then the gentlemen of the north, who had always been staunch for the Cause, would rally around him and sweep southward in a triumphant progress. Maurice was clear as to the part he himself would take; he itched for the moment of action; but until that moment came he thought it wiser to keep his own counsel.

'There's a horseman on the fell away to the right,' said Caleb presently.

Maurice glanced over his shoulder. A man was riding at walking pace in the same direction along the crest of the hill rising on the farther side of the valley, perhaps a mile away.

'And there's another,' Caleb added, 'a bit beyond.'

Maurice pulled up sharp.

'Have they seen us?' he asked.

'I reckon not. They couldn't see nobbut our heads.'

'True; the shoulder of the fell hides us. We'll wait a while.'

An uneasy suspicion had flashed upon his mind. Suppose Mr. Gilpin's stratagem had not been wholly successful? Suppose some whisper of the errand to Mossend had blown about the town, and those interested in intercepting the money had posted men here and there on the route, and near the destination? A single horseman was so common a sight on the fells as to give no cause for alarm, but remembering his experience on the previous evening Maurice felt it necessary to avoid running into a company for the second time.

He backed the horse into a little hollow.

'We'll dismount,' he said. 'You hold the horse while I take a look.'

'What's to do?' asked Caleb.

'I don't know—yet.'

He crept forward, worming his way from bush to bush as if he were stalking game, and where there were no bushes, taking advantage of every nook and hollow. In a few minutes, creeping up a slight eminence crowned by a clump of furze intermixed with brambles, he found himself so placed that he had a clear view of the opposite fell and of the country that lay between him and Mr. Langworthy's house.

And then he blessed his caution. He saw, not merely the two horsemen, who were now a little farther apart, and riding across instead of straight on, but three other men, dismounted and standing by their horses, at intervals along the track leading to Mossend. No one could approach the house, even by a long *détour*, without being discovered by one or another of these men. Their number, their movements, the positions they had taken up, all suggested that they had some definite purpose, and it was impossible to suppose that that purpose was friendly.

Lying flat on his face, and peering through the bushes, Maurice thoughtfully watched the men. The riders had turned round, and were now going, still at the same slow pace, in the opposite direction. The dismounted men were inactive, except that now and then one of them walked a little way up the rising ground and appeared to scan the surrounding country.

'They're on the look out for some one,' thought Maurice. 'Me? Well, how can I escape them?'

He lay for a few minutes, thinking hard. Then he smiled. Returning with the same cautious movements, he rejoined Caleb in the hollow. The time was now come for confiding in him.

'I'm carrying money to Mossend,' he said. 'I believe those men want to seize it. Besides the two horsemen, there are three dismounted along the track. There may be more out of sight. We must save the money.'

He showed the bags attached to his belt.

'I reckon that's a lot of brass,' said Caleb, open-eyed.

'Yes. Well, you'll change hat and coat with me and ride on towards Mossend. Stop when you see them, and trot off towards Kendal. If I'm right they'll follow you; they're too far off to see who you are. I can trust you to lead 'em a good chase. While you're gone I'll take the money on to Mossend.'

Caleb looked at the horse.

'He's a bit old,' he said.

'Yes; I wish we had one of your father's horses that know the fells. But we must chance it. You'll have a good start, and you can twist this way and that, and keep them employed long enough for me to reach Mossend. If they catch you _____'

'Ay, what then?'

'I was thinking of an excuse for your running away. You can tell them you were afraid they might be Prince Charlie's men.'

'Ay, that's fine,' said Caleb grinning. 'Happen they won't catch me at all.'

The exchange of clothes was soon effected. Then Maurice sought a hiding place in the midst of a thick clump of bushes. Caleb mounted.

'Can you see me?' asked Maurice.

Caleb rode by.

'Not unless I come right into the bush,' he said.

'Then off with you. Good luck!'

He lay listening to the hoof beats as Caleb trotted up the hollow to the crest of the fell. For a minute or two there was dead silence. Then he heard a distant cry. In another minute came the sound of a horse at the gallop. Caleb had faithfully carried out the plan. On sighting the horsemen he had halted as if he had suddenly discovered them, then wheeled his horse and trotted back. The nearest horseman set off in pursuit at full speed, summoning his companions by call and gesture to follow. Caleb urged his horse to a gallop, and passed within fifty yards of the bush where Maurice lay concealed.

Hardly two minutes had elapsed when Maurice heard the thudding of hoofs. Shrinking down, he made a small peep-hole in the bush and watched. A horseman, masked, galloped by on his left. He had only just passed when sounds on the right caused Maurice to drop at full length. For a moment he dared not even raise his head. With horsemen on both sides of him, could he hope to escape discovery? But the eyes of the hunt were on their quarry, Caleb galloping ahead; and Maurice, had he known it, might have watched the pursuit with little risk. As it was, only by his sense of hearing did he learn that four men had ridden by. But there had been a fifth. Had he been left behind? Maurice waited tensely. For a while there was silence. Then he heard distant thuds. They grew louder; he heard a clanking bridle, the squeak of dry leggings. The horseman dashed by; the sounds receded, faded into the silence.

Then Maurice ventured to lift his head. All the five men he had seen had now passed; he must chance the risk of there being others whom he had not seen. He crept up the hollow and looked cautiously around. To the right he saw the diminished forms of men and horses; to the left the country was clear. He stood erect, gave one more comprehensive look around, then set off at his quickest pace for Mossend, taking advantage of every convenient dip and fold of the fell. Not one living creature was in sight.

He reached the house, and was shown in at once to Mr. Langworthy's room. That gentleman stared at the strange figure in a coat much too short for him.

'Hallo, my lad!' he cried, with a laugh. 'The face is the same, but the coat—surely you outgrew that years ago. You've brought the money from Mr. Gilpin?'

'Yes, sir,' replied Maurice, unstrapping the bags.

Mr. Langworthy emptied them one after another, and counted the coins. Maurice meanwhile had caught a glimpse of himself in a long mirror. He had not realized till then how ill-fitting was Caleb's coat. It was baggy at the chest and shoulders, but the sleeve-cuffs reached almost to his elbows. He smiled at his reflection, and at the thought of Caleb's broad shoulders confined within too narrow bounds, and long sleeves dangling over his wrists.

'The amount is right,' said Mr. Langworthy. 'I will give you a receipt. You may well smile at yourself. Your other coat is mending?'

Maurice had already decided that he must tell Mr. Langworthy of the attempt to intercept the money, and how it had been defeated. The squire listened with a lowering brow.

'I told Gilpin not to breathe a word of the transaction,' he said irritably. 'I'll take good care he handles my affairs no more.'

'I am sure neither Mr. Gilpin nor his clerk has spoken of the matter,' said Maurice.

'Then who was it? Not Capplethwaite: he wouldn't risk losing a halfpenny.'

'Perhaps some one at the bank mentioned it.'

'That's scandalous. A bank should know how to keep secrets. And no one at the bank would know where the money

was coming unless Capplethwaite told. I don't understand it. No matter; I have the money safe, thanks to you. You acted with great presence of mind: it was clever; and I'll take care that your master knows what I think of you, as soon as I can get into the town. Here's the receipt. Put that into your stocking; I shouldn't wish it to fall into the hands of an enemy, and those villains may stop you on the way back. I hope not.'

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

CALEB LEAVES HIS MARK

Maurice had gone but a few steps from the room when he was called back.

'Eh, my lad, I'm a thick-head,' said the old gentleman: 'so much taken up with my own vexations that I forgot yours. You must be dry, and hungry too, I daresay. You must have something before you go. And I'll lend you a horse, and send two or three of my men with you a part of the way. We'll have no more trouble.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Maurice. 'I shall be particularly glad of the horse, because I could hardly get home before dark on foot, and I am rather uneasy about Caleb Seddon.'

'I'm glad you remind me of him. Give the lad this from me.' He handed Maurice a crown piece. 'But the lad will have come to no harm. The fellows hunted bigger game. I remember your father.'

The sudden transition took Maurice by surprise.

'I did not know him well,' Mr. Langworthy went on. 'But I admired and respected him. He wasn't worldly wise, made a mistake in coming out in the '15; that rising was doomed from the first. This time—' He paused, giving Maurice a keen look; then continued: 'Shall I talk treason?'

'Mr. Duckett has enrolled me, sir.'

'He has? That's capital. Well, this time, if they play their cards well, we'll pack great George back to Hanover. I'm delighted to see another Nugent on the right side. I'm too infirm to ride out myself, but what my money can do—there! the cat's out of the bag.'

'I guessed it, sir,' said Maurice smiling.

'And so you understand my pleasure that you foiled those rascals. Well, a few months ought to decide the fate of this realm, and bring our king over the water.'

Three sturdy retainers, well mounted and armed with pistols, accompanied Maurice when he set out after a quick meal. He expected that Caleb, if he had succeeded in evading his pursuers, would long since have reached home, and was not surprised at seeing no sign of him on the fells. More than half of the journey had been covered when he saw, browsing on the grassy bank of a beck that meandered through a dale on his left hand, a riderless horse that reminded him of the one he had ridden from Kendal. Bidding his escort wait, he hastened down the slope, caught the horse, and found that it was the same.

Where was Caleb? Maurice had grave fears for the boy's safety. He would not have left the horse of his own will. What had become of him? Had he been captured, carried off, perhaps done away with? There was no sign of him along the dale. Maurice gave his customary call: there was no answer. He cantered up to the serving-men above and told them his fears. They separated, and began to search in various directions, though such a quest, over the wide rolling spaces of the fells, might well prove fruitless. For nearly an hour they rode this way and that, meeting no one but an old shepherd, who had not seen the boy. Maurice felt that there was nothing for it but to ride on, hoping for the best. The sun was

sinking: darkness would soon render further search impossible.

Leading the riderless horse Maurice kept to the bridle track, while his companions rode at some distance on either side. A mile or two farther on Maurice caught sight of a figure seated on a mound above the track. The figure rose and waved an arm: the sleeve dangled. Maurice galloped on, and Caleb came down from the mound to meet him. He walked with a limp.

'Why, what on earth has happened?' cried Maurice as they met.

Caleb was a deplorable object. His mouth was cut: one eye was blackened and half closed; a bruise swelled upon his brow. Maurice's hat was battered to shapelessness, his coat torn to ribbons. But Caleb greeted him with a cheery smile.

'They caught you?' Maurice asked.

'Ay,' said Caleb, and grinned again.

'Where are they?'

'Rid away toward the town.'

'Long since?'

'Ay, a fairish long time.'

The serving-men came up, and looked with sympathetic curiosity at the damaged features and the tattered clothes.

'Thank you, my men,' said Maurice. 'You see what has happened. The miscreants have ridden away. We are not far from home and shall need you no longer. Caleb and I will ride our own horse.'

'Reckon you've a hard head, lad,' said one of the men.

'Ay,' said Caleb.

The men shook him by the hand and turned back. Caleb mounted behind Maurice.

'Now, tell me all about it,' said Maurice, setting off at walking pace.

Caleb's story, told with slow deliberation, lasted all the way home. For some miles he had managed to keep the lead, though not to get out of sight. Then three of the pursuers began to close up with him; his horse was flagging. Two of them, overtaking him after a last desperate sprint, came at him on either side with bludgeons. He parried the attack of one, and got home a shrewd blow in reply ('I reckon he's got a sore head', said Caleb); but before he could turn to meet the other a heavy stroke upon his own head dashed him from his saddle. From that moment his recollection was confused. He thought that several men had stood over him and bludgeoned him as he lay upon the ground; after that his mind was a blank until he revived to the consciousness of a splitting headache, his clothes in tatters, the pockets turned inside out, the horse gone. It was clear that while unconscious he had been searched thoroughly.

'They got nothing,' said Maurice. 'My pockets were empty. No; I had the copy of the mortgage. What an ass I was to forget that! But I suppose it matters little. They knew about it. I shall have to make another copy for Mr. Langworthy. Any bones broken, Caleb?'

'No. You've bashed me worse.' Caleb chuckled. 'Reckon my head's hardish. Father says so.' He chuckled again.

'Well, I'm glad it's no worse. But I'm sorry you've had all the knocks.'

'You took the money safe?'

'Yes. And Mr. Langworthy gave me a crown for you.'

'First money I ever earned that way.' Caleb's tone showed his delight.

'Did you know any of the men?'

'No: they all had masks. But I reckon I'd know one of 'em in Kendal market to-morrow.'

'How?'

'By his sore head. It'll need a goodish bit of plaster.'

They reached home in the dusk.

'Why, lad, what's come to ye?' exclaimed the farmer, as Caleb limped into the house.

Maurice felt it necessary now to tell the whole story. But it was deferred until Mrs. Seddon had attended to her son's wounds.

'That's right, Mother,' said John. 'Brown paper and vinegar will mend the lad. You haven't been fighting, you two?' He scanned Maurice's face. 'No; he'd have left his mark on you. But dang me if you aren't wearing his coat. What's the meaning o't?'

'And Maurice's coat is rags,' said Nanette. 'My poor children, what terrible doings!'

'Ay, it's queer,' said the farmer. 'Now tell us, lad.'

Maurice unfolded his tale, John listening with his usual grave stolidity, Nanette breaking into excited exclamations in a mixture of French and English.

'A very queer business,' remarked John at the end. 'I've never heard the like.'

'It is of that horrid Mr. Capplethwaite,' Nanette declared.

'Hoots, lass, that's fair nonsense. It were Mr. Capplethwaite's own money.'

'And that is why he wish to get it back, the miser. See now, no one else knows about the money. It is proved.'

The farmer laughed.

'You'd hang a cat for licking his whiskers,' he said. 'It's nonsense. But I'm right glad you did so well, Caleb lad. And as for hard knocks; well, hard knocks 'll make a man of you. And I reckon you gave one or two.'

'Ay,' said Caleb.

Next morning Maurice rode into Kendal. On the way he kept a good look-out, lest the baffled ambuscaders should take a fancy for avenging their failure. But nothing untoward occurred; he passed up Highgate without exciting attention, returned the horse to its owner, the landlord of the Dun Horse in Stramongate, and entered the lawyer's office at his usual hour.

Mr. Gilpin came in late. He looked pale and worn; Dawson explained, later in the day, when Maurice remarked on their employer's weary air, that he had passed a sleepless night.

'Worry! that's what does it,' said the clerk laconically. 'Worry 'll send him daft one of these days.'

'What does he worry about?' Maurice asked.

'I don't ask; he doesn't tell; I don't know.'

Before that, Maurice had been summoned to the lawyer's room and asked about his errand of the previous day. He gave a faithful account of all that had happened. Mr. Gilpin rested his head on his hand as he listened, and seemed too weary to take much interest in the narrative.

'I ought not to have sent you,' he said. 'I ought to have gone myself.'

Maurice wondered at this. Did the lawyer suppose that the money would have been safer with him?—that the band of robbers would have respected him more than another?

'I am sorry I did not secure the copy of the deed,' he said.

'That is a trifle,' replied Mr. Gilpin, somewhat to Maurice's surprise. 'You can make another. It is more serious that you have lost a good coat. That must be replaced. Go to Mr. Amos: he is our best tailor; and ask him with my compliments to measure you for a new suit.'

Maurice was nothing loth. Months afterwards he met Mr. Langworthy, who told him with a chuckle that the tailor's account had been included in Mr. Gilpin's bill of charges.

Mr. Gilpin said nothing to Maurice about the failure of his scheme. It was from Dawson that Maurice learnt what had happened. The clerk had been followed along the road at a discreet distance by two horsemen, who had waited near the house he entered, and dogged him back to the town when he returned. Apparently the conspirators had suspected the possibility of a trick, and, leaving nothing to chance, had attempted to make assurance doubly sure by cutting off access to Mr. Langworthy's house.

Maurice filled a spare half hour that morning by writing to Captain Folkard at his address in Glasgow. He explained that though his wish remained unaltered, unforeseen events had caused him to change his plans. Before he could join the captain he had an obligation of honour to fulfil. How long he would be bound, he could not say; perhaps the captain would have sailed before he could consider himself free. He begged the captain to inform him of his movements, and assured him that he hoped for an opportunity of some day seeking their fortunes together.

At midday he took the letter to the post himself, then went for his dinner to the Fleece Inn, where he was accustomed to take that meal. As he passed through the taproom to the ordinary he noticed among the men drinking there one whom he had sometimes seen going in or out of Capplethwaite's Yard. There was something odd about his appearance to-day—something that puzzled Maurice until he perceived that below the man's low-crowned hat a dirty white bandage encircled his head.

For the moment the fact was merely observed, but not recorded. As he sat at his meal a strange question suggested itself. Was this the man upon whom Caleb had gleefully left his mark? Rough characters had their dwelling in Capplethwaite's Yard—Capplethwaite's! he had seen a man watching the lawyer's office from the yard-entry on the previous morning. Was it possible that Mr. Capplethwaite's doings were known by the ill-reputed folk who lived in the yard bearing his name? Was he spied upon? Had some one watched his visits to the lawyer and the bank, and by intuition, or information, learnt of the destination of his money? How could he tolerate the presence, at his own doors, of people who were a byword in the town?

'I suppose they pay him rent,' thought Maurice. 'But I wouldn't have them at any price.'

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

MAURICE OBEYS A SUMMONS

It was no surprise to Maurice that Mr. Gilpin did not inform the authorities about the attack on his messenger. The money raised on mortgage by Mr. Langworthy being intended for the aid and comfort of rebels, clearly it was to the interest of that gentleman and all connected with the transaction to keep it as secret as possible. Maurice had hoped that it would be the beginning of crowded activities for himself, and as days and weeks passed without anything to vary the routine of his work in the lawyer's office he became restless and unhappy. During these weeks he saw almost nothing of Mr. Capplethwaite. They met in the street a few days after the incident on the fells. Mr. Capplethwaite barely acknowledged Maurice's salutation, and passed by with a scowl. Since then they had not come within speaking distance; and Maurice had no reason to think that his guardian took the least interest in his doings.

The townsfolk of Kendal went about their ordinary business as calmly as though kings and princes had no existence. There was, it is true, material for gossip in the rumours that floated in from the north, and conversation at the markets and in the inns beat upon topics more exciting than the price of sheep or oats. But the Scottish highlands were far away; two hundred years has passed since the last of the Border raids; it was more than fifty years since the Stuarts were banished from the realm, thirty since the Old Pretender's rising: and the stolid north-country folk had settled down to peace and quiet, their only interest in politics being shown by an occasional growl at the administration of Sir Robert Walpole. If Prince Charles had indeed landed—and some refused even to believe that—he might give the Government a little trouble in Scotland; but King George's generals would make short work of him if he was so rash as to show his face in England, and meanwhile the farmers must bring their produce to market, the sheep must be tended on the fells, and the cloth-workers must go on weaving.

There was a little band of people, however, whose romantic attachment to the Stuart House kept them in a state of hope and suspense. They had no real grievance against the House of Hanover; their lives and property were secure; trade was flourishing under Walpole's fostering hand: but King George inspired them with no personal devotion; there was a glamour in the Stuart name: and the very misfortunes of that ill-fated family appealed to all the sentiment and generosity of their nature. They had never given up the hope that a turn in the wheel of Fortune would one day restore their lawful Sovereign: whether they would take active measures to bring about the realization of their hope was at present a doubtful question. They remembered the abortive rebellion of 1715, ill-conceived, mismanaged, doomed to failure; and they were disposed to watch and wait for a clear proof that those errors would not be repeated after thirty years.

The project for a renewed attempt to recover the crown of Britain had been long cherished by James Stuart in his exile at Rome. It seemed that a favourable moment had come. Walpole's peace policy had at last broken down. War had been declared against Spain, war with France would inevitably follow, and James had been encouraged to believe that France would put an army at his disposal for the invasion of England. In the spring of 1744, indeed, a force of six thousand men had embarked at Dunkirk, but a violent storm drove the vessels ashore, and though the French had been lavish of promises to renew the enterprise, they had shown no eagerness to fulfil them.

Prince Charles, then twenty-five years of age, was of a sanguine temperament that disposed him always to believe what he wished to believe. He was well aware of his personal charm, and persuaded himself that he had only to set foot upon Scottish soil to become the rallying-point of the hereditary devotion of the clans. He saw the Highlanders flocking in thousands to his standard, the Lowlanders infected by their enthusiasm, a great Scottish army pouring over the Border, gaining recruits at every step, sweeping through a country torn by disaffection and party rage, and finally bursting with hurricane force upon London and overwhelming the insecure dynasty of Hanover. Deluded by vague promises of French support, he closed his ears against the prudent counsels of the more sober spirits among his Scotsmen, fell a prey to the eloquence of certain Irish adventurers, and at last, in July 1745, sailed from Belleisle in a little vessel of fourteen guns, the *Doutelle*, with only seven companions, of whom three were Irish. He escaped pursuit by an English frigate, rounded the north of Scotland, landed on the little island of Erisca in the Hebrides, and at last, on July 25, gained the mainland at Moidart.

A scrap of recorded conversation shows both the doubtfulness of the Highland gentlemen as to the chances of his success, and their spirit of almost fanatical loyalty. "Mr. Hugh MacDonald happened to meet with MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart crossing the water of Lochy, who asked him, "What news?" "No news at all have I," said Mr. Hugh. "Then," said Kinlochmoidart, "I'll give you news. You'll see the Prince this night at my house." "What prince do you mean?" said Mr. Hugh. "Prince Charles," said Kinlochmoidart. "You are certainly joking," said Mr. Hugh, "I cannot believe you." Upon this Kinlochmoidart assured him of the truth of it. "Then," said Mr. Hugh, "what number of men has he brought along with him?" "Only seven," said Kinlochmoidart. "What stock of money and arms has he brought with him

then?" said Mr. Hugh. "A very small stock of either," said Kinlochmoidart. "What generals or officers fit for commanding are with him?" said Mr. Hugh. "None at all," replied Kinlochmoidart. Mr. Hugh said he did not like the expedition at all, and was afraid of the consequences. "I cannot help it," said Kinlochmoidart. "If the matter go wrong, then I'll certainly be hanged, for I am engaged already."

The Prince had not been mistaken in his expectation of the effect of his personal influence. His gaiety, his cheerful endurance of hardships, his winning appeals to loyalist sentiment, and the fatal charm of his race, overbore doubts and hesitations. Many of the Highland chiefs were reluctant to take arms without a precise and definite assurance of French aid; one of the most powerful of them, Cameron of Lochiel, declared that there was no prospect of success and advised the Prince to return to France; but when Charles rejoined that he would certainly raise his standard, and Lochiel might stay at home and learn from the newspapers the fate of his prince, the Highlander's pride was piqued. 'No,' he said: 'I'll share the fate of my prince; and so shall every man over whom nature or fortune has given me any power.' Lochiel's example turned the scale with the waverers. From every mountain and glen chiefs and chieftains hastened at the head of their men. By the end of August the Prince had gathered about him, at Dunkeld, a force of two or three thousand Highlanders, and was ready to march southward towards his first objective, the Scottish capital.

Only the vaguest rumours of these events crossed the fells to Kendal, conveyed by packmen, drovers, and occasional travellers, who spread the gossip they had picked up on the way. Maurice was on tenter-hooks. Week after week of the summer slipped by; he went to and fro between the farm and the town, doing the routine tasks set him by Mr. Gilpin or Dawson, listening to the common talk of the markets and the inns, awaiting with ever-growing impatience the call to redeem his engagement. It was well understood by the Seddons that when Ducket gave the word he would buckle on his father's sword and join the Prince's army; even Mrs. Seddon did not dispute the cogency of his father's letter. She was brought to acquiescence by her husband's stolid assurance that the Prince would never cross the Border; the farmer had no belief in the staying power of the Scots. And as time passed on, and nothing was seen or heard of Ducket, the household pursued its even way, and only Maurice was disappointed.

He learnt now for the first time that John Seddon had for some years been aware that Ducket was not the drover he seemed to be. Anthony Delacombe was a poor gentleman of Cumberland who had lived for some time in Paris, and had there come in contact with the little community of exiled Scots whose passionate loyalty to the Stuart cause had survived all discouragements and adversities. In single-minded devotion he had returned to his own country as their secret agent, and adopted his disguise with a change of name, in order to further his work in keeping alive the embers of loyalty in the north country. John regarded him as a fanatic and a visionary, but acknowledged his personal force, and admired the skill with which he had for years carried out his mission without awaking suspicion among the government officials.

It was one day in the third week of September that Maurice again met Ducket. He was trudging home in the evening, when, at a lonely stretch of the road, the drover stepped out from behind a clump of whins.

'Well met, my lad,' he said. 'I am waiting for the dark, before I go into the town. The time is nigh.' Maurice noticed a gleam in his eyes. 'The Prince reigns in Edinburgh.'

'At last?' Maurice exclaimed.

'Ay, and sooner than we could have hoped. Cameron of Lochiel swept into the city with a few hundred Highlanders; not a blow was struck; the whole city welcomed him with joy.' This was not quite true; the citizens had been so taken aback that organized opposition was impossible. 'And what is more,' Ducket continued, 'the Prince has beat Johnny Cope at Prestonpans; the battle lasted only a quarter of an hour; the English regiments fled at the first shock with the Highlanders, and the way to England lies open.'

'Then we'll go north to meet the Prince?'

'No, no. You must be patient. We shall serve the Cause best by biding our time and rallying to the Prince as he passes through the country. His army will grow like a snowball. It will strike terror into the heart of the enemy. The Highlanders march swiftly; their equipment is light; we shall do well not to encumber them; an army has to be fed. Our English Jacobites are cautious, lukewarm; they need the evidence of success. The Prince needs not single adherents; my hope and belief is that when he has made some progress in his southward march all hesitation will vanish, and they will

rally to him in battalions. I am on my way to see certain trusty friends in Kendal, to arrange with them that when we know the Prince has left Newcastle and is pressing through Yorkshire, we shall gather our forces and make a rendezvous with him at Leeds. Be patient; be ready; the time will not be long.'

Next day the news was the talk of the town. The people began to regard the rising seriously. If Sir John Cope, the King's commander in Scotland, had been defeated in a pitched battle outside the walls of Edinburgh, beyond doubt the Prince was an enemy to be reckoned with. It was no longer incredible that he would cross the Border. But since the general expectation was that he would choose the more direct easterly route, the townsfolk had no apprehensions for their own safety. They might hear of battles in the east; none expected that the tide of war would sweep across their fells and dales.

Again Maurice had to endure a weary period of waiting. Duckett had disappeared; there was no further news; there was a cessation even in the flow of rumours. In truth the Prince still remained in Edinburgh. He held a council every day in Holyrood Palace, and there was a division of opinion among his advisers as to the course he had best pursue. His victory at Prestonpans had brought him a large accession of strength: a ship had arrived from France with arms, ammunition, and money; but the more prudent among his counsellors advised him to consolidate himself in Edinburgh, and prepare to defend himself against the army which it was known was marching north under Marshal Wade. But he was at once obstinate and sanguine. His easy triumph over Sir John Cope had imbued him with an exaggerated confidence in the Highlanders, who he imagined would beat four times their number of regular troops. And the flatterers among his father's courtiers had always talked of the Hanover family as cruel tyrants, hated by everybody; he was assured that if once he appeared in England the people would flock to him as a deliverer and chase away the usurpers. In this delusion he was immovably bent upon leading his victorious Highlanders into the southern kingdom.

One raw November day of drizzle and mist Maurice, looking out of the office window into the dismal street, noticed signs of commotion. Men were hurrying in one direction, towards the Town Hall; from every yard they flocked to swell the stream; their faces wore looks of agitation, anxiety, alarm. The town bell began clanging with rapid strokes; the tide of people became swifter; shawled women came to their doors and turned pale faces to their neighbours.

'Something has happened! There's news!' cried Maurice, leaping from his stool. 'I must go and see.'

'Daft—all daft!' growled Dawson.

Maurice snatched up his cap and dashed into the street. A great crowd filled the space opposite the Town Hall. On the steps stood the mayor surrounded by the aldermen. Above the din of hundreds of voices clanged the bell. Presently it ceased; the mayor lifted his hand; a hush fell upon the throng.

'Men of Kendal,' the mayor began.

There was confusion and uproar as newcomers surged upon the outskirts of the crowd; cries of 'Silence! Silence for the mayor!'

'Men of Kendal, there is grave news. Yesterday the Pretender——'

Groans drowned his voice.

'The Pretender crossed the Esk into England at the head of an army of Scots. He is marching on Carlisle. There is none to stay him. He has deceived the King's generals. In a few days, unless a miracle happens, he will be among us.'

Murmurs, curses, cries of consternation broke from the crowd.

'We cannot oppose the rebels,' continued the mayor. 'When they appear, keep calm; remain in your houses: raise no finger to resist them. They will demand food, money, lodging; it will be vain for us to refuse what they can take by force; but if you leave matters to me and your elected councillors, we will make the best terms possible, and do our utmost to preserve your lives and property.'

The crowd cheered for the mayor, and when he had retired, broke up into groups and discussed the news.

Maurice, tingling with excitement, moved about among them, listening, watching. He heard no word, saw no look of pleasure. Among all the populace, there seemed to be not one man who welcomed the imminent advent of his lawful prince. Men cursed the Prince, the Scots, the King's generals who had allowed the rebels to cross the Border unmolested; their agitated talk was mainly concerned with the safety of their goods.

He turned away, and ran into Mr. Capplethwaite.

'Wonderful news!' said Mr. Capplethwaite. 'More wonderful than we could have expected.'

Maurice for the first time felt warmly disposed towards his guardian. Here at last was one loyal supporter of the Prince.

'We shall get the word from Mr. Ducket,' he said. 'Have you seen him, sir?'

'Not for some time. But we must do nothing rashly. Ducket lacks prudence. We should very greatly err if we moved prematurely. I fear that Kendal has no enthusiasm for the Prince.'

'And are we to wait until he has succeeded before we join him?' cried Maurice,—'refuse our help until it is not wanted?'

'I yield in loyalty to no man,' said Mr. Capplethwaite, looking round to see that he was not overheard. 'But we must act with discretion as well as with zeal. You have had time to reflect, and I am sure you have given up that whim of yours.'

'I haven't,' said Maurice bluntly. 'I gave my promise, and when Mr. Ducket calls me, I shall go.'

Mr. Capplethwaite's manner, hitherto amiable, changed.

'You owe me obedience,' he said. 'I have told you before that you must have regard for my wishes. It is known that you are my ward: if you act indiscreetly, you compromise me. My position in the town, where opinion is hostile to us, demands circumspection. At the right time——'

He broke off as Matthew Spurr came up to him. A few whispered words were exchanged.

'Think it over, lad,' said Mr. Capplethwaite in a friendly tone to Maurice. 'You will see that I am right.'

Maurice was puzzled by Mr. Capplethwaite's quick changes. But his mind was made up. He only awaited the call from Ducket. Surely that call would come soon?

That evening he was surprised to hear from Mr. Gilpin that he was to lodge in the town. The weather was so bad that Mr. Capplethwaite had decided to spare him the daily journeys, and engaged a room for him at the Fleece Inn. This seemed a mark of kindness: was he unjust to his guardian after all?

A week passed. Every day brought fresh news, a fresh crop of rumours. The rebels were besieging Carlisle; they were digging trenches, erecting batteries, making scaling ladders. In Kendal the first alarm had subsided; many folk hoped that the castle of Carlisle would defy all attempts to storm it, and that the Prince would be delayed long enough for the royal forces to come to grips with him.

Every day Maurice hoped that Ducket would appear, or would send the long-expected summons. Every day he was disappointed. And he had the uneasy feeling that he was watched and followed in his comings and goings between the inn and the office. More than once he wheeled round suddenly, seeking justification for his feeling in some look or gesture on the part of a pedestrian near by. Once he saw one of the denizens of Capplethwaite's Yard moving at equal pace with him on the opposite side of the street: but the man did not turn towards him, and presently disappeared. He was annoyed at the persistence of the strange, apparently causeless sensation. Why should any one dog him? He wondered whether the names of Ducket's secret association had been betrayed to the authorities, and a watch was being kept upon the movements of them all.

The weather turned bitterly cold. Snow fell continuously for many hours; deep drifts formed in the hollows of the fells, isolating some of the higher farms, and Maurice could not have made the journey between his home and the town. It seemed as if Mr. Capplethwaite had foreseen the change. To the snow a hard frost succeeded; animals and men slipped and slithered on the icy roads; and the difficulty of travel accounted for the fact that for two days Kendal was without news from the north.

Then, late one afternoon, a weary weather-beaten courier rode in with tidings that stirred the town to a ferment of anxiety and fear. Carlisle had capitulated to the rebels; the castle was in their hands; contributions had been levied upon the inhabitants, and the Highlanders were making themselves the terror of the adjacent villages in which they were quartered. There could be no longer any doubt that the Prince would continue his southward march, and his arrival in Kendal might be expected as soon as the state of the roads permitted.

One of the first results of the news was a great increase of work in Mr. Gilpin's office. The burghers of Kendal, fearing massacre at the hands of the Highlanders, whom they regarded as bloodthirsty barbarians, hastened to make their wills. Some sent their families away into distant parts; the roads were thronged with vehicles of all descriptions, drawn by horses that struggled and panted through the frozen snow.

One morning—it was November 20—Maurice was warming his fingers, blue with cold and stiff with wielding his quill, over a small charcoal fire in Dawson's room when a note was brought to him, addressed in an unknown hand. He broke the seal with eager anticipation, and read:

The Association will meet at 6 o'clock by Kirkbarrow House. A.D.

His heart throbbed wildly; warm blood coursed through his veins; the long-expected moment had arrived! He resumed his work, but could not control his pen, and Dawson, looking over, next day, the folios he had written, frowned at the numerous errors, and was more than ever convinced that the world was daft.

At four o'clock Maurice hurried to his inn, and gulped a hasty meal. Kirkbarrow House lay at the lower end of the town, off the Milnthorpe Road; he could reach it in ten minutes; but in his impatience he set off a good half hour before he need have done. It was very dark; a bitter wind swept down the street; scarcely a soul was abroad. With his coat collar turned up to his ears, his hat pressed low, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, he made his way, half-sliding, half-running, along Highgate, down the bill, and had just come to the bend into Kirkland when he caught sight of a knot of men at the corner of Gillinggate. He swerved to the middle of the street to avoid them. There was a quick rush; in an instant he was borne to the ground. He called for help. A gag was thrust into his mouth, a band tied over his eyes. He writhed and kicked. In spite of his struggles his hands and feet were swiftly tied. With a man at each leg and arm he was hoisted from the ground, and carried at a rapid shuffle across the street.

He could only guess the direction in which he was borne. It was at first down-hill; then his captors turned to the left; by their slowing pace he knew that the ground was rising; they must be mounting the short incline of the Nether Bridge. Down again; again they struck to the left; he heard the slow gurgle of the river beneath the arches; they were crossing the field towards the castle mill. Then he lost count of their progress. It seemed a long time before the crunching of snow under their feet ceased, and their footsteps rang on bare stones and echoed from the roof of a covered way.

They came into the open again, took a few more steps and halted. A rope was noosed about his body, and he was hoisted into the air. A few moments of painful whirling ascent and the rope was pulled sideways. His arms bumped against the sides of a narrow opening. A gruff voice mumbled an instruction. The rope was lowered, and he came with a thump upon a wooden floor. He was released from the noose. Two men seized him, lugged him out of the room, through a passage, and into a room beyond. There they dropped him to the floor as carelessly as though he had been a sack of corn. They took the bandage from his eyes, the gag from his jaws, and left him. He heard a door slam, the bolt shot. He was alone, trussed up in the darkness and the cold.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

MR. CAPPLETHWAITE IS PAINED

Maurice's first impulse was to writhe and strain at his bonds, in a rage of indignation. In vain he tried to force his arms from his sides, to part his ankles; the cords did but cut into his flesh. Only when compelled by pain and exhaustion to desist did he begin to speculate upon the reasons of his capture, the identity of his captors. Had Ducket and the association been betrayed? Surely in that case the members would have been arrested in their own houses or places of business and thrown into the town jail; they would not have been waylaid in the street. Clearly he had been expected to pass through Kirkland to the rendezvous. Ducket's message had said 'by Kirkbarrow House'—a strange place for a meeting, now he came to think of it, on a cold winter night. Was it a genuine message? He had never seen Ducket's writing before; the message might have been forged to decoy him; but why should any one wish to decoy him? What enemy had he? In whose interest had he been laid by the heels? He remembered Mr. Capplethwaite's threat that it would be the worse for him if he cleaved to his determination to join the Prince, but surely a man of Mr. Capplethwaite's standing in the town would not have taken so extreme a step to restrain a humble clerk.

Puzzled, suspicious, indignant, he gave up useless questioning on these points. Here he was, tied up in a fusty room, lying on bare boards, shivering with cold: how long was he to remain in this painful plight? He lay on his back and drew up his knees; that did not ease his discomfort, and he straightened himself again. He tried to wriggle over the floor, so that he might reach a wall and gain support for his back; but the effort was too painful to be continued. He could do nothing.

Presently he heard footsteps, and caught a glint of light under the door. The bolt was drawn back; the door opened, and a man entered, bearing a guttering candle. The man, a thick-set fellow, was a stranger. Behind him came another of the same kidney, and then—Mr. Capplethwaite.

'Cut him loose; then wait outside the door,' said Mr. Capplethwaite.

One of the men slit his cords; the other handed the candle to Mr. Capplethwaite; then both retired. Maurice rose stiffly to his feet; his knees trembled, his teeth were chattering; but he faced his guardian steadily.

'Well, my lad, I am afraid you have passed an uncomfortable hour,' said Mr. Capplethwaite, in the breezy tone that Maurice had learnt to hate. 'But an hour's discomfort is better than a lifetime of misery.'

Maurice made no reply.

'You see to what stern measures your obstinacy forces me,' the elder man went on. 'With every wish to continue the kindness which as your guardian I have always shown you, I am driven to take steps which I deplore. I do not deserve such ingratitude; your treatment pains me to the very soul.'

Still Maurice was silent.

'Could I stand idly by and watch my ward, the son of a dear relative, rush blindly to his doom? I have your interests at heart: why do you flout me? You are young, inexperienced, I fear I must say headstrong. I have explained to you that whatever our sympathies, whatever hopes we may inwardly cherish, we must abide the fit moment for giving them public expression. That moment, believe me, has not yet come. We must not throw away discretion. Rashness leads straight to the gallows.'

He spoke impressively, but Maurice was tired of hearing what he had heard before, sick of this hesitating loyalty, this mean and cowardly halting at the cross-roads.

'You need not trouble about me,' he said. 'If I come to the gallows, that's my affair. Let me out.'

'Blind foolish boy!' said Mr. Capplethwaite mournfully. 'I hoped that this brief period of solitary confinement would have brought you to a better mind. I fear that your hot head, your incorrigible——'

His next word was smothered in his throat. Maurice sprang forward suddenly, drove his elbows into the rotundity of Mr. Capplethwaite's person, dashed the candle from his hand and flung himself upon the door. It opened outwards: he ran straight into the arms of the two burly men waiting in the dark passage. A gasping cry from Mr. Capplethwaite had put them on the alert. They clutched Maurice firmly, held him in spite of his desperate struggles, shoved him back into the room and hurled him to the floor. While one sat upon him, the other groped for the candle, and rekindled it from his tinder-box. The light fell upon the fat face of Mr. Capplethwaite, red with anger.

'Kindness is thrown away upon such an abandoned wretch,' he cried. 'You defy me, you assault me, your lawful guardian. You deserve no mercy. But I will not fail in my duty. Against your will I must prevent you from rushing headlong to destruction. At one word of contrition, a simple undertaking that you would respect my wishes, I would have let you go free; but you have shown yourself headstrong, obdurate, basely ungrateful; here you shall remain.'

'Shall we tie him up again, sir?' asked one of the men.

'No,' said Mr. Capplethwaite after a brief pause. 'It shall not be said that Reuben Capplethwaite went beyond the necessities of the case. He will be safe here. You will bring him a blanket; no one shall call me cruel. In the morning you will bring him food; but he shall not stir from this place until he gives me his word to——'

'You'll never get that,' said Maurice.

'Ah! we shall see, we shall see,' said Mr. Capplethwaite. 'Loneliness and meditation will soften your hard heart. You will send me a message in the morning... I will leave the room first, my men.'

In after days Maurice laughed at his remembrance of the big man, holding the candle, backing nervously through the doorway. The men followed him; the door was slammed and bolted. Once more Maurice was alone. But his limbs were free: that was to the good.

He had taken the opportunity in the last minute or two to glance around the room. It was about five yards square, nine or ten feet high. The walls were of stone. There was no fireplace or chimney; the ceiling was of wood; close to it there was one small window, heavily barred. Along one of the walls there was a double line of shelves, supported on iron brackets clamped to the stone. The floor was dirty, stained here and there; the appearance of the room, the stale odour that clung about it, suggested that it had been a store or warehouse.

So much he had learnt in that one brief survey. What did it avail him? In the darkness, nothing. He must wait for morning light; then he would examine the room thoroughly; but Capplethwaite had been so sure that escape was impossible that there seemed little hope even of daylight revealing a way out. Meanwhile there was the whole long night to live through: he must at least try to sleep.

He sat down against the wall, folding his arms. Footsteps brought him to his feet. The door was opened: a blanket, not of a sweet savour, was flung to him, and the door was closed and bolted again. Maurice rolled himself up in the blanket, disposed himself as comfortably as he could, and presently dozed off into the heavy sleep of physical and mental exhaustion.

When he awoke, a grey light was filtering between the bars of the high window. He got up, stretched his aching limbs, worked his arms about to ease his stiffness, and set about making a minute inspection of the room. There was not a hole or crevice in the walls; the door was of stout oak, without catch or fastening of any kind on the inside: the bolt outside he could not get at. The window? He looked up at it. The lowest of the horizontal bars was two or three feet above his head. He leapt up, grasped it, and pulled himself to the level of the window, so that he could look out. There was no glass; the bars crossed an opening in a wall so thick that he could see nothing but a leaden sky. He tugged at the bar he held: it was firmly embedded in the masonry. Holding on with one hand, he tried the other bars in turn; none of them yielded the least fraction of an inch. His muscles ached under the strain, and he dropped to the floor.

'I am caged,' he thought.

Presently there was a step outside. He stood close to the door, ready to dash out if a chance offered. It opened; his way was blocked by two men. The first bore a plate and a mug, the second a cudgel.

'Breakfast,' said the one. 'Any message for Mr. Capplethwaite?'

'No,' replied Maurice shortly.

The man grinned and withdrew; Maurice recognized him as one he had seen haunting Capplethwaite's Yard. He ate ravenously the thick bread and fat bacon, drank the ice-cold ale, stamped about the room to warm himself, then lay down in his blanket and slept.

The day wore on. A second meal was brought him; again he was asked for a message; again he refused. Then he wondered whether he might justify to himself the giving of a promise he did not intend to keep. A promise extorted under duress might be broken without loss of honour? He drove the suggestion from his mind; he would not descend to trickery.

He had no watch, and could not judge the lapse of time. It was afternoon, he guessed, when it suddenly occurred to him to examine the floor. The lofty window gave little light; he crawled about with his eyes close to the boards. Presently he discovered one that showed signs of dry rot at one end. He took out his knife, and scraped at the wood. It flaked away, but he was soon disappointed to find that the rot had affected only a small corner. He persevered, scraping and chipping until, after hours of work, as it seemed, he had cut a hole clean through the plank, large enough for him to insert two fingers. With these he tried to lift the plank—vain endeavour.

By this time dusk had fallen. Again he heard clumping footsteps. His rough attendant had brought him his final meal: a companion kept guard outside. Though it was almost dark, Maurice at the first sound had hastily thrown his blanket across the perforated board.

'Changed your place, eh?' said the man. 'Well, there's plenty of room. Any message?'

'Go to Jericho,' said Maurice.

The man went out laughing.

Maurice slept soundly through the night; he closed his eyes in hope, and opened them in renewed determination. How could he prise up the board? To cut a hole through which he could squeeze himself would take too long; he must find a means of lifting it—some kind of lever. The room was bare, except for the shelves. He examined the lower one; it rested on the brackets without fastening; he took it down. It was six or seven inches broad, but the wood was softer than that of the floor-boards; could he sharpen it to a point? He began whittling at it with his knife. Before he had cut away much he was interrupted by the man bringing his breakfast, and had just time enough to cover the little heap of shavings with his blanket and replace the shelf before the man entered.

Resuming his work the moment the door was closed, and neglecting his breakfast, he plied his knife with feverish energy until he had sharpened one end of the shelf to a size that would fit the hole. He inserted it, and pressed on the other end; the point snapped. With a feeling of despair he sat down on his blanket, caught sight of the plate and mug, and found that he had a very good appetite for his belated meal.

'I won't give in,' he said to himself.

His next operation was to enlarge the hole in the floor-board to double its former size. Then inserting his lever, he found that the nails holding the board began to give, with a light creaking. He increased the pressure with great caution, lest his lever should break again. Little by little the end of the board was forced up until it was an inch or so above the general level of the floor. Driving in his knife as a wedge to maintain the gap, he slid the shelf bodily under the free end of the board, stood up half erect, and pulled upward. With much groaning and squeaking of the stout and rusty nails the board moved higher, and at every inch gained Maurice wedged the shelf nearer to the middle. At last it came up with a jerk, leaving a rectangular hole about six feet by eight inches.

Maurice lay down and peered into the hole. He could see nothing. He let down the shelf, and touched bottom no more than five feet below. Apparently there was a shallow chamber extending beneath the room in which he was. Would there be time to explore it? He had not been visited except at meal times; but being unable to gauge the passing of the hours he could not tell how soon he might be interrupted. For prudence sake he decided to defer further work until he had

had his next meal, laid down the board, and covered all signs of his activities with his blanket.

The man came and went. Maurice ate his dinner—the invariable bread and bacon and ale—without a thought of the sameness of his fare. Then he set to work again. To raise a second board was an easy job. He let himself down cautiously through the enlarged aperture. His feet touched a firm flooring. In half darkness he groped about: the space in which he could move was limited. He was surrounded by kegs, boxes, bales like those he had seen in the pele tower. The air was stuffy with mingled odours. Beyond doubt the chamber was a smuggler's hiding-place.

'All my work for nothing,' he thought. 'I can't get out here.'

Still groping with bent head, he came presently to a gap in the collection of articles—a narrow passage through which he could just squeeze himself. At the end he came to a smooth wooden wall. He felt over its surface and touched a knob. It would not turn, but as he pressed upon it sideways it moved. He pushed steadily; a draught of fresher air met him. It was pitch dark, but he thrust his hand forward, and discovered that he had slid back a sliding panel, opening into a space beyond.

'Where am I now?' he asked himself, tingling with revived hope.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

MAURICE OVERHEARS A PLOT

Maurice sighed for a light. To feel his way in inky blackness consumed precious time. He groped forward, knocked his head against a sharp corner, and for a few moments felt too sick to proceed. Then he put up his hands, and discovered that he was under a staircase. Moving carefully forward he came to a wooden door. His groping hand struck upon a latch. Dared he lift it? His heart was thumping furiously. He listened; there was not a sound. He put a finger under the latch and tried to raise it silently; but, as is often the way with latches, it stuck, then rose suddenly with a loud click. No care could now save him if anybody was about, and he boldly pulled the door open. It revealed a bare empty room, like the one above, dimly lit through a barred window high in the wall. Faint sounds of voices came in from the outside.

Beneath the window there was a door. In a moment he found that it was locked. Glancing around, he saw a small low door in the left-hand wall. The bolt was inside. He hurried across the room, drew back the rusty bolt with careful up-and-down movements, opened the door an inch and looked out upon a small cobbled yard. No one was to be seen, but the voices were louder. He waited awhile, then pulled the door fully open and crept out, tiptoeing across the yard to a latched gate. Here he paused again in the same nervous hesitation, listening to the voices somewhere on the other side. They made an indistinguishable murmur. Plucking up his courage he raised the latch, which moved easily, opened the gate a mere crack and looked cautiously out. What he saw caused him to draw back hastily. He was at the end of one of the yards. The covered passage into the street, seventy or eighty feet away, was blocked by a crowd of people, all looking away from him as if watching some passing show.

New sounds struck upon his ear, a strange wild droning music mingled with the tramp of marching men. He opened the gate again. The crowd in the narrow entry showed excitement, jostling each other, standing on tiptoe, craning their necks. A wave of the barbaric music burst in from the street. Maurice felt his cheeks flush; he thrilled from top to toe. Were the Prince's Highlanders marching by?

Secure from observation by the crowd, who were intent upon the scene before them, he took a more deliberate survey of his surroundings. He was at the end of Capplethwaite's Yard. He recognized the houses on either side, a stone stairway leading up to one of them, the arched doorway that opened into Capplethwaite's house. He remembered having noticed from the entrance the old, apparently disused building at the end; it was in that building he had been confined.

What was he to do? For a moment he had a mad impulse to dash out, force his way through the crowd and gain the

street; but a little reflection showed him the hopelessness of such a move. He would certainly be recognized by some of the inhabitants of the yard: perhaps the very men who had captured him were among them. By and by, when the army had passed, they would disperse to their homes, leaving the yard clear. Then would be his chance to escape. Meanwhile he was relieved of the fear that his absence from the warehouse room would be discovered. Every one was absorbed in watching the scene in the street. It irked him that over their heads in the low entry he could see nothing.

Standing just within the half-closed gate he waited. The sounds of bagpipes and tramping feet receded. Some of the people in the passage pushed forward into the street to follow the procession, others returned to their houses, some hung about, talking together. The afternoon was creeping on; the short winter day would soon be over. At dusk his captors would bring him his evening meal. If he had not found an opportunity of getting away before then, he must wait until night, when all was still. Now that he knew the way out, he could endure his confinement a little longer.

He was peeping out again when he saw the burly form of Mr. Capplethwaite coming up the yard, followed by the two men who had previously accompanied him. They carried no food; it was not yet meal time; but beyond doubt they were making for the warehouse.

Maurice hastily closed the gate, hoping that its movement had not been seen. Darting back through the house yard, he entered the outer room, bolted the low door behind him, hurried into the cupboard under the stairs, from that into the shallow store-room, slid the panel, clambered up through the gap in the floor, closed it with the boards, spread his blanket over the hole he had cut, and laid himself down in an easy posture on his elbow, expecting to hear footsteps in the passage without.

To his alarm the sounds that he heard a few moments later came, not from the passage, but from the shallow chamber under the floor. Some one was moving about among the kegs and boxes; there were voices. His heart sank; his blood ran cold; by what unlucky chance had his temporary escape been discovered? In his self-consciousness he expected to feel the floor-boards rise beneath him.

The sounds continued for some time; it seemed that the kegs and boxes were being rolled or hauled away. Presently all was silent again. Maurice drew breath: whatever errand had brought the men below, it was apparently no suspicion of his doings. And then came the heavy tread of footsteps in the passage.

When Mr. Capplethwaite and his two satellites entered the room, Maurice turned over on his side to face them.

'Now, my lad,' said his guardian in a tone of good-humoured expostulation, 'this nonsense has lasted long enough. Firmness is an admirable quality when rightly directed, but when it is against reason, against common sense, it becomes sheer obstinacy, much to be blamed—much. I detest coercion; all Kendal knows how easy-going I am by nature, how patient, I may even say, how forgiving. You have treated me very badly: I overlook it, I wipe it out, and once more appeal to your better nature. And I will tell you the reason. The rooms in this building will be immediately required. If you persist in your obduracy—but I am sure you will not—other quarters must be found for you. And those quarters—ah! my lad, what pain you give me! The cellars!—think of it—the cellars, damp, mouldy, overrun with rats. I'd be loath to put a dog in them, even for the dog's good.'

'To catch the rats?' said Maurice, gently.

'Eh? To catch the—Aha! Capital! Capital! To catch the rats would be for the dog's good. I like a humorous spirit. Well, my lad, I see you are relenting.'

He drew a little nearer, and trod on one of the loosened boards, which creaked under him. Maurice shivered, and sprang up suddenly. Mr. Capplethwaite backed towards the two brawny men behind.

'Far from it,' cried Maurice. 'I do not relent. I will not go back on my word. It is useless to persecute me.'

Mr. Capplethwaite glared at him. For a moment Maurice expected an outburst. But the elder man said nothing more. The glare changed to a smile. Silently he returned to the passage, motioning to his companions to follow him. They closed and bolted the door. Maurice felt that his case was desperate. This silent departure was more ominous, more sinister, than threats.

Maurice was perplexed. It seemed that his discovery of the chamber below was not suspected. Then why was he to be removed? Were his friends hunting for him? Was Capplethwaite afraid of his being found? Or could it be that his present quarters were required for some one else?

In a minute or two he heard renewed sounds beneath him. Footsteps went to and fro; there came the noise of hammering. Then all was quiet. He waited tensely. Had the men gone below to prepare the cellars for him? He felt that if he was to escape it must be now. It was growing dusk: he must make an attempt to steal out through the yard.

Noiselessly he raised the boards and let himself down through the floor. This time his feet touched something soft. He stooped and felt with his hand. Apparently the floor was strewn with a number of sacks. Through the wider space left free by the removal of some of the kegs and boxes he approached the panel in the wall. Had it been fastened? To his joy it slid easily; his doings had not, then, been suspected. He passed through, into the cupboard. All was silent. He opened the low door an inch and looked out. The small yard was empty. Breathlessly he crossed it to the gate, and waited listening. There was still no sound. He opened the gate and peered down the yard. No one was visible in the gathering darkness. Out he stepped, tiptoeing on the cobbles, close against the wall.

He had nearly reached the covered passage leading to the street when two or three figures turned in at the further end. He could not pass them unobserved in the narrow entry, and he slipped hastily into the nearest refuge—the archway of Mr. Capplethwaite's private door. Crouching there in the shadow he shook as he heard Matthew Spurr's voice. The man would discover him; what could he do? There was only one course, and that was fraught with danger. Quietly he lifted the latch, opened the door, passed into the little room where he had first met Ducket, thence to the passage, intending to make his exit by the front door. To his horror he heard a key in the lock. He would be caught. With the despair of a trapped animal he turned swiftly into Mr. Capplethwaite's parlour. It was dark; he could see no hiding-place. He struck against a heavy oak table set against the wall. There was nothing better: he dived beneath it, drew in his legs, and lay there panting.

Mr. Capplethwaite came in, stirred the smouldering embers on the hearth, and kindled a candle on the mantelpiece. A moment afterwards Spurr entered.

'Well?' said Capplethwaite.

'It isn't well,' was the gruff answer. 'I don't like the look of it.'

'Sit down.'

The men drew chairs close up to the table. Maurice gazed with a sort of fascination at their legs.

'Now, what's wrong with it?' said Capplethwaite. 'It seems to me perfectly easy.'

'But it isn't. It's a danged risky job. There's sentries at the door, big-boned Highlanders with bare swords. The house is full of folk; two houses opposite crammed with officers; others billeted up and down Stricklandgate; thousands of wild savages within call. It's a daft scheme.'

'Come, my friend, you despair too easily. Don't you see that all these facts are in our favour? They've met with no opposition: thanks to the mayor, all our people are as mild as milk. They entertain the Highlanders like honoured guests. The Prince has the best house in this part of the town. His suite's all about him; there are sentries at the door; well, they've taken all the usual precautions, and they've no reason to suppose there's any need for more. Why, man, they'll never dream of danger.'

'That's all very well for you. You won't run any risk of trying the edge of a Highland claymore. I don't see *you* facing a ring of steel. Best give it up; it's nobbut foolery.'

'Thirty thousand, Spurr! One doesn't pick up thirty thousand good English pounds every day in the week: ten thousand for you, ten for me, and two hundred apiece for the men. Come, come, have any of my plans failed to work out?'

'One, Capplethwaite, one,' said Spurr with a laugh. 'Yon fine plan o' yours for getting back the brass you were

lending Langworthy. Likely you've forgot that, eh?'

Capplethwaite answered with a growl.

'Ay, and I mind of another,' Spurr went on, bitterly. 'I've cause to mind o't, too. Folkard has beat you; eh now, what have you to say to that?'

'Well, it was no plan of mine to attack a dozen seamen with half as many yokels. That was your plan, Spurr, and finely you boggled it. And as for th' other affair, Folkard had a good ducking, and but for that young fool of a lad he'd have been food for the fishes.'

'Ay, the lad's been a thorn in your flesh, and mine too. You've got him safe now?'

'Safe enough. He'll trouble us no more, you may take my word for it. But come back to the point. Thirty thousand is worth a risk. Between us we can muster fifty good men. In the dead of night they'll be worth a thousand. Some of 'em can make a hubbub at the front of the house. Some can hide in the yards. Some can move up and down street and wait for the signal. The brawl in the street will take off attention from what's happening inside.'

'Ay, but——'

'Wait. Let me finish. Five of the best will get into the garden at the back, carrying enough stuff to barricade the four-foot way at the side. You see the game? At the signal the men in front will rush the sentries and get into the passage, which 'll be barred by the time the Highlanders are ready to attack. It's not the first time Kendal men have held their yards against the Scots. Another half dozen will block my yard alongside, and while that's doing, you and five or six men will be at the main job.'

'Eh now, that's for me, is it? Hang me, Reub, if you ain't the cunningest fellow for saving your own skin. Why——'

'Do be patient. You know the house, don't you? Well, you're the man for the job. You'll get on to my roof, crawl over the next, and force the trap-door in the next. They'll certainly give the Prince the best bedroom. You know where that is?'

'Ay, on the second floor.'

'Well, you'll creep down. It will be the dead of night, remember: all quiet, no lights. You'll make for the room. The Prince will be alone. If there's a chamberlain or valet at the door, you'll know how to silence him. You and two men will gag the Prince and lug him up to the roof. Then the men in the yard below will break out and draw off pursuit. The hubbub will cover your descent through my trapdoor. We'll carry the Prince through my yard and shut him up under where young Nugent is now perishing with cold.'

'They'll find the broken trap-door.'

'What if they do? Mine won't be broken. They can't tell what building the Prince has been carried through. They may hunt high and low, but I reckon they'll never discover the place where we've hidden our kegs these many years.'

'What about the lad?'

'Confound the obstinate pig! I suppose I shall have to let him go.'

'Why shouldn't you? Good riddance, I say! What do you hold him for?'

'That's no concern of yours,' snapped Capplethwaite. 'Now I've done, what's wrong with the scheme?'

'Nowt—in talk. But it's a deal easier to plan than to do. You won't do much for your ten thousand, Reub. You'll be snug here: we'll get the knocks.'

'Well, man, it's brawn and brains—a partnership as old as the hills. You and your men—brawn: I—brains. And let me tell you, it's not often that brains serve brawn so generously. That's my weakness: that's stood in my way all my life.'

'What has?'

'My kind heart. If I hadn't been afflicted with a fatal generosity of disposition, I should have been a rich man to-day, Spurr.'

'Mercy on us! Give me summat hot to drink to wash that down. I'll blow up the fire.'

Capplethwaite took bottles and glasses from a cupboard. Spurr hung a kettle to an iron hook in the chimney and plied the bellows. As the logs burst into flame, Maurice shrank back still further against the wall. He could hardly endure the waiting while the two men prepared and consumed their drink, talking over the details of their scheme. At last Capplethwaite rose.

'It's time we got our men together,' he said. 'And I want to see if Ducket is still over the way. I don't think he'll trouble us. Now Spurr, remember that everything is to be done quickly. I'll answer for my men. Keep yours quiet, and sober, until three in the morning; then we'll move. Give three raps on the yard door. Thirty thousand, my friend. One more glass, for luck.'

They drank together, and went out. Maurice heard the street door close. Then he stretched his cramped limbs, and came from beneath the table.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

MAURICE MEETS THE PRINCE

In the first-floor room of a small house in the Stricklandgate, a few doors from Mr. Gilpin's office, Drover Ducket was waiting for recruits. He had been waiting there all that bitter winter day, starting at every rap on the street door, at every footstep on the stairs. Often and often he went to the window and gazed up and down the street, watching for the members of his association, summoned to redeem their pledges. Now and again he fancied he saw, in the distance, the features of one or another of the men who had engaged themselves to support the Stuart prince; but as the figures, closely muffled against the cold, drew nearer, his heart sank low, like the fire that he forgot to tend, and his soul ached with a pain more racking than that of the body. 'There is none that is faithful,' he groaned, 'no, not one.'

He was there at the window when the advance troops of the Prince's cavalry rode up from Stramongate, there when the kilted Highlanders on foot marched by to the skirl of the bagpipes. A glow of passionate devotion swept through him as he caught sight of the tall lithe figure of his Prince striding past among his men, gallantly sharing the hardship of the wearisome journey from Penrith. He saw the Prince enter the house chosen for his quarters, two doors from Mr. Capplethwaite's on the other side of the street: what dreams he had cherished of leading a staunch company of Englishmen to greet their future sovereign and offer him their swords! But he was alone; not one of those he had relied on had answered his call; he writhed with shame and disappointment.

The bustle that accompanied the Prince's entry subsided; the spectators dispersed and withdrew into their houses; but Ducket was aware of one short sturdy figure that passed and repassed, like a sentry on a beat. He remembered having seen that figure once or twice before during the day, but the fact had made no impression upon his busy mind. Now he looked more attentively: the persistence of the lad attracted him, a certain doggedness in the way he passed up and down a short stretch of the street, ending always at Capplethwaite's door. He wore a long frieze coat, its collar turned up to his ears, almost meeting the brim of his hat; his hands were thrust into his pockets; a stout cudgel was tucked under his arm.

Presently he chanced to turn his face up towards the window where Ducket stood. 'That's Seddon's boy,' said the watcher to himself. 'I'll call him in.'

He had sent a note to Maurice among other members of the Association, addressing it to the Fleece Inn. In the general ruin of his hopes the non-appearance of the youngest had been scarcely regarded with any particularity; but his recognition of Caleb Seddon carried his thoughts to the youth upon whose loyalty he would have staked the most. Could it be that Maurice Nugent was equally infected by the spirit of craven caution that had rendered all his adherents false to their plighted word?

Going down to the street door, he beckoned the lad to him.

'Your name is Seddon?' he said.

'Ay,' replied Caleb.

'Where is Maurice Nugent?'

Caleb looked up at him suspiciously. Ducket was quick to read the expression of his eyes.

'Come in,' he said. 'You may trust me. I am a friend.'

Caleb hesitated, looking up and down the street, and towards the entry of Capplethwaite's Yard.

'You can watch from my window,' said Ducket. 'Come; I wish to talk to you.'

They went up the stairs together. Caleb hastened at once to the window, and stood at the corner, where he could see the portion of the street he had patrolled.

'Now, my lad,' said Ducket, 'let me tell you something. I sent a note to Maurice Nugent yesterday at the Fleece Inn, asking him to meet me here. I expected him to come. Can you tell me anything about him?'

'He weren't there.'

'Ah! He has gone some errand for Mr. Gilpin?'

'Nay, Mr. Gilpin don't know where he is.'

'Come, tell me all you know. There is nothing to be afraid of.'

'I know nowt, nobbut that he's gone,' Caleb blurted out. 'Been gone two days. Mr. Gilpin sent up t' th' farm. Mother's fair sick. Father come into th' town, and asked at yon inn. Maurice went two nights ago and hasn't come back.'

'Strange! Your father made inquiries? He asked Mr. Capplethwaite?'

'Ay.' Caleb paused a moment or two; his eyelids flickered. Then he cried, 'It's him.'

'What do you mean?'

'Him! Yon Capplethwaite. He's at the bottom o't.'

'Why do you say that?'

Caleb shuffled his feet. He looked out into the street, now darkening in the gloom of the November afternoon. Turning towards Ducket, he cried with sudden passion:

'I know it's him. I know it, I tell you. He's a black heart. Mother says so, and she knows. He hates Maurice; he's done summat, I'd take my oath on't.'

'And that's why you have gone up and down the street so often, watching Capplethwaite's house?'

'Ay, there's nowt else I could do.'

Ducket looked at him perplexedly. The boy clearly had no proof; his suspicion seemed to be founded on nothing but dislike of Capplethwaite. Why should Capplethwaite spirit his ward away? Ducket remembered the man's indignant protest against Maurice's joining the Association. His objection had been twofold: that the lad, in his state of pupillage, was too young; that his open adhesion to the Prince would compromise his guardian. Ducket had long ago ceased to rely upon Capplethwaite's profession of loyalty; he had scratched his name from his list; but surely the man was not so abject a coward as to entertain any real fear of his own position being seriously jeopardized.

While he was still silently pondering, there came the sound of a scuffle in the street. In the mirky dusk he could just see a number of figures struggling in the entry to Capplethwaite's Yard. Next moment Caleb shouted 'Maurice!' dashed from the room, took the staircase in two flying leaps, and darted across the street, cudgel in hand. Ducket snatched up his sword and followed him, hatless.

At the street end of the narrow passage, five men surrounded a sixth, whom they were hauling and shoving back into the entry. Upon them Caleb fell lustily; his cudgel smote their skulls with resounding cracks; and two of them fell headlong upon the cobbles. Recovering from their surprise at this sudden attack, two others turned about; one seized the uplifted cudgel and wrenched it from Caleb's grasp, the other caught him round the waist, and found himself unawares involved in a wrestling match.

Meanwhile Maurice, exhausted by his struggles against such odds, was being borne back toward the entry, limp in the grip of a huge ruffian twice his weight. At this moment Ducket sprang across the prostrate bodies, pinked the man who had disarmed Caleb, and rushed upon the biggest of the five. The man yelled as the keen point pricked his flesh, swung round cursing, and seeing the sword in Ducket's hand flung Maurice from him and incontinently fled down the street. His uninjured comrades made all haste to follow him, and the only signs of the two minutes' conflict were the two forms prone on the ground.

The two sentries at the door of Prince Charles's house beyond had looked on with disinterested amusement: a brawl between Southrons was no concern of theirs.

'Hech! But yon's a bonny fechter,' laughed one, as Caleb picked up his club.

'Come, my lads,' cried Ducket.

Taking Maurice by the hand, he led him quickly across the street and up the stairs to his room, Caleb following, his broad face alight with happiness. Ducket lit a candle and pulled the curtains, while Caleb pressed Maurice into a chair.

'Are you hurt?' he asked anxiously.

'A bit battered, and rather out of breath,' replied Maurice smiling. 'You came in the nick of time, old lad.'

'Ay,' said Caleb. 'I knew it were Capplethwaite.'

Ducket locked the door, drew a chair beside Maurice's, and said gravely: 'This must be explained, my lad. It was only a few minutes ago I learnt of your disappearance. Young Seddon here—a bonny fighter, to be sure—declares it is due to Mr. Capplethwaite. I was loth to believe it, but—well, let me hear what you have to say.'

'Caleb is right, sir,' Maurice began.

'I knew it,' Caleb ejaculated triumphantly.

'Two nights ago I received a note bidding me attend a meeting by Kirkbarrow house. It was signed with your initials, sir.'

'I did not send it,' said Ducket. 'Go on.'

Maurice related all that had happened since he was trepanned in Kirkland. The incidents of his imprisonment he passed over hurriedly, so eager was he to come to the amazing conversation he had overheard. Ducket's face grew darker as he listened to the story. He did not interrupt, made no comment. At the end he asked one question.

'You are sure Capplethwaite was ignorant of your presence in his room?'

'Quite sure. When Spurr and he had gone, I waited a minute or two, then went out by the yard door. There were two men in the entry. I made a rush: others were coming down the yard. I broke through into the street, but was then tripped and seized. Mr. Capplethwaite will think that I had escaped direct from the warehouse into the yard. He will have no reason to suppose that I entered his house, much less overheard his conversation.'

'That is well. Now I want you to come with me. You, my lad' (to Caleb) 'will stay here until we return.'

He put on his hat, buckled on his sword, and led Maurice to the Prince's quarters across the street.

'I wish to see the captain of the guard,' he said to one of the sentries.

'Eh mon, and what's your name?' asked the Scot.

'Anthony Delacombe.'

'Aweel, bide a wee.'

He went into the house, and soon returned with a trim middle-aged Scot of whom Maurice was to see much in the days to come.

'Well, sir?' he asked, pleasantly.

'My name, Anthony Delacombe, is well known to Mr. Murray of Broughton. Through him I would crave an audience with his Royal Highness. I have an important communication to make, to his Royal Highness himself.'

'Come away; I'll put your name to Mr. Murray.'

Ducket and Maurice followed him into the house, to a room on the ground floor. There he left them. Presently he returned with a ruddy man of some thirty years, John Murray of Broughton, the Prince's secretary.

'Well, my friend,' said Murray, grasping Ducket's hand, 'I'd given ye up. Ye've brought your company?'

'You cut me to the heart, Mr. Murray,' replied Ducket. 'They have all failed me—all but one.'

'That's a verra fashious circumstance. I doubt the Prince 'll no be that glad to see ye. He's no in the best o' spirits the night. But come awa' in; I'm telled ye've a communication to make to 'm, and I'd like fine to see ye fetch up a bit smile on his glowering phiz. Come awa' in wi' ye.'

They followed their guide up the stairs to a large room on the first floor. The opening of the door caused the candles on the mantel to gutter, and it was by the light of the huge log fire blazing on the hearth that Maurice, whose heart was pumping hard, surveyed the scene. About a dozen gentlemen in Highland dress stood here and there about the room. One man, of great height and robust appearance, bent over a map spread on the table among bottles and glasses. The central figure of the group was a young man who sat back in a big chair, his elbows resting on its arms, his legs stuck out. His ruddy face was crowned by a light periwig, with his own fair hair combed over the front. He wore a tartan short coat; on his breast shone the star of the order of St. Andrew. Maurice knew that he was looking upon his Prince.

'Shut the door, Murray,' cried the Prince, in a clear voice with a slight foreign accent. He shivered. 'Ma foi! Il fait diablement froid.'

His handsome face was disfigured by a look of peevish discontent.

'Here's a good friend of ours, Sir,' said his secretary, signing to Ducket to advance: 'I beg leave to present to your Royal Highness Mr. Anthony Delacombe.'

The Prince's scowl lightened; he shot an eager look at Ducket.

'Eh, the gentleman who was to join us with a goodly company,' he said. 'Well, sir, you are welcome.'

He extended his hand. Ducket fell on one knee and kissed it.

'And your company?' continued the Prince. 'I trust it is large in number and perfect in equipment.'

The eyes of every one in the room were turned upon Ducket. His face was very pale; there were tears in his eyes.

'Sir, I have failed,' he said brokenly. 'My life's work is wasted. Of all those who promised me their swords there remains but one.' He glanced round at Maurice, still standing near the door.

'Nom de Dieu, it is the same story everywhere,' cried the Prince passionately. 'You have all deceived me, all. Where are the thousands who would spring to arms and crowd to my standard? Thousands! In these weeks since we left Edinburgh there are two, and now two more, and one a boy! My lord, I take it very ill.' He faced the man who had been studying the map. 'Had I held to my plan and marched through Newcastle into Yorkshire——'

'Your Royal Highness would have stuck in the bad roads,' interrupted Lord George Murray bluntly, 'and Wade would have had you at his mercy. It is a principle of war not to risk a battle unless upon good terms. We have advanced thus far unmolested: the road to the heart of England lies open to us; my advice was to march by Carlisle; I hold to it, and I maintain that our best chance of drawing recruits is to push on with resolution.'

'Lord George Murray is always right,' sneered the Prince.

A flush mounted to Lord George's haughty countenance. Before he could reply Murray of Broughton interposed.

'Mr. Delacombe has an important communication to make, Sir, and I doubt ye'd better hark to 'm before we argy-bargy about what's done.'

The Prince turned towards Ducket.

'Well, sir?' he said.

'I crave permission for my young friend to tell the story, Sir,' said Ducket. 'His name is Maurice Nugent; he is the son of Paul Nugent, who came out for His Majesty your father thirty years ago.'

'I have heard the name,' said the Prince, looking with more interest at Maurice.

'Deed 'tis a good name,' said an elderly gentleman behind him—Sir Thomas Sheridan, who had been his tutor. 'I knew Paul Nugent: the King had no more devoted servant.'

'What have you to tell me?' asked the Prince. His mien had changed: he looked and spoke pleasantly.

Maurice stepped forward, collected himself, and in a few brief sentences related the plot he had overheard. The Prince shouted with laughter.

'My faith, gentlemen,' he cried, 'you remember La Fontaine's story of the basket of eggs! They will sell my skin, will they? But they must catch the bear first.'

'You take it lightly, Sir,' said Lord George Murray.

'What would you have me do? Shake in my shoes? At least I can trust my Highlanders.'

'But you will send instantly and arrest these villains, Sir.'

'Not I, I assure you. And I beg you, gentlemen, to keep your lips locked. A pretty story it would be to fly abroad, that an attempt was made to kidnap the Prince Regent by his loyal subjects for the sake of thirty thousand pounds! No, no; it will be time enough to arrest them when they have actually made the attempt. It will be amusing. I thank you, Mr. Nugent. Your pleasant tale has done me good. Come and see me in the morning. And you, Mr. Delacombe, do not take your failure too much to heart. You have done, I am sure, all that man could do, and I doubt not that your sword will do me excellent service.'

Thus graciously dismissed, Duckett withdrew, taking Maurice with him to his quarters for the night. Maurice was too weary after his recent experiences to remain awake and await the issue of Capplethwaite's plot. Next day he learnt what had happened. A body of gentlemen was secreted in the bedroom which the Prince was to occupy. Another band was hidden in the garden. About three o'clock in the morning there was a low whistle from the roof. A group of men emerged from Capplethwaite's Yard and rushed upon the sentries at the door of the Prince's house. They were instantly surrounded by Highlanders who dashed from their hiding-places.

Meanwhile the party on the roof, having prised open the trap-door before giving the signal, had descended into the attic. As the sounds of the fracas below reached them they poured downstairs, headed by Matthew Spurr, burst in the unguarded door of the room where they supposed the Prince lay asleep, and found themselves in the midst of a crowd of armed gentlemen. Rushing back pell-mell to make good their escape they were intercepted by a second band who had sprung out of the room opposite. There was a brief brisk mellay in the dark at the foot of the staircase. When candles were brought, two men lay dead in the passage, and the rest were easily captured. Before the dawn, Spurr and his fellow raiders, their hands manacled, were tied to the stirrups of a party of the Prince's Lowland horse, and despatched as prisoners to the castle of Carlisle.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH

THE PRINCE MARCHES OUT

Next day was Sunday. There was early a stir in the street, and Maurice, looking out of his window, watched with lively curiosity the knots of Highlanders who strode up and down, clothed in short coats and kilts, their bare knees blue with cold. They had discarded their muskets, but every man had his broadsword and dirk. Their strange appearance and soft lilting speech had the fascination of novelty for the English lad, and he studied them minutely: these were the doughty warriors whose charge had broken the English regulars at Prestonpans, and upon whose swords hung the fortunes of the Cause.

Duckett came into the room.

'You are up, my lad; that's well,' he said. 'The Prince is to see you this morning, you remember, and as his Royal Highness, after the night's ploy, will likely not rise till church-time, you had best ride at once to your farm, breakfast there, take leave of your friends, and bring away your best coat and your sword. The roads are hard: you will get there and back before service is over.'

'You think the Prince will accept my service?' asked Maurice eagerly.

'I haven't a doubt of it. By the way, that good lad of Seddon's has already gone. He set off before daylight to ease his parents' minds. I told him to announce your coming.'

'I must send a note to let Mr. Gilpin know that I have left his service, and indeed explain and apologize for——'

'Explain nothing,' Duckett interrupted.

'But surely I should explain that my absence was involuntary.'

'Explain nothing,' Ducket repeated. 'Indeed, set nothing on paper. The spoken word is air; *litera scripta manet*: the pen is a deal more mischievous than the sword. I will take care that Mr. Gilpin receives a message by a discreet person; you have been called away; he shall know nothing more—unless he already knows everything from Capplethwaite: there is some bond between the two.'

'Mr. Capplethwaite will no longer thwart me, I hope.'

'I think not,' said Ducket grimly. 'He will gain nothing now from either the success or the failure of the Cause, and some day he may have to come to a reckoning with me. He will not relish that.'

'And my property that he has in trust?'

'Whether the king be James or George the law is supreme. Gilpin is Capplethwaite's adviser; he will keep him within the law.'

By the time Maurice was dressed, Ducket had a horse ready for him at the door.

'Stick that into your cap,' he said, handing Maurice a white cockade. 'It will frank you through the Highlanders, who otherwise might take a fancy to your horse. You will find me here on your return.'

Scarcely any of the townfolk were to be seen as Maurice rode down the street. The town appeared to be given over to the Scotsmen. Their aspect was wild, but there was nothing offensive in their behaviour, and at the entrance to one of the yards Maurice saw a big yellow-bearded fellow dandling a young child, who was laughing merrily in his arms.

When Maurice drew near to the farm, the ringing of his horse's hoofs on the ice-bound road brought the Seddons to the door.

'Eh lad, this is a good sight,' cried John heartily. 'Mother hadn't a wink of sleep all night; she was in a terrible werrit.'

Nanette rushed forward and enfolded Maurice in a warm embrace.

'Ah chéri, il est atroce, l'abominable Capplethwaite!' she cried.

'He's gone,' said Caleb.

'Gone!' exclaimed Maurice.

'Ay. I saw him, over yonder, going towards Grange.'

Maurice laughed.

'I don't care for him,' he said.

'But he shall be punished,' cried Nanette. 'He has behaved wicked; he shall be put in prison.'

'I don't know about that,' said her husband cautiously. 'He's the lad's guardian, and I don't know but he was in his rights to keep the lad out o' mischief. And I reckon he's wise to take a holiday while the Scotsmen are in the town.'

'I don't care for him now,' said Maurice again. 'I've done with law. I'm going to join the Prince.'

'Ah, no, no,' cried Nanette. 'The war, it is terrible: remain here with us. What is the Prince to you?'

'I must go, dear,' said Maurice, placing his arm about her shoulders and leading her into the house. 'It was my

father's wish; it is my duty. I have come to say good-bye.'

'Ay, the lad mun go; he's a Nugent,' said John. 'But I'm right sorry. I bethink me thirty years ago; folk wouldn't stir for the King then; I doubt if they'll stir for him now. But a Nugent mun do what honour bids.'

'I mun go too,' said Caleb, stoutly.

His mother threw her arms about him, declaring with passionate tears that she could not part with him, imploring her husband to support her. John waited in grave silence until she had become calmer.

'I'd fain keep both the lads,' he said presently, 'but a Seddon mun aye follow a Nugent. Thirty years ago I rode out wi's father; we took never a scratch, neither of us: happen the lads 'll be lucky too.'

In vain Nanette pleaded that Paul Nugent's fate had been exile and ruin: Maurice replied that he had little to lose, and there was a chance of winning much. He reminded her that Caleb and he had been close comrades all their lives: that his father and John Seddon had been like brothers in the days gone by; and when John insisted that it would be a disgrace if Caleb was the first Seddon to break the bond that had held for centuries the good woman gave way, and staunching her tears, set about preparing her son's simple outfit.

The bells were ringing for service as the two lads rode into Kendal. The Scotsmen were flocking to the churches, not in ordered companies, but in irregular groups. Maurice recognized Lord George Murray and others whom he had seen overnight in the Prince's room, and looked expectantly for the Prince himself. But when he reached Duckett's lodging he learnt that the Prince was remaining within doors, for a reason that gave Maurice a little wondering amusement. It appeared that Dr. Simmonds, the vicar, had quitted the town on the approach of the Highland army, and the Prince had refused to attend a service conducted by the curate.

Duckett had arrayed himself in the seemly garb of a soldier. Maurice washed, put on his best coat, buckled on his sword, and stepped across the street with his friend. He felt a tightness in his throat when he found himself once more in the presence of the Prince. The Young Chevalier was toasting his toes before a roaring fire. His secretary, Murray of Broughton, was playing at cards with three others.

The Prince turned as his equerry announced the visitors. Cheerfulness glowed upon his handsome features, and he smiled gaily when he recognized Maurice.

'Ma foi! c'était bien amusant,' he said: it was his manner to speak French or English indifferently. 'I owe you, Mr. Nugent, a pleasant diversion and a good night's sleep. Your kidnappers hae sore heids the morn. You hear, my lords and gentlemen? I am becoming expert in the idiom of my ancestral country. Eh bien, Mr. Nugent, you are the youngest of the four English gentlemen who have not been afraid to espouse my cause. I have heard from my friend Sir Thomas some account of the services your father rendered to mine before I was born. The honour of the Nugents is a proverb. What say you to the offer of a captaincy in my army?'

Taken aback, Maurice could not at once find words.

'I cannot attach you to a regiment,' the Prince went on, smiling kindly: 'par malheur, my Englishmen do not yet make up a regiment, and the clans are fully officered. Besides, I take it that you know at present as little of military matters as some of my good friends here.' He smiled mischievously at the card players. 'Qui veut, peut. Your immediate services and your family record merit at least a captaincy; and I doubt not one or another of my generals can make good use of you.'

'It is a great honour, and I humbly thank your Royal Highness,' Maurice stammered.

'Cela va s'arranger,' said the Prince. 'Broughton, enter Mr. Nugent's name upon your list. He will draw from my chest pay equal to that of a captain in the service of the Elector of Hanover: what is it, Broughton?'

'Half a crown per diem, sir,' said his secretary.

'Not a great emolument,' said the Prince, 'but there will also be allowances—provided our coffers are replenished. You are a horseman, Mr. Nugent; I saw you from my window not long ago. I think, Broughton, you may have a word with my lord Elcho when he returns from church, and commend Mr. Nugent to him. Au revoir, Mr. Nugent.'

Maurice fell on one knee, kissed the hand extended to him, and backed to the door. His head was awl with excitement and happiness.

'A word wi' ye, Delacombe,' said Murray of Broughton, as Ducket moved to follow Maurice. 'You'll bide in or about this town. Gin we hae guid success, a wheen waverers will need organizing. That's your part, and I look to ye to implement your engagement. Ye'll no fail me.'

Ducket gave Maurice and Caleb dinner in his own lodging.

'You're to be congratulated, my lad,' he said heartily. 'Lord Elcho is a fine young nobleman, commander of the first company of the Prince's life-guards. They're all young Lowland gentlemen, and they lead the march.'

'I'm sorry you won't be coming with us,' said Maurice.

'So am I,' returned Ducket with a sigh. 'But Mr. Murray is right. The first victory will bring over the doubting hearts, and I must be at hand—though I fear the town is no longer safe for me. The pity is that the Prince's council would not risk a meeting with Marshal Wade at Newcastle. Wade is a dodderer, and the prestige won by the Highlanders at Prestonpans would have carried them half-way to victory. The choice of this western route gives time to the enemy, and I fear—Bah! the die is cast. If we lose hope we lose all. I trust that when the men of Lancashire and Wales see their gallant prince among them they will rally to him in their thousands. God save the King!'

They had hardly finished dinner when a messenger commanded Maurice's instant attendance upon Lord Elcho. Maurice came back in a quarter of an hour, flushed and eager. The cavalry were to march that afternoon to Lancaster in advance of the Prince, who would follow with the infantry next day. At two o'clock the lifeguards formed up in the market-place. Bugles blew, drums beat, and at half-past two the little body of 150 men clattered down the street.

Maurice felt a little shy and self-conscious among his new associates. He thought they eyed him with a certain supercilious curiosity, and he was not long in learning that a Scotsman's pride is pride of the highest degree. But he admired their martial appearance, in coats of blue faced with red, and scarlet waistcoats with gold lace, and drew good augury from their animation and high spirits. Caleb, he found, had to endure a good deal of rough joking at the hands of the servants of the officers, but the lad took everything with his usual stolidity, and by and by became a favourite with the rest.

The cavalry passed the night at Lancaster, and next day advanced to Preston, taking up their quarters in a village near the suburbs. Maurice had so far had no special duties to perform, and felt himself to be a mere looker-on. What he observed was interesting enough. On arriving at a town, Lord Elcho summoned the civic officials before him, proclaimed Prince Charles as Regent for his father King James the Third, demanded a contribution from the municipal treasury, and ordered the authorities to provide billets for the whole army of five thousand men. All these demands were meekly complied with. A sergeant was sent out with a drummer to beat up recruits, and returned perhaps with one or two of the ragtag and bobtail; there was no enthusiastic flocking to the standard. The people of the western shires were in fact in a state of resentment and alarm. At Chester they broke down the bridge over the Dee; at Liverpool they made haste to convey their valuables to the security of the ships lying in the harbour. Tales of the Highlanders' barbarity and shameless looting were spread through the country and created a panic—tales wholly unjustified, for the Prince's army, anxious to win adherents, was on its good behaviour during the southward march.

After a day's halt at Preston, where the Prince joined them with the infantry, the cavalry marched to Wigan and thence to Manchester, entering that town on the morning of November 29. A sergeant with a drummer had preceded them, and met them at the head of some two hundred recruits—a sorry rabble—whom he had managed to enlist. They seized the town bellman, and dispatched him in search of the mayor with a requisition for money. In the afternoon, when the Prince arrived, the mob cheered him to his lodgings in Market Street Lane, the bells were set ringing, and orders were given for a general illumination. Several persons of importance came and kissed his hand, and a great crowd watched

him through the open windows of his room as he sat at supper with his principal officers. Deceived by those demonstrations the Prince was in high spirits, and Maurice learnt from Lord Elcho's aide-de-camp that he had talked of nothing but the manner in which he should enter London, whether on foot or on horseback, what dress he should wear.

Without putting himself forward, Maurice had found one or two opportunities of being of use to Lord Elcho's officers in their dealings with the persons upon whom they were billeted, and the icy reserve with which they had at first treated him had begun to thaw. Those whose lodgings he shared discussed the march of affairs more freely over their evening meal, and he gathered up a good deal of what was common talk in the army. He discovered that there were frequent dissensions in the Prince's council. Prince Charles, ignorant and self-willed, was an easy prey to flatterers, and lent a ready ear to the suggestions of the hare-brained Irish adventurers about him. Lord George Murray, the General-in-Chief, on the other hand, could not bear fools gladly, and took no pains to disguise his distrust and contempt of the Irishmen. He in his turn was disliked and suspected by Murray of Broughton. The council was a house divided against itself.

Lord Elcho was a thick and thin supporter of Lord George Murray, and his subalterns were devoted to him and shared his views. The group with whom Maurice was quartered at Manchester opened their minds freely. They had marched far enough into England; they had received not the least encouragement from any person of distinction; the French had not landed; they had won no recruits except two or three hundred vagabonds; it was idle to pretend to set a king upon the throne of England without the consent of the people; they had better go back to Scotland before worse befell.

'And all these havers about what dress the Prince 'll wear intil London!' said one. 'Och, man, it's pitiful.'

They were not less despondent when, on reaching Macclesfield, they learnt that Marshal Wade was hurrying after them on their left rear, the Duke of Cumberland had marched northward, and his army was already in cantonments about Lichfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and other towns not far away, and a third army was mustering on Finchley Common for the defence of London. They awaited anxiously the decision of the council of war that was summoned to debate this serious news, and when they heard that it was resolved to push on by forced marches so as to get between the Duke and the capital they were cheered by the prospect of a battle, even though it sealed their doom.

It was on Wednesday, December 4, that Maurice was first called upon for special duty. Within a few miles of Derby he was ordered by Lord Elcho to ride forward with a trumpeter, inquire for the magistrates, and demand billets for 9,000 men. Involuntarily he showed his surprise. Lord Elcho laughed.

'Yes, we are only 5,000,' he said, 'but we must blow our trumpet loud. And I choose you because you are an Englishman; they may believe you are one of thousands.'

Maurice smiled, saluted, and rode off, glad of even this little break in the monotony of marching. His job was easier than he expected. Derby was stricken with terror at the approach of the rebel army. Most of the well-to-do inhabitants had fled, carrying away all their portable property of any value. Maurice had no need to assume an air of sternness and severity. At his demand, made formally in the name of the Prince Regent, the mayor hastened to assure him that the Prince would be heartily welcome, and everything possible should be done for the comfort of his army.

About an hour after, when the vanguard of some thirty men rode into the town, they were cheered by the rabble, the bells were set ringing, and bonfires were made in the streets. They were drawn up in the market-place, and sat their horses there, the centre of an admiring crowd, for two or three hours until Lord Elcho arrived with the life-guards. Soon afterwards the head of the infantry column appeared, marching six or eight abreast, the bagpipes skirling, the eight standards flying in the breeze. They filled the market-place. Then Lord Elcho summoned the town crier, ordered him to proclaim Prince Charles Edward as regent of the realm, and sent him to bid the magistrates appear before him in their official gowns. The man returned and tremblingly reported that the gowns had been sent out of town.

'They havena sent their sarks, I ween,' said my lord, smiling. 'I'll excuse them the gowns.'

On the appearance of the obsequious magistrates Lord Elcho inquired of the arrangements they had made for billeting the troops. He was assured that his orders had been punctually obeyed, and that bread, cheese, and beer were

ready for the soldiers. It had been impossible to prepare 9,000 beds, but where there were no beds the floors had been strewn with clean straw, and the magistrates hoped that the weary men would enjoy a comfortable night.

Prince Charles arrived in the dusk of the evening, marching on foot, as his custom was, among his Highlanders. A roaring crowd accompanied him to his lodging in Lord Exeter's house in Fall Street, and refused to disperse until he had shown himself at the window and bowed graceful acknowledgements to the loyal subjects of King James. Surely the tide was turning: the pealing bells, the blazing bonfires, the floods of beer, the shouting mob—what could all this mean but that the heart of England was sound, the strong arms of the men of England would oust the Hanoverian usurper from his stolen throne?

Poor deluded Prince! The rabble shouted as they would have shouted for a circus; the magistrates had rung their bells and kindled their bonfires to placate the barbarians whose resentment they dreaded. Derby furnished but three recruits; and meanwhile King George's armies were closing in upon the rebels.

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH

THE PRINCE MARCHES BACK AGAIN

That night, when Caleb came to Maurice's lodging to perform his usual duties as officer's servant, he wore a very long face.

'What ails you?' asked Maurice.

'I'm fair sick,' the lad replied.

'You look well enough: where's the pain?'

'It's nowt but march, march. I'm fair sick of it. I thowt it were to be fighting.'

'There'll be fighting enough presently,' said Maurice smiling. 'But *you* won't fight, you know. You've no gun, no sword: you'll be among the camp-followers.'

'I've got my fists,' said Caleb sullenly.

Maurice laughed outright.

'And very good fists too,' he said, 'but not quite the weapons for tackling the Duke's dragoons. Rest easy, old lad; there may be a chance even for your fists before we are through with this business.'

Maurice had to confess to himself that he shared Caleb's disappointment. So far not a blow had been struck. The army had penetrated to the heart of England; it had gained no reinforcements except the ragged Manchester regiment; the enemy was by all accounts within a day's march; yet the Jacobite leaders seemed bent on avoiding a battle, though the sole hope of rousing the sleeping loyalty of the country lay in winning a victory.

If he had known what was passing at the council of war then being held in the Prince's lodging his discontent would have turned to dismay. High words flew across the table. Lord George Murray, by whose advice the march had been pressed to Derby, had suddenly veered, and was now urging a retreat with all the force of his imperious temperament. The Duke of Cumberland with 12,000 men would be that night at Stafford: Marshal Wade was coming up by hard marches with almost equal numbers along the east road: another army was assembling north of London; to meet these thirty thousand regular troops the Prince had barely five thousand fighting men, ill-trained, ill-disciplined, with but thirteen pieces of artillery. The odds were too great. Expectation of a general rising had been deceived. The French

transports could not elude the vigilant British fleet. The only prudent course was to withdraw into Scotland, join up with the clans which were still gathering there, and keep the army together until a favourable opportunity of renewing the attempt arose.

Lord George's arguments were supported by his fellow Scots: even the Irish showed less ardour now that they were in touch with the enemy. The Prince stormed, cursed, passionately accused Lord George of betraying him. He declared for pressing on; the regular troops would never dare to fight against their lawful prince; they would desert their colours and flock to him: he would enter St. James's with as little difficulty as he had entered Holyrood House. The Scots were adamant, and the Prince broke up the council in a burst of rage, crying that he would have no more councils, would neither ask nor take their advice; he was accountable for his actions to nobody but his father.

All next day he persisted in his defiance. At nightfall he sullenly yielded to the inevitable: he had prevailed on not one single person to join him, and, sick with mortification, issued the order for retreat.

There was consternation among the regimental officers when the order was circulated among them. Hitherto the men had borne the hardships of an arduous march patiently, buoyed up by the hope of an easy conquest. They had beaten Johnny Cope, and thought themselves equal to any army of Southrons and the Elector's Hessians from oversea. They throve on self-admiration; how would they endure the humiliation of withdrawal from a fabulous enemy whom they had never seen? The bonds of discipline were slack: it would take little to madden them to open mutiny, and turn the retreat into a rout.

It was resolved to keep them in suspense. On the morning of December 6, powder and ball were distributed as before an action. It was hinted that Marshal Wade was at hand, and they were going to fight him. When they learnt the direction of their march, and suspicion grew rife among them, another artifice was adopted for their beguilement. It was given out that the Prince was marching to the relief of reinforcements from Scotland which were in danger of interception by Marshal Wade. When Wade had been beaten off the march to London could be resumed. The rumbling of discontent was for a while subdued, but the Highlanders tramped the frozen roads in sullen silence.

As on the southward way, the column was led by the cavalry, the guns and ammunition wagons were in the centre, the Highland regiments followed. Maurice was no longer attached to Lord Elcho's life-guards. Lord George Murray had assumed the command of the rear-guard, consisting mainly of the seasoned regiment of MacDonald of Lochgarry. In the early morning Maurice was summoned to Lord Elcho, with whom he found the Highland chieftain who had been captain of the guard at Prince Charles's lodging at Kendal.

'This is your man, Lochgarry,' said Lord Elcho.

Lochgarry gave Maurice a friendly smile of recognition. He had asked for the services of an Englishman as galloper.

'He'll do, my lord,' he said. 'He hasna the kilts, and will no be ower kenspeckle. I haena a doot he'll serve me fine.'

Maurice was as much pleased as Caleb at the change. It could hardly be doubted that the retreating army would be pursued. The brunt of any fighting would fall on the rear-guard, and Maurice felt that he would be spared the humiliation of following a campaign without once drawing his sword.

Riding with the rear-guard, he was an eye-witness of the demoralization that retreat causes in an army of irregular troops. The delusion of the Highlanders as to their destination lasted barely a day. Though unbeaten, they were fleeing. The Cause was lost. It was no longer to their interest to spare the people who had disappointed them: they would take full toll for their chagrin. At Ashburn appeared the first signs of disorder. They pointed cannon at the houses of the mayor and other wealthy inhabitants, threatening to lay them in ashes if £19,000 was not instantly forthcoming. They stripped people on the high road of their coats and shoes, and carried off all the horses they could lay their hands on. Stragglers broke from the ranks, and helped themselves to whatever their fancy coveted in the wayside farms. At Manchester they forced a way into the houses, and emerged with armfuls of loot. They defied the efforts of the officers to restrain them, and but for the steadiness of the better-led regiments, such as Lochgarry's, the Young Chevalier's army would have degenerated to a rabble of marauders.

There was excuse for the Highlanders in the severity of the weather. Incessant marching over ice-bound roads had worn their shoes to shreds. The first demand of the common soldiers at every village and town they came to was for shoes. At Lancaster, where the army halted a whole day, every tailor and every shoemaker in the town was employed in making shoes and cloaks, and their output under threats was prodigious. The Duke of Cumberland's army was only a day's march behind, and Prince Charles talked of awaiting him at Lancaster: it was a shame, he said, to go so fast before the son of a usurper; and since Marshal Wade was still crawling through Yorkshire, and could not get between the Jacobites and Scotland, Lord George Murray went off with a party of the Guards to choose the ground for an engagement. But learning from some Yorkshire Rangers, whom they made prisoners, that Wade had detached a body of light cavalry under General Oglethorpe to join hands with the Duke, Lord George sent the news to the Prince, who changed his mind, ordered the baggage to march at once, and the rest of the army to move off early next morning for Kendal.

It was the afternoon of Sunday, December 15, when Maurice rode by Lochgarry's side at the head of the rear-guard into the town he had left so hopefully three weeks before. The whole place was in an uproar. On the previous day the mayor had received an anonymous letter stating that the Highland army had been routed by the Duke of Cumberland. The news spread through the streets and yards, and when, a little later, the Duke of Perth with an advance party of 120 hussars rode through the town without halting, it was assumed that they were fugitives. It happened to be market day, and the market-place was thronged. As the hussars turned into Finkle Street, the mob suddenly fell on them with stones, clubs, and any weapons they could pick up in their hurry. The hussars fired a few shots, wounding four of the townsfolk, and the enraged populace, gathering strength every moment, chased the horsemen down Stramongate with volleys of stones. As they came to the bridge, a shot was fired from an adjacent house, and one of the hussars fell; whereupon his comrades let off their muskets in retaliation, and the mob dispersed.

Kendal had to pay dearly for the rash and hasty inference that the Duke of Perth led a defeated army. Less than twelve hours after the Duke's departure the Highland infantry marched in in full force, with bagpipes playing and colours flying. Already in a dangerous mood, they were enraged at the news that one of their hussars was slain. While the general was demanding of the mayor the payment of a heavy fine from the town's chest, certain of the common soldiers satisfied their notion of a suitable revenge by stripping wayfarers of their shoes, and breaking into houses that appeared to be worth plundering. They confined their attention to houses on the main streets, not venturing themselves within the intricacies of the yards.

Such was the scene of riot and plunder into which Maurice came riding among Lochgarry's regiment. Lord George Murray instantly issued stern orders against any further molestation of the citizens, and his authority for the moment prevailed.

Maurice was in something of a quandary. He knew very few persons in the town, and these would look askance on him as a rebel. Calling at Ducket's lodging he found that the drover was absent and had not lately been seen in the town. As the march would not be resumed until the morrow, it would be easy to obtain leave for an hour or two to visit the farm, but would such a visit compromise John Seddon? The men of Kendal were no longer indifferent towards the Jacobites; they were in a state of furious resentment, which might wreak itself on any one who had relations with the enemy.

In the end he decided to give Caleb leave for the day, and to ride over the fells himself in the dusk of the evening, when he might escape notice. They would ride back together. And he was glad he had so resolved, for when he reached the farm, he found there the man he most wished to see, Ducket himself.

'My good friends have allowed me to make this my head-quarters,' said Ducket. 'The town is too hot for me, thanks to Capplethwaite.'

'The wretch!' cried Mrs. Seddon. 'He is a monster of wickedness.'

'Not quite that, perhaps,' said Ducket, smiling faintly. 'He is like many another, careful for his own interests. "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." To hoard wealth is his ruling passion; it has made him treacherous, unworthy of trust.'

'You speak in charity, lad,' said John.

'And who of us doesn't need that?'

'But he doesn't deserve it. He hid away, Maurice, until the Prince had been gone a week. Then, when we had news that you got no support, and King George's armies were gathering, he came out as bold as a lion on the Government side. He threatened to throw our friend here into jail if he showed himself in the town——'

'He might have done so at once without giving me a chance,' said Ducket.

'Ah, but he was afraid you'd tell of his ill-doing with Maurice. Howsomever, you'll be safe here so long as you care to stay.'

'I leave to-night,' said Ducket. 'I can do no more in these parts. None of those I have fostered will come out for the Prince. I'll no more seek to persuade others, but will serve my royal master with my own sword. I go to Penrith; perhaps we shall meet there, my lad.'

Over the supper-table Maurice related the incidents of the past three weeks; then, about seven o'clock, he took an affectionate farewell and started back with Caleb.

On reaching his billet, he learnt from his fellow officers a disquieting piece of news. The Duke of Perth with his hussars had been sent on in advance to bring back reinforcements for the battle that the Prince believed to be imminent. But the deputy lieutenants and magistrates of Westmorland and Cumberland had been ordered by express messengers from the Duke of Cumberland to break up the roads, destroy the bridges, and use all possible means to harass the retreating army. There had not yet been time to accomplish much in the way of destruction, but the Duke of Perth had found every passage blocked by hastily levied bodies of militia, every bridge guarded. Through the whole of that Sunday he was chased from place to place, and though with resolution and courage he might have broken through the mob of Penrith townsmen and country people, he abandoned the attempt and scampered back ingloriously to the main body at Kendal.

The night happened to be fine, and Maurice went for a stroll with a lieutenant of the Glengarry regiment. The streets were deserted; the weary soldiers were sleeping off their fatigue in preparation for next day's march over the rugged hills. Maurice directed his steps towards Stricklandgate, intending to show his friend the lawyer's office where he had spent unhappy months. As they turned the corner of Finkle Street they were aware of a commotion on their right hand. Hurrying on, they saw a big figure shot out of a doorway, and fall sprawling on the cobbles. Behind him poured a group of hangers-on of the army, loaded with coats, shoes, boxes, bundles large and small.

The fallen man rose and tried to intercept them.

'Heavens! it is Capplethwaite,' cried Maurice. 'Come on, MacDonald.'

Drawing their swords they rushed up to the scene, arriving just as Capplethwaite was felled for the second time. At the sight of the officers the looters scampered away and disappeared.

'I hope you are not hurt, sir,' said Maurice, with his friend's assistance raising the fallen man from the ground. He was dishevelled; his coat was torn; his face showed livid in the starlight.

'Hurt!' he groaned. Then recognizing Maurice he burst out: 'This is your doing, you miserable puppy! You set a horde of scoundrels to rob me. You shall pay for this.'

'He's fou, forbye a doited dotterel,' cried the amazed Scotsman.

Maurice laughed. He remembered how Spurr had requited his good offices on the fell-side.

'You had better go indoors,' he said quietly, and turned his back upon the angry man.

Next morning he dropped in at Mr. Gilpin's office.

'Eh, you're back, then,' said the morose Dawson. 'Had your fill of rebellion, I reckon.'

'Not at all,' he replied. 'It's life; you're half dead here. Red blood is better than black ink. Your soul is strangled with your tape.'

'And your scrag will be strangled by the hangman, and where'll your soul be then?'

'There's no saying,' returned Maurice with a smile.

'Here's a letter for you.'

He handed Maurice a missive addressed in large straggling characters, and sealed with the impress of an anchor. It was from Captain Folkard.

'What's come to you, lad?' he read. 'I've had a mort of botheration with agents and providers and crew, but the *Good Intent* is ready for sea at last, and her hold is well stocked with a cargo that will fetch its price in the Indies. Being a man of my word I'm waiting for you, but I can't wait for ever, and I'm set on sailing in the first week of the New Year, so spread your courses and steer for the north. PS. Glasgow is sound for King George, so we'll have no trouble with rebels or other trash.'

Maurice smiled as he pocketed the letter. The Prince would be in Glasgow before New Year's Day.

'I'll find the old fellow,' he thought. 'He'll be surprised that I'm among the rebels. I wish I could go with him, but I've chosen my course.'

'Can I see Mr. Gilpin?' he said.

'I doubt, but I'll ask him,' said Dawson.

He returned in a minute.

'He won't see you,' he said. 'He'll have no traffic with rebels. And he bids you get out of the office at once. He's a reputation to keep up.'

'I won't soil it,' said Maurice somewhat huffily. 'Good-bye, Dawson. You think me daft, of course.'

'I do that. You're all daft, from the Pretender down to his flea-bitten gomerils of Highlanders. But I wish you no harm.'

Maurice gave him laughing thanks, and hastened back to his quarters. He was immediately summoned to attend Lochgarry.

'We march at once, Nugent,' said the Scotsman. 'But I'm gaun to leave ye here. Ride back along the road, and keek for the enemy, who canna be far behind. The weather's turned sour, and we'll hae a difficult march the day. Bide till ye get a glimpse o' Wully's vanguard, then whip up your nag and follow us. I'm thinking we'll see English blood ere the day's oot.'

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

THE HIGHLANDERS TURN AT BAY

Hitherto Maurice's duties as galloper had been confined to riding up and down the column with messages between Lord George Murray or MacDonald of Lochgarry and other officers. So far as progress in military service was concerned he was certainly hastening slowly. He never quite realized that the canny Scots, slow to give their confidence to any man, were testing him step by step.

Lochgarry permitted him to keep Caleb as orderly, much to the elder lad's joy. Side by side near the head of the Stramongate bridge they watched the army defile by up the hill: the Duke of Perth's hussars, brave in their red facings and gold lace, leading the van; other troops of cavalry following; then the Highland infantry, dirty, bedraggled, unkempt, worn thin by their prolonged exertions, yet marching with wonderful lightness, each man armed with musket, sword, dirk, and target; then the thirteen cumbersome cannon and the ammunition wagons with their escort; finally the picked regiments of the rearguard, with the Glengarry MacDonalds at the tail. A tired army, thought Maurice, but one that would still give a good account of itself if it came to a pitched battle.

'We won't go back through the town,' he said to Caleb. 'It will hardly be safe for us now.'

They cantered across the fields, crossed the Nether Bridge, and struck into the Milnthorpe Road. One or two persons whom they passed eyed them curiously, but nothing in their dress distinguished them as members of the Jacobite army, and at Lochgarry's suggestion Maurice had removed the cockade from his cap.

They rode on, past Sizergh Castle, and presently turned up a lane on the left that led to a wooded hill from the summit of which they would gain a view of a long stretch of the road towards Lancaster. Dismounting in the shelter of the trees, they tethered their horses, and sat on fallen trunks to watch for the appearance of the Duke of Cumberland's troops. It was a bleak bitter morning; the wind blew gustily from the north-west, sweeping masses of black cloud across the wintry sky. Though partly protected by the trees, they were soon chilled to the marrow, and Caleb suggested that they should return to the road and continue their journey. But Maurice, loth to run the risk of stumbling unawares upon the Duke's vedettes, insisted on their remaining at their watch post.

Hours passed. The sky became more lowering; a thin drizzle began to fall. They ate the bread and cheese Caleb had brought in a wallet, and drank from their leather flasks. Late in the afternoon Caleb declared that he saw horsemen moving towards them far down the road. They got into their saddles and waited. The dark mass gradually defined itself. Above blue cloaks they saw steel caps. These must be the Duke's dragoons. The road seemed full of them. It was time to go. They rode down the slope, galloped along the lane into the highway, and did not draw rein until they were breasting the hill that rises from the bridge towards Penrith.

Four miles from Kendal they came upon a scene of confusion. Some of the four-wheeled ammunition wagons had broken down. The miry road was strewn with wheels, shells, and grape shot. There were no means of repairing the wagons; they were indeed vehicles unfit for transport over steep hills, on broken roads always difficult and now rendered almost impassable by snow and ice.

Maurice's report that the enemy were less than ten miles in the rear brought the peril of the situation home to the anxious minds of Lord George Murray and his staff. It was almost dark; the Duke of Cumberland would not venture upon a night march through difficult country; but with morning light he would press the pursuit. The artillery could not be abandoned; some means of replacing the broken wagons must be found. A farm lay not far from the road, and thither the gunners were dispatched to seize upon all the carts they could find.

The main part of the army had proceeded on its way, but Lord George had ordered the rearguard to stand by the guns. A fierce storm of wind and rain came on. The Highlanders had no defence against its fury except the hedges that lined the road, and they lay the whole night through, drenched and sleepless in the mud. The ammunition was loaded on to the farmer's carts, and at dawn the march was resumed. Haggard and footsore, the Highlanders made slow progress over the steep fell, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that they reached at nightfall the village of Shap, only six miles from the scene of the breakdown, and half-way to Penrith. All day they were aware of the enemy's horse hovering in their rear, and when they halted a few shots were fired out of the dark, which caused them to remain a second night under arms without sleep or rest. Meanwhile the main body lay at Penrith, ten miles ahead.

At daybreak the rear-guard set off with the artillery for Penrith. On the summit of a hill half-way to that town they

saw a numerous body of cavalry; and from the loud clamour of their trumpets and kettledrums they supposed that the Duke's army had crept ahead of them to cut them off. Without waiting for orders from Lord George, who was in the rear, the commander of the foremost regiment resolved to rush upon the enemy, sword in hand, in a desperate attempt to cut their way through to Penrith. The Highlanders, weary though they were, dashed up the hill with incredible swiftness. Lord George saw their manoeuvre. The narrow road, blocked by the artillery, allowed no space for the rear regiments to pass; whereupon Lord George ordered them to break through the hedge and ascend the hill from the fields. Responding with a yell, the MacDonalDs made such good speed that they reached the top on the heels of the others. Their wild appearance and a brisk discharge from their muskets apparently terrified the body of light horse which had circumvented them. They fled in disorder.

The march was continued without a moment's delay. In less than an hour a wagon broke down, blocking the road. Seven or eight men rushed off to a farm about half a mile away, seized an empty cart in the yard, and hauled it to the highway. Within half an hour the ammunition had been transferred from one vehicle to the other.

At this moment Caleb, riding beside Maurice at the tail of the column, cried out that he saw dark objects moving on a hill about three miles to the left.

'Come and tell the colonel,' said Maurice.

Lochgarry gazed in the direction pointed out.

'Och, my laddie, they're bushes,' he said.

'Bushes don't move, sir,' said Caleb. 'I reckon they're sodgers.'

'You're scunnered,' said Lochgarry. 'The Duke's on the road behind; he's no had the time to march round on our flank.'

'I reckon I'm right,' the lad persisted stoutly, 'and that you'll see in an hour.'

A dip in the ground shut off the view; but the troops had only just passed the cross-roads when from the left came the clatter of hoofs and the jingle of accoutrements.

'Hech: the laddie's in the right,' cried Lochgarry.

Ordering the artillery to press on with all speed he wheeled his regiment and formed them up across the road. It was bordered on either side by a ditch and a stiff thorn hedge, so that the enemy could not surround the Highlanders or attack them on a broad front. There was no time to prime their muskets; the Highlanders met the charging dragoons with their swords, and held their ground so stoutly that their assailants drew off. Then they doubled to overtake the wagons, now a hundred paces ahead, wheeled again, and received a second charge as firm as a wall. The running fight continued for about a mile; then the detachment of dragoons gave up the contest and halted to await the main body of the Duke's cavalry, hastening by forced marches along the high road. It was clear that the retreat could only be secured by a rear-guard action. Lord George Murray dispatched a courier to acquaint the Prince at Penrith with the situation and to bring back reinforcements. At the same time he ordered the artillery to make all speed through Penrith, and not halt until they reached Carlisle, sixteen miles ahead.

The courier returned with orders from the Prince to avoid an action and follow him to Carlisle without delay. Meanwhile the rearguard had reached the village of Clifton, and on the open moor, half a mile behind, the Duke of Cumberland's dragoons, five hundred in number, had already dismounted, and were advancing in two lines. A larger force of horsemen was gathered in their rear.

Lord George rode up to Lochgarry.

'Will your men fight?' he asked.

'Ay, they will that,' was the reply.

'Then we'll say nothing about the Prince's order,' said Lord George.

He called up all the officers, addressed them individually, and in a few hurried words explained his dispositions. It was already dusk; if they could check the enemy until darkness fell they might make good their retreat.

The Highlanders were ordered to conceal themselves behind the hedges that crossed the moor on either side of the highway, and reserve their fire until the enemy came within pistol shot. Then they would fire, taking care not to enfilade their comrades on the opposite side, and follow up with a charge, but not to pursue across the moor. All the officers sent their horses to the rear, and took post on foot with their men.

Maurice was throbbing at the prospect of his first fight. At last had come the opportunity of using his father's sword in the cause of his sovereign. Beside him in the shelter of the hedge crouched Caleb, gripping the hilt of the sword with which he had managed to provide himself. All along the hedge the Glengarry men lay expectant, silent, or muttering ribald jokes about Geordy and Geordy's Wully: how they would tread down their turnip-field dykes and send them packing back to Hanover.

It was now an hour after sunset. The moon peeped out fitfully from among scudding banks of cloud. Except for occasional 'popping shots' the Duke of Cumberland's dragoons had made no sign. At last there were bugle calls, words of command, and the Highlanders, peering through their hedges, saw the yellow belts and steel caps of the enemy gleaming in the moonlight as they moved in line across a hollow of the moor. A few minutes of breathless suspense, then the word rang from Lord George's lips, and on both sides of the road a brisk fire burst open the advancing ranks. 'Claymore!' shouted Lord George. The Highlanders flung down their muskets, drew their broadswords, sprang through or over the hedges, and with a rousing slogan threw themselves pell-mell upon the enemy. It was their immemorial way of fighting; many a victory had they won by the sheer impetuosity of their charge.

And now the air rang with the dreadful sounds of conflict: cries and answering cries, the crash of steel upon steel, the groans of wounded men. Maurice, carried forward among the rushing Highlanders, found himself in the midst of a furious mella, and dealt flashing blows right and left upon the belted dragoons. Close beside him Caleb was lustily plying his sword, using it like a hammer upon the steel caps. It snapped in two; many swords were broken that night; but Caleb had not the resource of the Highlanders, who when they lost their swords seized their dirks, and 'did their business in the better way'. Caleb had no dirk. The dragoon he was engaged with had his sword uplifted to strike, but the nimble lad dodged the descending arm, drove his fist full at the strapped chin, and sprang over the tumbled body in the wake of his master.

On both sides of the road the fury of the Highlanders' charge broke the ranks of the dragoons, and discomfited, they fled to their supports in the rear, sped on their way by flanking fire from a stone dyke behind which a detachment of the Glengarry regiment was posted. Obedient to their general's orders, the Highlanders did not chase them far, but returned to their hedges and recharged their muskets, expecting to hold their positions through the night and fight a pitched battle in the morning with the aid of reinforcements. But there was no sign of a renewed attack from the enemy, and after some hours word was passed through the ranks to retire silently.

This half-hour battle of Clifton Moor was the last ever fought on English soil. Both sides claimed it as a victory, the Duke of Cumberland because he had driven the Highlanders, as he said, from the most defensible village he ever saw; Lord George because he had checked the pursuit and given time for the main body with the artillery to get away. The honours rest with the Jacobites. They had suffered little loss; no officer was even wounded except Lochgarry, who was slightly hurt in the knee; and the check inflicted upon vastly superior forces deferred for months the battle that was to crush finally all hope of a Stuart restoration.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST

THE PRINCE FIGHTS HIS LAST BATTLE

It was Christmas Day. Maurice rode beside Lochgarry as Lord George Murray's column marched into Glasgow. There was no bell-ringing, no sign of welcome; the people watched the entry in sullen silence.

Among the spectators who stood in the slush at the edge of Glasgow Green was a short, stout, swarthy seaman whose face wore an air of cynical amusement. Suddenly his eyes lit up; he started forward, with a cry of 'Ahoy there!' and fell into step beside Maurice's horse.

'You don't mean it, lad!' he cried in his deep bellow. 'You don't mean to say you've signed on with this rag-tag crew.'

Maurice leant down and grasped Captain Folkard's hand. He felt a trifle embarrassed.

'I'll come and see you, captain, as soon as I've stabled my horse,' he said.

'The same place: Sandy McWhirter's in the Gorbals,' said the captain, pulling at his beard as he fell back.

An hour later Maurice entered the narrow close that led to the captain's lodging.

'I'm right glad to see you,' said the captain, meeting him at the door. 'But what in thunder are you doing among these rascals? You might have knocked me down with a feather when I sighted you. D'you mean to tell me you've signed on with the Pretender?'

'With the Prince, captain. I couldn't do anything else.'

'Couldn't do anything else!' roared the captain. 'But the vessel ain't seaworthy; she's heading straight for the rocks. I wouldn't have believed it of you. Sit ye down, and spin your yarn. Was it Capplethwaite drove you to this?'

The captain listened patiently as Maurice related all that had happened since their last meeting.

'Well, I can't gainsay ye,' he said, at the end of the story. 'I'm not the man to set a lad against his own father's wishes. But I'm main sorry, that I am. There's no good in it. Your Prince will be wrecked, and then what'll become of ye!'

'He's never lost a battle yet,' cried Maurice, with spirit.

'How many has he fought? By all accounts he's steered clear when the word should have been for close action. He beat Johnny Cope, for sure, but Johnny is a duffer. Cut loose, lad, and come wi' me. I've been waiting for you.'

'I wish I could,' sighed Maurice. 'I'm afraid you're right. Nobody in England stands for the Prince; the people here don't want him, judging by their glum faces to-day. But you wouldn't quit a sinking ship, captain.'

'I would, if there were a sound one alongside. There's no sense in drowning when you can get a dry berth. But I won't plague you, lad. I'd wait for you still if I could, but I can't afford it. I'm bound to pay my crew. I must sail in a week.'

'How long will you be away?'

'That's more than I can tell. Maybe a year, maybe five. It depends on wind and weather and the luck of my trading. When I come home again you'll be a full-fledged lawyer, I suppose.'

'Not I. If I don't get a bullet in me I shall go to sea. Who knows?—perhaps you and I will meet again in the Indies.'

'Ay, who knows? Well, lad, there'll be a hearty welcome for you from Elijah Folkard if our courses do cross. You'll come down to the Broomielaw and see the last of the *Good Intent*?'

'If we are still in the town, be sure I'll be there.'

And a week later, early on the morning of New Year's Day, Maurice and Caleb stood side by side on the quay, and watched the barque move slowly out on the tide and disappear into the mist that shrouded the river.

Two days afterwards the army left Glasgow, the Prince with one column marching to form a junction with reinforcements from the north and then to besiege Stirling, Lord George Murray with the second to Falkirk, intending if possible to advance to Edinburgh. But Edinburgh was now in the hands of the King's troops, under the command of General Hawley, who moved out to meet the rebels. Lord George joined forces with the Prince at Bannockburn, and the Jacobites cherished high hopes that their cause would triumph on the field where, four centuries before, Scotland's independence had been won. The army was drawn up in line of battle, awaiting an attack from Hawley. Finding that he did not move, Lord George took the initiative, led his men across the moor south-west of Falkirk, and descending from a hill in the midst of a violent rain-storm with the wind behind him, fell upon the royal forces just as they had finished dinner, and threw their first line into disorder. The Highlanders were quick to seize an occasion so favourable to their tactics. They swept down the hill, firing as they ran, threw down their firelocks, and rushed upon the enemy with their swords. The royal troops broke before the impetuosity of the attack, and in a few minutes were fleeing for their lives.

From that moment the Prince's fortunes declined. After the battle great numbers of the Highlanders deserted to visit the homes from which they had been absent so long. The news of Hawley's defeat brought the Duke of Cumberland in hot haste from London, whither he had returned after chasing the Jacobites over the Border. Hopelessly outnumbered, the Prince was once more compelled to retreat, marching over mountain and glen until he reached Inverness. Meanwhile King George's troops moved after him relentlessly, part through the Highlands, part by sea along the east coast, and on April 15 the Duke of Cumberland had established himself with a large and well-equipped army at Nairn, four miles from the Prince's head-quarters at Culloden.

Early on the morning of that day the Prince's forces were drawn up in line of battle on an open moor. Maurice was surprised to find Duckett among the officers of the Glengarry regiment. They had not met since that December day when they had parted at the farm, Duckett having been constantly with his friend Murray of Broughton in attendance on the Prince.

'You are with us to-day?' said Maurice after warm greetings had been exchanged.

'Yes. You knew that Broughton was ill? John Hay has taken his place, and as he and I do not agree I have asked Lochgarry to make use of me. You and I will ply our swords together.'

'We shall fight, then?'

'We must,' replied Duckett gloomily. 'It is a pity; Cumberland's army is twice the size of ours. The Scots think themselves vastly superior to us Englishmen, but they would be the better of our discipline. Hundreds of them have slipped away home to sow their fields; they come and go as they please, and pride themselves on not being mercenaries, as they call the Duke's troops.'

'But they take pay.'

'When they can get it. They have had none for a month past, and Broughton was at his wits' end to keep them together. His illness is a calamity. Hay has a crotchety temper and no head. He is responsible for provisioning the troops, and he has boggled it. There's very little food for to-day and none for to-morrow. That's why we are bound to fight. The prudent course would be to retreat into the mountains; there we might defy Cumberland's regulars for months, perhaps years; but to order hungry Highlanders to retreat would mean their scattering far and wide in search of food, and we should no longer be an army.'

'Then it is win all or lose all.'

'With all the odds against us—the odds of numbers and of ground. This flat open moor is ill-suited to the Highlanders. Charging over broken ground they are irresistible; you saw that at Falkirk; here a well-directed fire from the enemy will mow them down before they get to close quarters. I foresee the ruin of all our hopes, my lad. But we will do all that men may; you and I will keep faith and fight a good fight, and if death comes ... You remember that line of Shakespeare's: "Take honour from me, and my life is done." If we live, let us live with honour.'

As the hours passed, it became clear that Cumberland would not attack that day. Some one suggested a night march,

with all the advantage of surprise. The Prince and most of his officers adopted the idea with enthusiasm. During the afternoon vast numbers of the men stole away in search of provisions; but the Prince continued keen for the attack, and at eight o'clock, when it was too dark for their movements to be perceived by the enemy, the march was begun. Before the vanguard had gone a mile, message after message reached Lord George Murray from the rear, entreating him to move more slowly. Through frequent halts it was one o'clock in the morning before they had got half-way. Upon Lord George consulting his officers, they all agreed that the sun would be up before they reached the enemy's encampment; it was hopeless to think of surprising them, and to attack an army double their number in daylight would be sheer madness. John Hay came up with a command from the Prince to hurry on, but nobody minded him, and at two o'clock, in sight of Cumberland's camp fires, the troops faced about and got back to Culloden just before dawn.

Maurice and Caleb lay under horse-cloths on the sodden ground. In the early morning they were stirred out of a heavy sleep by the clamour of pipes and drums. Lifting their aching bodies they found themselves in the midst of a scene of wild confusion. Officers on horseback were dashing hither and thither over the moor; Highlanders, singly or in groups, were rushing about, trying to find their regiments. The morning was dark and misty; a fine rain was falling; and in the mirk the toil-worn soldiers, roused from their too brief rest, moved as distractedly as frightened sheep.

Lochgarry came galloping up.

'Wully's on the march, Nugent,' he cried. 'I'm gaun to the Prince for orders. Our regiment's yonder.'

He waved his hand, and galloped off towards Culloden House. Some twenty minutes later, when he returned, the MacDonalds had formed their ranks, and stood shivering in the drizzle. Lochgarry called his officers about him. He was in a towering rage.

'These cursed Irishmen!' he exclaimed. 'O'Sullivan, it seems, is settling the order of battle, and he's put us on the left of the line. The ignorance o' the fule! He doesna ken that the MacDonalds have held the right four hundred years syne, and I doot the men will be in an ill mood the day.'

Since the glorious day of Bannockburn the MacDonalds had always been assigned by royal favour the place of honour on the right. The jealousy of the clans was notorious, and when the men of Lochgarry's regiment learnt that their wonted position was to be held by the Camerons and men of Athol, they burst into bitter complaint and lamentation. The change seemed an omen of ill fortune, and they shivered with chill despair.

The morning hours were spent in scouring the country-side for the Highlanders who had broken away from the main body. By eleven o'clock the line had been formed, the right resting on the boundary wall of a field, the left unprotected. The Highland foot regiments held a long front, on flat boggy ground. A short distance in their rear the cavalry were posted, and behind all, in the centre, was the Prince with his personal attendants.

Between eleven and twelve the Duke of Cumberland's army was dimly descried through the mist, about two miles away. Through the ranks of the Jacobites ran the final orders. The Highlanders were not to move until the word of command was given; then they were to discharge their muskets point-blank and rush in with their swords.

Maurice and Ducket stood side by side on the left of Lochgarry's regiment. Caleb held Maurice's horse a little in the rear.

'Is there any hope?' asked Maurice.

'Who can tell?' Ducket replied. 'The odds are against us—the number of the enemy, the nature of the ground; weariness, hunger, and discontent among our men. If we can break the Duke's regulars at the first charge, we may win, as at Prestonpans and Falkirk; the struggle must in any case be short.'

The MacDonalds in gloomy silence watched the wall of redcoats and bluecoats steadily advancing across the moor. They saw a detachment of the Duke of Cumberland's horse move across from his left wing to his right to reconnoitre the left of the Prince's army. The movement was hailed with a salvo from the Prince's artillery, and when the Duke's guns roared in reply, loud shouts broke from the ranks of the opposing armies, and the Highlanders jeered as they saw the horses that drew the English cannon sink in the marshland. But the gunners removed the horses and dragged the guns

across the bog to firmer ground. The cannonade was resumed; grapeshot flew into the Highland ranks; and the shouts of derision changed to cries of impatience, a clamorous demand to be led to the attack.

It soon became clear that the Prince's artillery was outmatched both in numbers and efficiency. His shots did little execution among the ranks of the English; but great gaps were appearing among the Highlanders. Angry murmurs burst from the galled Scotsmen; there were dangerous signs of restlessness; some broke their ranks and ran off, others flung themselves on the ground; louder and louder grew the cries for action.

The Duke's gunners had directed their attack mainly on the Prince's right and centre, and the MacDonalds on the left, suffering as yet little, had been held well in hand by their officers. They watched, indeed, in grim silence the havoc that was being wrought in the ranks of the rival clans. Presently one or two regiments in the centre, unable to endure the galling fire longer, threw off all restraint and dashed impetuously upon the English troops in their front. Met by a terrible fire from muskets and field-pieces they pressed on with the fury of desperation, and perished to a man upon the bayonets of the solid English infantry.

The Highland regiments on the right were unleashed at last. They fired one volley, then sprang forward with the speed of greyhounds, cleft a path with their claymores through the first line of the Duke's infantry, swept on exulting to the second, and had almost reached it when a devastating fire crashed into them from the steady English ranks. The Highlanders faltered, broke, and fled.

At the first sign of a check Lochgarry called Maurice to him.

'Nugent, this canna be tholed,' he said. 'Ride to the Prince, beg him to gie us the order to move to the right, tell him that his leal MacDonalds bide only for his word. See the Prince himsel', ye ken; dinna be put off.'

Maurice ran to his horse and was soon galloping round the flank of the second line towards the spot where the Prince was watching the battle, among a small group of horsemen. Before he reached the place he saw a sputter of earth just in front of the group. The horses reared, the group broke apart, and Maurice had come within a few paces when a second cannon-ball plunged into the ground near the Prince, bespattering his face with dirt. Next moment another ball killed the Prince's horse; he fell to the ground; and an instant later a fourth ball flew past; and struck the Prince's servant, standing with a second horse a little in the rear.

Maurice forgot his errand. The Prince was on the ground, alone; his scattered escort were endeavouring to control their startled steeds; the spare horse was scampering away. Maurice dashed after the frightened animal, caught its bridle, and wheeling round lugged it back to the Prince.

'Mount, sir,' he said, 'and withdraw out of range.'

The Prince turned towards him a pale, begrimed, agitated face.

'Je vous remercie,' he cried, leaping on the horse. 'Tout est perdu. Sauve qui peut.'

'Sir,' cried Maurice, remembering his mission, 'Lochgarry bids me——'

The sentence remained unfinished. Two of the Prince's Irish friends had come to his side, and between them he galloped away in the direction of Culloden. Maurice hesitated a moment. It seemed useless to pursue; the Prince had lost his self-control; no commands could be expected from him. A cannon-ball whizzed past Maurice's head. His horse reared and almost threw him. Casting one forlorn look in the direction of the fleeing Prince he wheeled round and rode back into the battle.

Meanwhile, Lochgarry, impatient of delay, had ordered his men to advance. They let off their muskets and had drawn their swords when they saw the regiments which had usurped their immemorial place in full flight across the field. In sullen anger they halted and turned their backs, re-formed to repulse with savage ferocity a charge of dragoons, and slowly withdrew. Their hearts were broken. They saw the Duke's infantry advancing like a solid wall; on their right flank a body of cavalry was preparing to swoop upon them. With a wail of despair they broke up into small parties, four or five together, and made all haste to seek refuge in the hills. Only the Duke of Cumberland's strange hesitation in

ordering pursuit saved them from annihilation.

Maurice's heart fell like lead as he rode through the disordered groups of fugitives. When he regained the spot where Lochgarry's regiment had stood there was no sign of them except the bodies of the slain, muskets, powder-flasks, broken swords. A figure sprang up from the ground.

'I knew you'd come back,' said Caleb.

'Where's Lochgarry?'

'Gone.'

'And Ducket?'

'I haven't seen him.'

'Which way did Lochgarry go?'

Caleb pointed westward.

'Then up behind me, old lad. There is nothing to keep us here.'

Maurice wheeled about, cantered diagonally across the moor, skirted the wall and pressed on, hoping to overtake his chief. The Highlanders had fled with such incredible speed that he passed only a few wounded men making their painful way. Presently he caught sight of a tottering figure struggling along with the aid of a musket as a staff.

'Delacombe!' he exclaimed.

His friend turned, and Maurice was startled by the pallor of his pinched features. A gory rent in his breeches proclaimed his plight. Maurice reined up; in an instant he and Caleb were upon the ground.

'You are hurt!' he cried, catching Ducket as he swayed.

'My leg,' murmured the stricken man. 'But leave me; the Duke will pursue; I would not——'

'Not a word more,' said Maurice, cutting him short. 'We will hold together. Caleb, help me to lift him.'

Together they hoisted him to the saddle, and supporting him on either side made all haste from the fatal field.

Ducket's strength was ebbing fast. Soon it became clear that he could not retain his seat. Some shelter must be found for him, some friendly hand to give him tendance. They had wandered from the main course of the fleeing army; there was nothing to be seen on the waste of the wide moor except a cottar's hut in the midst of a small croft. Thither Maurice led the horse.

At the gate he called. A bent old woman came to the door.

'My friend is wounded,' Maurice cried. 'Will you help him?'

The woman shook her head and uttered shrilly words in an unknown tongue. Ducket raised his hand and pointed to the white cockade in his hat, at the same time speaking a few words that Maurice did not understand. The woman flung up her hands and with strange moaning cries came hastily to open the gate.

'She laments for Prince Charlie,' murmured Ducket, as Maurice led the horse through.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND

THREE TRAVELLERS RETURN HOME

One clear midnight in the first week of June, three worn, tattered, footsore travellers dropped down the steep fell-side above John Seddon's farm. A dog barked somewhere as they approached the door. The shortest of the three gave a low whistle, and the bark changed to a joyous yelp. He rapped on the door; a window above was thrown open; a night-capped head appeared; a voice demanded 'Who's there?'

'It's me, Father,' said Caleb.

In a minute the door flew wide, and Caleb rushed into his mother's arms.

'Who's with ye, lad?' asked John, peering at the two figures in the background. 'Guid sakes!' he cried as they advanced, 'it's Maurice and Drover Ducket. Come in with ye; you're right heartily welcome. We've been wearying for news of ye. You look fair worn out, poor lads. Sit ye down; I'll soon rouse a fire, and you shall have hot broth to comfort ye.'

Caleb let down a long bundle from his back; it appeared to be a mass of bracken tied with wisps and tendrils, but it clanked as it fell on the hearth.

'Our swords,' said Ducket, answering the farmer's inquiring glance. 'We've kept them and our honour. All else is lost.'

'Ay, it were a mad, bad business, but it's over, thank God. I reckon you've a long tale to tell, and I've summat to tell you too. But you must eat first; you look fair clemmed.'

He went to the still open door, gazed carefully around, then closed it and shot the bolts. His face wore an anxious look, but he said little as he bustled about, helping his wife to prepare a meal.

When the travellers had fed and were sitting at ease about the fire, Ducket, the least sleepy of the three, related the story of their wanderings. They had remained for more than a week in the hut of the old Highland widow, who with true hospitality had fed and tended them, treating Ducket's wound with a decoction of herbs from her own garden. Her sons had followed their chief throughout the campaign. A few days after the battle one of them returned with news of its immediate sequel. The Prince had made no attempt to rally his broken forces. Abandoning himself to despair he had fled with a few friends. In the bitterness of his spirit he complained that the Scots had betrayed him and bade the faithful clansmen disperse and shift for themselves.

Considering what to do, the three fugitives had decided, when Ducket was able to travel, to make their way southward into their own country. For five weeks they had tramped, meeting with friends at every croft and bothie while they were in the Highlands, fed and entertained and sped on their way. Reaching the Lowlands, they stripped off all that marked them as soldiers; Maurice exchanged his coat for one of fustian; and, avoiding the towns, they followed a route which Ducket knew of old. They suffered no hardships, for there were Jacobites everywhere who were ready to assist them, and it was not until they came into Cumberland that Ducket thought it necessary to take precautions. For the past fortnight they had travelled mainly by night over the sheep-tracks, Caleb, as the least likely to be suspected, buying their food in the villages. When they reached the neighbourhood of Penrith all their little stock of money was spent, and for twenty-four hours they had had no food.

Ducket had proposed that the others should leave him. Though his work for the Cause had been conducted secretly up to the time of the Prince's invasion, he had come out into the open at Kendal, and could not doubt that his name was on the list of those for whom the authorities were raising the hue and cry. The country was no longer safe for him, but there was a chance that Maurice's part in the rebellion might be regarded as the escapade of a foolish boy, led away by his elders, and he would be allowed on promise of good behaviour to return to his employment. This suggestion Maurice had stoutly resisted. He would not shelter himself under any plea of youthfulness, and his brief taste of a life of action and adventure had confirmed his resolution to seek his fortunes on the sea. Captain Folkard was gone, but seamen were

to be found in every port, and he had made up his mind, after visiting the Seddons, to look for a vessel at Whitehaven or Liverpool.

'I don't know but what you're right, lad,' said John. 'And I'm not so sure that you'd be safe in Kendal even did you wish to follow the law. Mr. Gilpin wouldn't have you back, and Mr. Capplethwaite——'

'What of him?' asked Maurice as the farmer paused.

'There never were a man so strong for King George. He's a great man in the town now. He got up a petition to Government for compensation for the damages the folk suffered when Prince Charles's army passed through, and though I don't know that owt'll come of it, he's greatly cried up by the townsfolk, and there's a talk that he'll be elected mayor come November.'

The farmer again hesitated, with an uneasy look.

'He came up one day,' he went on presently, 'and asked me whether I'd heard owt of ye. "Nowt," said I: "happen the poor lad's killed." "I wish him no harm," says he, "and I shall do nowt against his interests. But it's only right I should tell you that if the Government think him important enough to proscribe him—and his name is against him—his property will be confiscated, and I shall be powerless to prevent the little I hold in trust for him from being seized." That was after we had news o' the battle.'

'Ah, the wretch! He will take it for himself,' cried Nanette.

'I shan't bother my head about it,' said Maurice. 'If I'm proscribed, it's gone; if I'm not, I can't claim it for four years, and by that time perhaps I shan't want it, though I'll take care that Mr. Capplethwaite doesn't have it, however trifling it may be. I shall leave the country as soon as I can, and in four years I may be as rich as those Indian nabobs we hear about.'

'I'm not afeard for you, lad,' said the farmer, smiling. 'It's our friend Ducket I worrit about. Th' other day an officer rid up from Carlisle and asked me did I know the whereabouts o' one Anthony Delacombe, alias Ducket, who was wont to tramp the fells in the disguise of a drover and was now wanted for high treason against his Majesty King George. He showed it me writ down in a warrant, signed by the Lord Lieutenant. I couldn't deny I knew the man, but I said I hadn't set eyes on him for six months or more. And then he bade me take notice that if I met this pretended drover, and neglected to hand him over to some officer of the Government, I should be deemed—there, I can't mind o' the long words he used, but their meaning was that I'd find myself jailed, or transported, or likely strung on a gibbet.'

'John, you never told me that,' cried his wife, glancing quickly at Ducket.

'True, my dear; what need to bother you?'

Ducket had got to his feet.

'You should not have let me in, Seddon,' he said. 'Heaven forbid that I should bring trouble upon you and your family. I'll be gone.'

'Nay, lad, but where'll ye go? You don't suppose I'd turn ye out now, not for all the magistrates and lord-lieutenants in the country.'

'I know that, my friend. But the price is too high. It's my purpose to sail away to France; the King may still have some use for me there; and I doubt not I can find some nook or cranny where I may shelter for a while. I can count on your help to find me a vessel?'

'Ay, that you can. You daren't appear openly in the ports; I reckon they're watched. But I'll go down myself to Milnthorpe. A smuggling vessel——'

'Ay,' cried Caleb, so loudly and emphatically that the others jumped.

'What is't, lad?' his father asked.

'I know. Drover Ducket can hide in the pele tower,' said Caleb.

'A good notion,' said Maurice. Turning to Ducket he continued: 'We found a secret way into the tower yonder. It has been used as a smuggler's store, but there'll be no smuggling until the days are short. Likely enough no one will visit it for months.'

'It's on Spurr's land, lad,' said the farmer doubtfully.

'Spurr—what has become of him? He was sent a prisoner to Carlisle.'

'And released when the royal duke took the town again from the Jacobites. He got back after Christmas, a very sick man. He went away to Grange, for the sake of the sea air, and since his return there's bad blood between him and Capplethwaite, over the smuggling, I reckon. He's in Kendal a good bit.'

'Then there's little risk of his going to the tower, and if he does, there's the chimney and the secret passage for a refuge. We might hide there for months.'

'We?' repeated Ducket.

'Yes. Your danger may be mine, and in any case I'll share your lot, if you'll have me as a companion. Remember, I shall be waiting for a vessel too.'

'You'll need summat to eat,' said Caleb practically.

'Of course we shall,' said Maurice. 'Nanette will provide us with a good stock to begin with, and if we need more, Caleb can bring it to us by night.'

'Ay, but I'll be there,' said Caleb.

'No, no, you'll be more useful outside. You don't need to hide; the authorities won't hunt you down.'

'Ay, but Father says a Seddon mun aye follow a Nugent, and I'll follow ye right enow.'

'Well, you shall do what is best for us all. And as it will be light in a couple of hours we had better start at once. There'll be nobody on the fells at this time of night to see us.'

About two o'clock in the morning three laden figures crept along the bank of the beck until they reached the niche in the crag where Maurice and Caleb had made their discovery more than a year before. There was light enough in the summer sky to guide their steps, but grass had overgrown the metal slab, and it was some little time before the entry was made ready.

'You must go back, Caleb,' said Maurice decisively. 'Any one passing here in daylight would certainly see that the soil had been disturbed. We shall trust you to smooth all the signs away.'

'Ay, I reckon I mun,' sighed the lad.

Maurice and Ducket in turn dropped into the underground passage. Caleb lowered after them their swords, a bundle of blankets, a basket well stuffed with provisions, a jar of beer, with mugs and plates, knives and forks, and one or two other conveniences. He waited until there came reverberating through the passage a call to show that all was well; then he replaced the slab, did his best to remove all traces, and trudged back to the farm.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD

ME. CAPPLETHWAITE IS HELD TO RANSOM

There were changes in the tower room since Maurice had last seen it. The shutters of the window—or rather door, for the frame-work was unglazed—had been thrown back, and the perpetual twilight of the northern summer night showed that most of the goods that had crowded the floor had been removed. A pile of empty sacks stood in one corner; two or three empty kegs and broken boxes lay about among the straw; the rope ladder dangled from a hook in the wall; coils of rope lay beneath it. No doubt the place had been partly cleared at the close of the smuggling season.

The two men, after a cursory glance around, spread their blankets, removed their shoes and outer garments, and were soon asleep.

Wakened by the sunlight streaming in at the window, they rose and discussed the position as they ate and drank.

'This will serve as a fairly comfortable inn, provided we are not disturbed,' said Ducket, looking round with satisfaction. 'The room appears to be used for nothing but smuggled stores, and we shall be gone long before the free-traders start their work again.'

'We may have to stay longer than we think,' said Maurice. 'We are at war with France; it may not be easy for John Seddon to find a vessel that will land you on the enemy coast.'

'War matters nothing to the free-traders. A common interest links them on both sides of the Channel, and Seddon should be able to discover a seaman in Milnthorpe or Morecambe who will carry me across—for a consideration. It would cost less in the autumn.'

'I wish Captain Folkard were in the neighbourhood. But I suppose he is by this time somewhere off the coast of Africa.'

'You need not wait for me, Maurice. I depend on a coasting vessel; you require one going a long voyage, to America or the Indies—unless you will accompany me to France.'

'It is good of you to propose that, but I have set my heart on going far over the world. I have done what my father bid; the Prince has cast us off; I am no longer bound to him. But I will not leave you until I see you on your way.'

'Your companionship is very welcome, for time will hang heavily these long summer days. We must devise some occupation to while away the hours.'

They spent a part of the day in sword exercise. Now and again they looked cautiously out of the window across the fells towards Kendal. Nothing was to be seen except the distant figures of solitary shepherds with their flocks. Maurice went with Ducket up the stairs to the roof, and showed him the shining waters of Morecambe Bay. As evening drew on, they reclined on their blankets, and Ducket held Maurice spell-bound with stories of his adventures at home and abroad. The day had not seemed long.

In the dead of night Ducket, who slept lightly, was awakened by a slight sound. He half rose, grasping his sword. From the chimney came a hoarse whisper: 'It's me.'

'Caleb! What's your news?'

'Nowt but Father's gone, and Mother's sent ye some books, and a hank o' wool, and some knitting-needles. She said ye mun have summat to do to keep ye cheerful.'

'Give her our thanks, my lad,' said Ducket. 'I shall have to invent a way of knitting, unless Maurice can teach me.'

'I can't,' said Maurice, now awake. 'Caleb, you mustn't come every night. Our food will last another two days. Don't

come till then unless you have news. It's not worth while to run the risk of being seen and tracked. One of Spurr's shepherds may be about.'

Caleb scoffed at the idea that he could not elude a shepherd, but he gave a reluctant promise to do as Maurice wished.

'It is clear that we must take turns in keeping watch,' said Ducket, when the boy had gone. 'Unlikely as it is that any unfriendly person will approach the tower during the night, it is only prudent to guard against surprise. Caleb was right among us before we knew it.'

The next two days passed undisturbed. On the second night, about eleven o'clock, Maurice, who had taken the first watch from sunset till midnight, was looking out of the window. The air was clear, and the contour of the fell three or four hundred yards away was sharply cut against the sky. Not a sound broke the stillness except the tinkle of a sheep-bell far off, and the drone of a beetle that flitted past. The watcher scarcely heeded sound or scene; his mind was busy with memories of the past, and dreams of the mysterious future.

Suddenly his attention was caught by a number of dark forms on the rim of the fell. For a moment they were dimly visible against the blue background; then they disappeared. He could not tell at once whether they had moved towards him or away; but presently he saw black patches on the fell-side, coming directly towards the tower. They were too large and too dark for sheep; Spurr kept no cattle; but these moving objects were crossing Spurr's land, beyond which lay Kendal.

Maurice turned and wakened Ducket. Standing back at either side of the window they watched.

'Men,' murmured Ducket.

'Yes, and coming here,' was the whispered response.

The thoughts of both flew the same way. Had Caleb been tracked? Had the authorities sent a party to arrest the rebels? They waited until it was beyond a doubt that the tower was the men's objective. Then, without a word spoken, they turned into the room and began to bundle their belongings quickly and noiselessly into the back of the chimney. In a minute it was done. Maurice threw a glance around; they had left nothing in the room that would reveal their intrusion. But a space of the floor had been cleared for their blankets. This Maurice hastily strewed with straw.

Crouched at the head of the narrow stairway behind the chimney they waited, listening. There were voices below. Then they heard a succession of creaks.

'Some one is coming up a ladder,' Ducket whispered.

Heavy boots clumped upon the floor.

'Cut them loose and send them up,' said a gruff voice. Maurice knew it well.

A confused babel of protests and curses.

'Won't come, won't they?' growled the man who had entered the room. 'Come up, Dick, and you, Jacob.'

Creaks again; two other men climbed the ladder and dropped over the sill.

'Noose yon rope and sling it over the hook,' said the leader.

Soon there was the sound of a rope running over a hook. The protesting cries below were abruptly smothered.

'Heave, my lads.'

The men hauled on the rope; two men were hoisted through the doorway one after the other and lowered to the floor. A thin voice, which, husky though it was, Maurice thought he recognized, began to expostulate.

'Hold your gab,' cried the rough voice, 'or I'll gag you again. Tie them up, lads.'

The men's boots scuffled on the floor.

'Now get down, and stand by while I throw out the ropes. We'll make all sure.'

Again the ladder creaked; then there were thuds upon the ground. Maurice ventured to peep below the arch of the chimney-piece. Against the pile of sacking sat side by side a large figure and a small. Their features were just discernible. The prisoners were Capplethwaite and Gilpin: the jailer was Matthew Spurr.

Spurr sat down upon a keg.

'Now, Reuben Capplethwaite,' he said, 'I'm a man of few words. Here you are, and here you'll stay till you tell me what I want to know. You'll have a dose of the physic you gave young Nugent, and I reckon it'll work with you sooner than with he.'

He chuckled hoarsely.

'I've nothing to tell you,' said Capplethwaite. 'Must I repeat it? This is outrageous treatment. Mr. Gilpin, I call you to witness this man's infamous ingratitude. I made him; I put him into the Nugent estate which I had bought——'

'Ay, a mighty favour, wasn't it?' said Spurr. 'You've a kind heart, haven't you? Mr. Gilpin, this devil has made my life a hell for nigh thirty years. He's used me as cover for his own dirty schemes; he's took advantage of my necessities and made a slave of me. He got to know of a slip I made in my young days that would bring me to the gallows were it known, and he's held it over me like a sword. What I've done for him! And I've stood all the risks, and got all the knocks, while he's pouched the money. A worm'll turn; I'll stand it no more; I'll have what I want out of him, or by my soul I'll——'

'You've already got four hundred pounds,' said Capplethwaite morosely.

'Ay, it was a rare slice of luck that I dropped in upon you just when Mr. Gilpin was paying his debt. I reckon you've made his life a misery too. I reckon you've squeezed him and bled him same as you have me. How much did you really owe him, Mr. Gilpin? Three hundred? two? one? No matter: you've turned, like me. I've got the four hundred, but you've got his receipt; you'll be none the worse; I've no quarrel with you.'

'Then why subject me to this—this unpleasant treatment?' asked Gilpin mildly.

'Ah, because you know too much. I'm bound to hold you safe until Capplethwaite owns up. Another six hundred: that's all I want; with that in my poke I'll quit this cursed place and start somewhere afresh, old as I be. And he's got thousands stowed away somewhere, the miserly hound.'

'It's false!' cried Capplethwaite. 'I've nothing stowed away.'

'You're a liar. You've been seen counting your gold. What have you done with young Nugent's fortune? How much have you sneaked from 'Lijah Folkard's profits? Plague on you, I didn't come here to listen to your lies. Take your choice. Either tell me where you've hid your hoard, or I'll swing you out of yon doorway by the rope that swung you up; ay, and that's swung up many a keg for your profit. I'll give you till sunrise. You've a few hours to make up your mind. Own up, or by my life you'll dangle yonder as a warning to misers and traitors.'

'You wouldn't dare——'

'Wouldn't dare!' laughed Spurr. 'I know you, Reuben Capplethwaite; you know me. I've not much to lose; you've a good deal. You're to be mayor of Kendal, they say! Well, think it over. You may gather another hoard, but you can't buy another life. Likely Mr. Gilpin will give you a word of advice. I'll leave you—till dawn.'

He clambered out of the doorway and down the ladder. His voice was heard ordering his men to remove it and to

keep a good watch. Then there was silence. Spurr was hastening across the fell to his farm; a bag of money dangled from his hand.

'Gilpin, I tell you it's a delusion,' said Capplethwaite. 'I've no hoard. I ask you, would I be such a fool as to secrete coin in the vicinity of the Yard?'

'As you know the Yard, it does seem a little odd,' said the lawyer, with a touch of sarcasm. 'But there's a persistent rumour in the town that a hoard exists. It will be hard to persuade Spurr of the contrary.'

'But if I had—and I deny it—you, a man of law, would not counsel me to yield to this infamous threat. It is blackmail; it is a capital crime. And the wretched man would not dare to murder me. You do not think he would proceed to that extremity, Gilpin?'

'You know him better than I,' said the lawyer, drily. 'He may intend merely to terrify you. But I admit he seemed to be in earnest. As a matter of principle I should advise a client to resist such an attempt at extortion; but in the present circumstances both client and adviser are the victims of *force majeure*. On the whole it would seem best to comply.'

'I cannot; I protest on my honour I cannot,' cried Capplethwaite in agitation. 'I am in straits myself. I would not have pressed you for that four hundred, Gilpin, had I not been compelled. My ventures have been unlucky; I was robbed of a very large sum by a pack of rascally Scots——'

'Ah! There *was* a hoard, then?'

'I own it, Gilpin; I own that I had put away something for my latter years, when——'

'When you have to give an account of your trusteeship,' added the lawyer, as Capplethwaite paused. 'It is time for me to be frank with you. You have had me under your thumb. Spurr is not your only victim. I deplore that I have not had the courage to throw off your yoke. You are not Maurice Nugent's lawful trustee. The trusteeship was left to your father. No doubt the courts would have transferred it to you had you moved them: you chose not to do so; I kept silence, because you had me in your power. Your receipt releases me; you must choose another lawyer, Mr. Capplethwaite. My last word of advice to you is, get rid of Matthew Spurr. He knows too much about you for your comfort.'

'For mercy's sake, Gilpin, do not abandon me.' There was now a note of terror in Capplethwaite's voice. 'Think of some device, some trick, that will save me from Spurr. Threaten to bring him to book for his violence. He will spare you; he said he had no quarrel with you; you can testify against him.'

'Threats will not move him. And I foresee that he will take steps to keep me quiet until he has got himself out of harm's way. You have brought me to a pretty pass.'

'I beg you, I beseech you, save me, save me——'

Maurice nudged his companion. They crept silently down to the foot of the stairway.

'Is the wretched man speaking the truth?' Maurice whispered.

'About his hoard? I am inclined to think he is.'

'Surely Spurr will not carry out his threat?'

Ducket shrugged.

'Who knows? He has evidently a long grudge to pay off. He may dare anything. But we can't allow Capplethwaite to be hanged.'

'No. We must release him and let him and Gilpin out by our secret entrance. But stay. If we do that, when Spurr finds them gone he will certainly search until he discovers the exit through the fireplace. We shall be trapped—unless we go

too.'

'It will soon be light. We could hardly escape notice by Spurr's men. John Seddon is working in our interest, and the lad Caleb will be here soon, bringing us food. We could send him to Kendal for assistance.'

'And that would be your ruin. The better course would be to send him after his father, and meanwhile defend ourselves here—close the shutters, and keep the rascals off with our swords.'

'Yes. If we can hold the place for one day.... Come.'

They returned to the chimney. Maurice dropped lightly into the room. Capplethwaite, not at first recognizing him, gave a gasp of terror.

'Be silent,' said Maurice, in a whisper, advancing across the floor.

He cut the men's bonds. Ducket joined him. They closed the shutters—a number of stout boards held together by cross-pieces, set together roughly, with gaps showing here and there between them. Then they laid the empty sacks beneath the doorway, and piled on them the boxes and kegs to form a reinforcement of the shutters. They worked silently but quickly. In half an hour they had done all that could be done. Capplethwaite and Gilpin, cramped by their long bondage, had looked on in amazed silence.

Maurice drew the blankets from the rear of the chimney and spread them on the floor for himself and Ducket.

'Now we have only to await the dawn,' he said.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH

SPURR PLAYS HIS LAST CARD

A silence of embarrassment fell upon the four men. Maurice was not inclined to enter into explanations; Capplethwaite's face, could it have been seen, would have expressed amazement at the presence of the men he had betrayed, coupled with a dubitative relief. It was Gilpin who first realized the situation.

'I am heartily glad, my lad,' he said, 'that you have escaped the edge of the sword. Doubtless I am not mistaken in concluding that you and your companion are fugitives from——'

'We will say nothing of that, Mr. Gilpin,' Maurice interrupted. 'Let me tell you that we overheard your conversation with Mr. Capplethwaite, and what passed between you and Matthew Spurr. We have interposed to protect you; I can't tell what will follow; this is not the time for the bandying of compliments.'

He remembered Gilpin's refusal to see him on his last day in Kendal.

Silence reigned again. Presently Maurice murmured to Ducket:

'It is time that Caleb was here.'

But Caleb did not come. The night drew on. Gleams of the dawn shafted through the gaps in the shutter. At length Spurr's voice rasped from without.

'Who shut that door?'

There was a confused murmur of voices. The four men in the room could distinguish nothing. It was well for their

peace of mind. For two men had dragged a short, sturdy, sullen boy before their employer.

'We cotched him, measter, carrying a basket of vittles and a jar of beer.'

'Eh, what's that? It's young Seddon. How did he know we had——' He paused. Illumination had dawned upon him. 'Guid life, my lads, here's luck for us all. The boy joined the rebels with young Nugent. Nugent's hiding in the tower, I'll swear, though Lord knows how he got in.' He turned towards Caleb. 'Rascal, is Maurice Nugent in yon tower?'

Caleb eyed him in sullen silence.

'Sulky, are ye? I'll make ye speak.'

He took a cudgel from one of his men, and belaboured the boy defenceless on the ground. Caleb pressed his lips hard together; not a word escaped them.

'Eh well, no matter,' cried the man. 'He's there right enow, my lads. We'll have him out. There's a price on the head of every rebel. You shall all of you have a share.'

'Shall we go for the constables?' asked a man.

'Nay, we'll do this ourselves; there'll be the more credit to us. Set up the ladder.'

This was not heard by the men above. The first articulate word they caught, when Spurr had mounted the ladder and banged at the door, was his command to open. They made no reply. Spurr stormed and cursed, pushed at the boards as forcibly as his somewhat precarious position on the ladder would permit. Then he called for a hatchet. There was an interval of silence. Presently a hatchet crashed into one of the interstices between the planks.

'Our barricade is useless,' whispered Ducket. 'We must defend the door, or he'll soon hack his way through.'

They pulled down the boxes and kegs they had but lately erected. Ducket took up his sword, waited until the edge of the hatchet appeared in one of the gaps, then thrust his point just beneath it. He hit nothing, but the sight of the blade alarmed Spurr, who withdrew the hatchet and paused awhile. His next attack was upon a plank to the left. Here again Ducket thrust in his sword. For a minute or two hatchet and sword played a game of hide and seek, at various points in the width of the door. Ducket's thrust was always a second too late until it occurred to him to choose a different gap from that which was immediately attacked. Then at last he scored a hit. Spurr let out a savage curse; his axe crashed to the ground; the ladder creaked as he hastily descended among his men.

Maurice darted up to the roof, and peered over the battlements. A man was binding up Spurr's arm. Seven or eight others were grouped around. At a little distance, lying bound on the grass, was Caleb. Here was a calamity indeed. Not only had they no food for the day, they had no messenger through whom to summon help in the last resort, if the attack should prove too strong to be beaten off.

While Spurr's wound was being attended to he was giving orders to his men. Maurice caught a few words here and there: 'barn' ... 'more ladders' ... 'no dilly-dallying' ... 'rick pole'. Some of the men hurried away in the direction of Spurr's farm, hidden in a fold of the fells a mile away. Maurice was concerned to see that Caleb was carried away among them.

He had just withdrawn his eyes from following them when the sight of another figure, some distance to his left, set his heart thumping. Mrs. Seddon was coming swiftly across the fell in the direction of the tower. Maurice guessed her errand. Alarmed at Caleb's failure to return, she had impulsively set out to seek him. As yet she must be invisible to the men below; nor could they see Maurice, standing back from the battlements. Rapidly he thought: he must not allow her to approach; could he by signals enlist her help? The first thing was to stop her, and raising both hands above his head he pushed them from him as though urging something away.

Nanette understood, and stopped short. Maurice was in a quandary; how could he convey more information to her? Already she must understand from his gesture that danger threatened at the tower; what help could she give? She was

quick-witted enough to know that for Ducket's sake she must not seek assistance in Kendal; where else could she go?

He remembered the incident of the year before, when Captain Folkard had brought up a band of seamen from the coast, and they had been attacked by Spurr's countrymen. How he wished that Folkard were at hand now! An idea flashed upon him. No doubt many of Folkard's old associates were still in Milnthorpe. Could they be persuaded to undertake something in behalf of their captain's friends? Nanette must seek them out. She was a fearless horsewoman; she could ride there in less than two hours; before the day was out the seamen might arrive to turn the tables on the attackers, and carry the beleaguered four to at least a temporary safety aboard some vessel.

But it was impossible to convey all this by signs. He must speak with Nanette. She had moved a little nearer; she was growing impatient. He waved to her again, swept his arm to the right of her with a downward movement, then pointed to his lips and threw out his hand towards her. Would she understand? She turned to her right in seeming puzzlement and indecision, then faced towards him suddenly, threw up her hands and nodded her head vigorously. Next moment she had vanished.

Maurice ran down to the room, told Ducket in a rapid whisper what he had seen and what he intended, and disappeared into the chimney. A minute or so later he cautiously pushed up the metal slab and peeped around. No one was in sight: Spurr's men were all on the other side of the tower. He emerged from the hole, covered his traces, and struck up the border of the stream, which meandered through a dell between high shelving banks. Soon he caught sight of Nanette approaching him. He looked round to make sure that there was no observer, drew Nanette aside, and told her as quickly as he might of the state of affairs, the capture of Caleb, and the mission he had devised for her.

'Ah, mon pauvre enfant!' she exclaimed, clasping her hands. 'I must go first and seek for him.'

Maurice explained that Caleb would suffer no harm; that time was pressing. She said that her husband, when he rode off to Milnthorpe, had told her that if he found no suitable vessel there he would proceed either northward to Maryport, or southward, possibly as far as Liverpool.

'We cannot wait for him,' said Maurice. 'You will find friends of Captain Folkard in Milnthorpe. Send them up without a moment's delay, armed. They shall be well paid. I must get back. Goodbye.'

When he regained the neighbourhood of the tower, he heard ominous sounds. Slipping into the hole, he pulled the cover down, rushed through the passage and up the stairs into the room. Crashing blows were falling on the door. Ducket, sword in hand, was standing on guard; Gilpin had caught up a stave of a broken keg; Capplethwaite was pacing the floor in trembling agitation.

'I must see what they are doing,' said Maurice.

He darted up the staircase to the battlements and peeped over. Two ladders had been planted against the wall side by side with the first. On the one at the left a man was smiting the door with a long axe, striking it at an angle, out of reach of Ducket's sword. On each of the other two a man was mounted, a little below the level of the door; between them they held a rick pole, which they were employing as a battering-ram. Below stood Spurr among the rest of his men, encouraging the attackers with hoarse shouts.

Even as Maurice watched there was a loud crack. One of the planks had been driven in. He caught sight of Ducket's blade flashing in the opening; the men were beyond his reach, and a yell of triumph broke from the group below. Ducket tried to grasp the end of the pole; but the man with the axe leant over towards him, and he had to slip aside to avoid the murderous edge. A breach having been made, a few more thrusts with the pole sufficed to demolish the door. The fragments fell in with a crash; nothing remained but a ragged strip about the bulges.

'Up with ye, lads!' cried Spurr. 'There 's nobbut a boy with the two men. Yoick! yoick! They can't get away.'

The two men dropped the pole and descended. Maurice ran back to the room, snatched up his sword, and joined Ducket just as the man with the axe sprang to the floor, and his comrades came swarming up the ladders, armed, some with cutlasses, some with mattocks and other implements of the farm. The axeman parried a thrust of Ducket's sword.

'There's two, measter,' he shouted down.

'Two, is there? Well, there's ten of you. At 'em, lads; there's brass for ye when all's done.'

The axeman, a huge fellow, was a formidable antagonist and Ducket was fully engaged with him. No one else had yet got a footing within the room, and Maurice, with the advantage of position, was able for a while to keep the assailants at bay, thrusting now here, now there as they tried to strike up at him. Gilpin came forward with his wooden stave.

'Get back, you hinder me,' cried Maurice. 'Ah!' He uttered an involuntary cry of pain. His sword fell from his hand. One of the men had drawn a pistol and fired almost point-blank. The bullet had struck Maurice in the forearm. Quick as thought he snatched up his sword with his left hand, and rose to meet the man, who had seized the moment to spring into the room. Ducket had just felled his big opponent, and was instantly engaged with another who had scrambled over the sill from the second ladder. But on all three ladders men were surging up. With Maurice half incapacitated the pressure of numbers must soon prevail.

At this moment little Mr. Gilpin, who in his youth had longed to be a captain under the great Duke of Marlborough, had an inspiration. He rushed to Capplethwaite, shrinking away in the remotest corner.

'Up to the roof with that keg,' he cried. 'After me!'

He seized a box and made the best of his speed up the stair to the battlements. Capplethwaite with a keg lumbered after him.

Maurice's antagonist had just reeled back from a desperate lunge. Ducket had laid a second man low and was pressing a third, when from the battlements above came hurling down a missile that struck the pole of one ladder, bounced off, caught the head of a man on the ladder next to it, and ricocheted over the shoulders of the men below him until it crashed into splinters at Spurr's feet. While they were still agape with amazement, their eyes turned heavenward, a keg rolled over the parapet and started its whirling descent. Cries of terror broke from them. There was no time to escape. The spinning missile descended with ineluctable rapidity and in a couple of seconds crashed upon the central ladder. It quivered; a skull cracked. With one consent the men on the ladders slid down, a human cataclysm. Boots kicked heads and trod on knuckles. The first to reach the ground crawled swiftly away on hands and knees like monstrous beetles that would escape crushing. The others were piled one upon another; and the keg bounced and rolled merrily down until it came innocently to rest in a hollow fifty yards away.

The catastrophe unnerved the two assailants who were still upright in the room. They flung down their arms and cried for quarter. Ducket bade them carry their wounded comrades down the ladders, which, when they had all descended, he threw one after another clear of the tower.

Smiling, he mopped his dripping brow.

'Huzzay for the little lawyer,' he said. 'But you are hurt, my lad. Let me see.'

The bullet had ploughed a thin furrow in the flesh. Ducket washed the wound with a handkerchief moistened with ale and bound up the arm.

'Thank heaven it is no worse,' he said. 'We have won the first trick; what will they do next?'

Spurr had withdrawn with his men to the sloping ground opposite the tower. His attitude did not suggest that of a beaten man. On the contrary, his rugged features expressed a malign satisfaction. He was in fact explaining to his men that their profit would be greater than he had supposed. He had recognized Ducket at the window, and was gloating in anticipation over the triumph of handing to the authorities the man who had been hatching treason for years past. Sooner or later want of food would compel the occupants of the tower to surrender. Leaving his men to keep guard, he went off in the direction of his farm.

Capplethwaite and the lawyer had now come down from the roof.

'We are to be besieged,' said Ducket. Capplethwaite groaned. 'But time is on our side. A messenger has gone for assistance. They will not risk another attack; we have only to wait in patience.'

'If I am found in the company of rebels,' Capplethwaite began.

'Silence, sir,' said Ducket sternly. 'You can disclaim us. We shall certainly repudiate you. You have played a double game, meanly, dastardly. You are unfit for the company of honourable men. The pity is that when relief comes you will be free to return to Kendal and pose again as a respectable member of society.'

'I may have something to say to that,' remarked Gilpin quietly.

Capplethwaite withdrew like a whipped cur to a far corner of the room, and sat down on a pile of sacking in sullen silence. The other three posted themselves at the window, and Maurice, whose friendly feeling towards the lawyer had returned, gave him an account of all that had happened since his kidnapping in Kirkland.

The day wore on. Spurr returned with more men, bringing food. They maintained their watchful position on the fell-side. In the afternoon signs of impatience appeared among them. The men gathered about Spurr, it seemed in altercation. Voices rose high. Their words did not reach the ears of the group in the tower, but it was evident that they were tired of their job, and Spurr was having difficulty in keeping them together. At last they fell silent, crowding about Spurr, listening with eager intentness, as he spoke to them. Then there was a movement towards the tower. Spurr and some others disappeared into the vaulted base. Two or three climbed the fell, and began to cut down with billhooks the scattered gorse bushes, which they piled in a heap in front of the entrance.

'Are they going to smoke us out?' said Maurice.

'It's not Spurr's interest to destroy us,' said Ducket. 'He wants to terrify us into surrender.'

A dense cloud of smoke rose from the heap of gorse beneath the window. Spurr and his men ran from the entrance, and posted themselves at a little distance. Two men held the ladders, ready to run forward when the expected cry for relief came.

The fire burnt itself out. Spurr was evidently angry. He sent more men to cut the gorse, more heaps were carried to the tower, this time into the building. Gilpin seized a broken box, and was about to hurl it out of the window upon the heads of the men passing into the entrance.

'Don't give them fuel,' cried Ducket, seizing his arm. 'Things look more serious. But surely the vault below is stone-roofed?'

'No!' cried Capplethwaite, coming forward. His lips were pale. 'Part of the stone roofing collapsed years ago and was replaced with wood.'

They surveyed the room. The floor was of stout timber, old and dry; it would burn fiercely.

'Thereof?' said Ducket.

'There is wood in the upper floor,' said Maurice.

'Then the roof will collapse when the rooms below are burnt away. Run up and see if there is any sign of a rescue party.'

When Maurice returned, to report that no one was in sight, wisps of smoke were already curling up through cracks between the boards. He heard the crackle of flames below.

'We are doomed!' cried Capplethwaite. 'I cannot be burnt alive.'

He was rushing to the window. Maurice seized him.

'Don't be a fool. We have a refuge.'

He led the way to the back of the chimney, and clambered up. Duckett and Gilpin shoved Capplethwaite's big form before them and heaved him into the opening. In single file they crept down the winding stair and reached the passage below. Capplethwaite puffed, and complained of its narrowness.

'Why did I not know of this passage?' he asked, as one aggrieved.

Nobody paid any attention to him.

'We should be safe here,' said Maurice.

'Unless the tower falls and crushes us,' said Duckett. 'But that will not be yet. It may not be at all. I must still think that Spurr intends merely to frighten us. He gains nothing by our death, except revenge; and the Seddons know we are here; the crime would be brought home to him.'

'When we don't give in, he'll suspect there is some secret hiding-place and very likely discover it.'

'If he does he cannot drag us out. He can only keep watch on the entrance. And always time is on our side.'

Whatever Spurr's intention may have been, the fire was now beyond his control. The floor of the room which the four men had lately left had burst into flame. Smoke was creeping down the stairway from the chimney. What was worse, it appeared to be filtering through the walls of the passage; the stonework must be cracking under the heat. The atmosphere grew hotter, more and more stifling; presently it became insupportable.

'There's no help for it,' said Maurice. 'I must go to the end and open the entrance. We must clear the air.'

'The smoke will rush out,' said Duckett.

'But it may not be seen. Spurr is on the other side of the tower. We must take the risk.'

He crept forward, climbed up the hole by the steps in the wall, and lifted the metal cover. The draught sucked the imprisoned smoke into the open, giving relief to the suffocating men. After a minute or two Maurice let down the cover; but the acrid reek was entering the passage in greater volume.

'We must get out,' said Duckett. 'We can't breathe unless the hole is kept open. Spurr may send a man round to the back for water. He will discover our hiding-place; we shall be caught like rats in a trap, for the passage is as hot as an oven, and we shall willy-nilly be driven out. Better go now, while we are still undiscovered, and find shelter in some wooded hollow until our rescuers arrive.'

'If we only knew when they will arrive! Let us go, then. You agree, Mr. Gilpin?'

'I agree to anything that will give me air,' gasped the lawyer.

'You have nothing to lose,' cried Capplethwaite. 'But I... if Spurr...'

'If you prefer to suffocate, stay here,' Maurice cut in.

He clambered up, Gilpin followed. Capplethwaite begged them in a frenzied whine not to desert him. With the assistance of Maurice above and Duckett below, he struggled through the narrow opening and emerged a panting, quivering heap.

Maurice glanced around. No one was in sight. The tower was enveloped in smoke.

'Follow me,' he said.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH

GOOD-BYE

In single file the four men slipped down from the niche to the border of the stream, which was the sluggish trickle of summer time, leaving on either side a wide margin of its rocky bed. Maurice's intention was to proceed up the channel until he reached a spot where the western bank could be scaled, and then to make for a hollow well known to him, thickly overgrown with brushwood, where they might find refuge for a time. But Capplethwaite, never very active, seemed now to be half-paralysed with fright, and made slow progress, even with assistance from Ducket and Gilpin, over the rough and slippery rocks, and they were still some yards short of Maurice's objective when a loud shout burst out behind them. One of Spurr's men, bearing a water jar, had come round the tower, and caught sight of them. In a few moments, beyond doubt, the whole pack would be in full cry.

Maurice gave a hurried glance around. In the eastern bank, where the stream curved, the floods of winter had carved out a deep cavity. There they might hold out, if only for a brief space, and every minute gained favoured the chance of rescue. Maurice urged Capplethwaite and the lawyer, who were unarmed, into the innermost recess. With Ducket at two yards' distance on his right, he posted himself at the horn of the crescent.

Scarcely a minute had passed before the pursuers flocked round the tower wall and came rushing up the bed of the stream, Spurr at their head. Every man bore a weapon of some sort—rake, mattock, axe, cutlass, cudgel. Spurr, his eyes gleaming with triumphant malice, threw himself, cutlass in hand, upon Ducket, the most valuable prize. Two men, one with a cutlass, the other with a rake, bore down upon Maurice. Parrying a sweeping blow from the rake, Maurice sprang lightly to his left, at the same time dashing his sword hilt in the face of the second opponent. The first man, carried past him by the impetus of his charge, was turning to raise his rake for a second blow when Gilpin darted forward, hurled himself with all his force behind the man's knees, and brought him to the ground.

Meanwhile, Ducket, practised swordsman though he was, had had much ado to defend himself against Spurr's cutlass, wielded with the strength of fury. But Spurr was well advanced in years, and his energy was soon expended. His arm flagged. Ducket, marking his opportunity, passed suddenly from defence to attack, and with a dexterous twist of his sword struck Spurr's weapon from his hand, just in time to meet the onslaught of half a dozen men who had now reached the scene. For a few moments he was hard pressed; there was no space for swordplay; he could only jab with his point now here, now there, in a stubborn effort to ward off his opponents' weapons. He gave ground; Maurice, beset by others of the crew, could lend him no aid; it seemed that the little party must inevitably be overwhelmed.

At this critical moment there came a bellow from the direction of the tower. Maurice could not see the shouter through the press of his assailants, but well he knew that leonine roar. Spurr knew it too. He threw an anxious, alarmed look around, then tried to force a way between two of his men towards the bend in the bank. He was an instant too late. The mattock with which one of the men was in the act of smiting Ducket dropt heavily upon the neck of his employer, and Matthew Spurr fell head foremost into the water.

Startled by the appearance of an unexpected enemy, dismayed by the fall of their leader, the gang broke away and fled helter-skelter up the bed of the stream. On their heels pressed the strangest cavalcade ever seen upon the fells. At the head, mounted on a shaggy hill-pony, Captain Folkard bumped and swayed on his saddle, one hand jerking the reins, the other flourishing a cudgel. Next came John Seddon on a stout Galloway; behind, strung out at irregular intervals, rode a dozen men, four of them obviously mariners, the rest wild-looking fellows of many vocations; the smutty face, brawny arms, and leather apron of one proclaimed him a blacksmith. The steeds were as various as the men.

Captain Folkard pulled up his pony with a jerk when he reached the cavity in which the four men had sheltered. 'At 'em, my hearties!' he roared to his men. 'Run 'em down! Yo ho! yo ho!' He tumbled from the saddle, and rolled towards the bank with hands outstretched, while the rest galloped by in pursuit of the fugitives.

'Cheerly, cheerly, messmate,' he cried, gripping Maurice's hand. 'All hands on deck, repel boarders; well done, my lad.'

'You came in the nick of time, captain,' said Maurice. 'We were almost done. To be saved by you! I could hardly believe my ears when I heard your voice.'

'Ay, 'tis a wonder of wonders. There's a Providence in it.'

He looked inquiringly at Ducket.

'This is my friend Mr. Delacombe, known as Drover Ducket,' said Maurice.

'I've heard of ye,' said Folkard. His eyes ranged beyond. 'Why, bless my stars, if I don't see Reuben Capplethwaite! Providence is uncommon kind. He's seasick, by the look of him.'

He glanced curiously at Gilpin.

'And this is my friend Mr. Gilpin, in whose office I worked,' said Maurice.

'The lawyer! Well, 'tis a world of wonders! Why, bless my eyes——'

He broke off. The man whom Gilpin had felled had just lifted a gaunt limp form that had lain face downward in the stream. There was silence. Then Folkard took off his hat.

'I knowed him twenty years,' he said, quietly.

By this time his men were beginning to return with their prisoners.

'Let us get to the other side of the tower,' said Ducket.

They retraced their steps down the stream. As they turned the corner they met Nanette leading her horse.

'You are safe,' she cried. 'Where is my son?'

'He is at Spurr's farm, I think,' said Maurice.

'Ah! I will fetch him,' she exclaimed.

'Wait,' said Maurice. 'Spurr is dead. Caleb will be in no danger now. John will go with you in a few minutes.'

'And that man!' she cried, with a dark look at Capplethwaite. 'Why is he not dead too?'

'Why, ma'am, 'twould have been too easy an end for him,' said Folkard. 'He's got to pay a reckoning first.'

'How was it that you came so luckily?' asked Maurice.

'I'll tell ye, lad.'

'Ought you not to consider the safety of these gentlemen?' said Gilpin. 'The burning tower will rouse the countryside.'

The woodwork was now blazing fiercely, and a smother of smoke was rising, which must have attracted attention had not all the surrounding country been Spurr's, and all his men already in the neighbourhood of the tower. Maurice declared that it was invisible from the town, so that there was time to hear the captain's story.

It was a strange scene. On the green slope facing the burning tower Maurice, Ducket, and Gilpin sat side by side. A little below them, on the right, Nanette stood, holding her horse's bridle. On the left was Folkard, sitting on a tussock, his

pony's bridle looped over his arm. He kept an eye on Capplethwaite, who lay between him and the group of three. And there, to the accompaniment of the roar and crackle of the fire, Captain Folkard explained his presence upon the scene. He had made a slow passage down the mist-laden Clyde that January day, and at the mouth of the estuary had run into a violent hurricane. The *Good Intent* weathered the storm, but was so severely battered that she had put back into Greenock for repairs. It was a month before she was fit for sea again; then the winds were contrary; she crept down the channel, was forced by stress of weather to seek refuge in Larne harbour, and, the cargo having shifted, was delayed for many days. The captain then sailed for the Isle of Man to settle his affairs with the smuggling fraternity there. Hearing of the defeat of Prince Charles at Culloden, he was concerned for the safety of Maurice Nugent, and decided to put in at Milnthorpe with the double object of making inquiry of the Seddons, and of getting from Capplethwaite a sum of money due to him, which he sorely needed in order to recoup the losses he had suffered through the delay of his voyage. At Milnthorpe he had met John Seddon, and learnt from him the plight of Maurice at the tower. He was beating up his old friends among the smugglers to form a rescue party when Mrs. Seddon arrived.

He had just concluded his story when Maurice caught sight of a short sturdy figure trudging over the crest of the fell.

'There's Caleb!' he cried.

Mrs. Seddon gave a glad cry and, dropping her bridle, ran to meet the boy. Caleb's face wore a broad smile as he joined the group. A canvas bag swung from his hand; it clanked as he flung it upon the ground.

'My money!' cried Capplethwaite, starting up.

'Maybe it's mine,' said Folkard, pulling him back. 'You and me must come to a reckoning, Reuben. Let's hear what the lad has to say.'

'I were coming over the fell that night,' said Caleb, 'when I heerd a sort of mumbling, and I were afeard it were a ghost. I slipped down behind a bush, and then I seed it were nobbut old Spurr tramping homeward, and a-mumbling to hiss. I come on, with niver a notion there were any one about, when I tumbled over a feller's legs stretched out beside yon furze bush. He nabbed me afore I could run, and lugged me down, and then him and his mates tied me up, and I felt fair mad, I did. I heerd 'em talking about their job, and Spurr going off wi' Capplethwaite's money—I knowed it were him, because they called him th' owd miser; and they reckoned how much brass they'd get when they cotched Maurice and took him into Kendal. I were mad, sure enow. When Spurr come back in the morning, he bade two o' yon men to carry me to his farm, and they cast me on the straw in the stable, and theer I bode for hours, trying to wriggle out o' th' cords. Ay, it took me a long time; I thowt I'd niver do it; but I did it at last; and then I thowt, belike that brass belongs to Maurice and not to th' owd miser at all. Wheer's Spurr put it, thinks I? So up I gets, and creeps into th' hoose. There were no one about, nobbut th' owd woman in the kitchen; and presently I come to the parlour, and theer I spied the bag on a shelf over the table. And theer it is.'

'It's mine,' said Capplethwaite; 'a debt paid to me by Mr. Gilpin. Give it to me. You shall have sixpence, my lad. And I'll be getting home.'

He was struggling to his feet, but Folkard pushed him down.

'Sit on your hunkers,' said the captain. 'Maybe the lad's in the right and the money bain't yours. Maybe I've a claim myself. Well, Mr. Lawyer?'

Gilpin had risen; a strange smile wreathed his lips; he gently rubbed his hands.

'Permit me to say a word,' he began. 'The time has come to clear up certain matters that have long lain on my mind. To my knowledge Mr. Capplethwaite holds as trustee for Maurice Nugent a valuable share in the Durham Deep Mine.'

'A breach of confidence,' cried Capplethwaite, protesting.

'A breach of fiddlesticks,' retorted Folkard. 'Sit still, Reub; go on, Mr. Lawyer; I begin to think I'll like ye.'

'Maurice Nugent, through events which I deplore,' Gilpin continued, 'is about to leave the country. It is not fit that he

should go out into the world unprovided. It is within the power of a trustee to realize a reasonable proportion of an estate for the benefit of a ward if the interests of the ward demand it. This is an occasion on which the interests of the ward clearly call for such action. Unfortunately there is no time to make really adequate provision. But that bag contains £400, a sum which may justly be handed to Maurice Nugent as an instalment towards——'

'It is infamous! It is robbery!' cried Capplethwaite furiously. 'It is my money. To give it to this boy would be giving aid and countenance to the King's enemies.'

'Surely a new-born solicitude for the King,' said Duckett drily. 'I remember that Reuben Capplethwaite was Number Seventeen in an association whose members were bound by solemn oath to maintain the cause of the rightful sovereign, King James the Third.'

Capplethwaite's eyes fell before Duckett's steady gaze.

'I would add,' resumed Gilpin, 'that you are in a serious position. I have already pointed out that you are not in fact Maurice Nugent's guardian and trustee.'

'Prove it! Prove it!' blustered Capplethwaite. 'And if it were true, the Nugent property would fall into Chancery, and the boy being a rebel it would be sequestered to the Crown.'

'Possibly, but let me point out that you would have to account at once for every penny received during your control of the property.'

'Ay, that's a clincher,' cried Folkard. 'Mr. Lawyer, I'm beginning to love ye.'

'Further, you would have to answer for any irregularity in your title,' Gilpin went on. 'That would be a serious matter. But the first consideration is the interest of your ward; if that is secured, probably he will be content to let bygones be bygones.'

'Do as you please, Mr. Gilpin,' said Maurice in response to the lawyer's glance. Duckett's eyes were dancing with amusement.

'That clears the ground,' said Gilpin. 'Mr. Capplethwaite, you must choose instantly between the alternatives I now place before you. On the one hand you will pay to Maurice Nugent this £400 as an instalment of money reasonably due to him, and accept such arrangements for the future administration of the property as I may decide upon. On the other hand, you may take this £400, whereupon I shall lay an information before the Court of Chancery calling for an inquiry into your dealings with the young man's estate. The choice is yours.'

All eyes were turned upon Capplethwaite. John Seddon had now joined the party. In the background Spurr's men, a sorry group of prisoners, stood surrounded by their captors.

Capplethwaite was manifestly struggling with himself. He glanced at the bag of money almost within his reach, then at the faces of those watching him. His eyes burned with a fierce hatred for Gilpin.

'Quick about it, Reuben!' said Folkard. 'Mr. Lawyer will take up my business next.'

'A curse upon you all!' cried Capplethwaite. 'There is no gratitude in the world. I made you, Andrew Gilpin; you turn and bite me——'

'Your choice, Reuben,' said Folkard. 'We've no time for speeches. Quick, man.'

'Then take the money,' said Capplethwaite, 'and let me go.'

Caleb picked up the bag and handed it to Maurice.

'A receipt—I must have a receipt,' cried Capplethwaite.

The receipt was written on a leaf from Gilpin's pocket-book.

'Another leaf, Mr. Lawyer,' said Folkard. 'He's no more money here, and we can't wait to send to Kendal for it; but if he'll just sign a paper to say that he owes me a hundred pound, I'll leave it with you, and you can get the cash at your leisure.'

Capplethwaite signed the IOU.

'Now may I go?' he demanded.

'Not yet, Reuben,' said the captain. 'No one trusts you, ye see. Me and these gentlemen are going to ride for Milnthorpe. John Seddon will keep you here until we are safe aboard. Then you may go. Mr. Lawyer, I take back what I've said about men of your trade, calling you worms and such like. I'll let ye know what port you can send the money to—mine, and the lad's when you get some more. Or maybe he'll wish ye to keep it for him. That's all one. Now, my lad, and you, Mr. Ducket, 'tis time we slipped our moorings. 'Twill be nigh sunset afore we get aboard. Say your good-byes, lad; it may be many a year afore ye see your friends again. I'll speak a word with my men and be ready for ye in a minute or two.'

Maurice held out his hand to John Seddon.

'Nay, lad, I mun see thee safe on board,' said the farmer. 'It's too long a journey for Mother to ride it again.'

'That is true,' said Nanette. 'And I could not bear to see the ship sail away.'

She clasped Maurice in her arms; almost silently they took farewell.

'Now, Caleb lad, take your mother home,' said John.

'I want to go wi' Maurice,' said the boy slowly. 'A Seddon mun aye follow a Nugent.'

'No, no!' cried his mother, holding him fast. 'I cannot lose both my children.'

Caleb looked pleadingly at Maurice.

'I'd fain have your company,' said Maurice, 'but you must stay with Mother. I'm going I don't know where; all is uncertain. Perhaps if I have success, some day we may sail away together. Good-bye, old lad. Good-bye, Mr. Gilpin; remember me to Dawson.'

'I will do so,' said the lawyer. 'He will take pleasure in looking after your interests with me.'

'And call me daft,' laughed Maurice. He hesitated a moment. 'Good-bye, Mr. Capplethwaite.'

Capplethwaite turned his head away.

A few hours later, John Seddon stood alone on the quay at Milnthorpe. Far out in the bay a three-masted vessel, with all her canvas spread to catch the light breeze, was slowly receding into the sunset. The farmer watched until he could see no more than a dark patch upon the horizon.

'Happen the lad'll be lucky,' he said to himself. 'And happen not. But I reckon he'll always put honour first.'

Other titles by Herbert Strang

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[End of *Honour First*, by Herbert Strang]