

CHAPTER XXI - THE LAST JACOBITE RISING

On the evening of the Queen's birthday, bridies were eaten to her honor in a hundred Thrums homes, and her health was drunk in toddy, Scotch toddy and Highland toddy. Patullo, the writer, gave a men's party, and his sole instructions to his maid were "Keep running back and forrit wi' the hot water." At the bank there was a ladies' party and ginger wine. From Cathro's bedroom-window a flag was displayed with Vivat Regina on it, the sentiment composed by Cathro, the words sewn by the girls of his McCulloch class. The eight-o'clock bell rang for an hour, and a loyal crowd had gathered in the square to shout. To a superficial observer, such as the Baron Bailie or Todd, the new policeman, all seemed well and fair.

But a very different scene was being enacted at the same time in the fastnesses of the Den, where three resolute schemers had met by appointment. Their trysting-place was the Cuttle Well, which is most easily reached by the pink path made for that purpose; but the better to further their dark and sinister design, the plotters arrived by three circuitous routes, one descending the Reekie Broth Pot, a low but dangerous waterfall, the second daring the perils of the crags, and the third walking stealthily up the burn.

"Is that you, Tommy?"

"Whist! Do you mind the password?"

"Stroke!"

"Right. Have you heard Gav Dishart coming?"

"I hinna. I doubt his father had grippit him as he was slinking out o' the manse."

"I fear it, Corp. I'm thinking his father is in the Woman's pay."

"What woman?"

"The Woman of Hanover?"

"That's the queen, is it no?"

"She'll never get me to call her queen."

"Nor yet me. I think I hear Gav coming."

Gav Dishart was the one who had come by the burn, and his boots were cheeping like a field of mice. He gave the word "Stroke," and the three then looked at each other firmly. The lights of the town were not visible from the Cuttle Well, owing to an arm of cliff that is outstretched between, but the bell could be distinctly heard, and occasionally a shout of revelry.

"They little ken!" said Tommy, darkly.

"They hinna a notion," said Corp, but he was looking somewhat perplexed himself.

"It's near time I was back for family exercise," said Gav, uneasily, "so we had better do it quick, Tommy."

"Did you bring the wineglasses?" Tommy asked him.

"No," Gav said, "the press was lockit, but I've brought egg-cups."

"Stand round then."

The three boys now presented a picturesque appearance, but there was none save the man in the moon to see them. They stood round the Cuttle Well, each holding an egg-cup, and though the daring nature of their undertaking and the romantic surroundings combined to excite them, it was not fear but soaring purpose that paled their faces and caused their hands to tremble, when Tommy said solemnly, "Afore we do what we've come here to do, let's swear."

"Stroke!" he said.

"Stroke!" said Gav.

"Stroke!" said Corp.

They then filled their cups and holding them over the well, so that they clinked, they said:

"To the king ower the water!"

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When they had drunk Tommy broke his cup against a rock, for he was determined that it should never be used to honor a meaner toast, and the others followed his example, Corp briskly, though the act puzzled him, and Gav with a gloomy look because he knew that the cups would be missed to-morrow.

"Is that a' now?" whispered Corp, wiping his forehead with his sleeve.

"All!" cried Tommy. "Man, we've just begood."

As secretly as they had entered it, they left the Den, and anon three figures were standing in a dark trance, cynically watching the revellers in the square.

"If they just kent!" muttered the smallest, who was wearing his jacket outside in to escape observation.

"But they little ken!" said Gav Dishart.

"They hinna a notion!" said Corp, contemptuously, but still he was a little puzzled, and presently he asked softly: "Lads, what just is it that they dinna ken?"

Had Gav been ready with an answer he could not have uttered it, for just then a terrible little man in black, who had been searching for him in likely places, seized him by the cuff of the neck, and, turning his face in an easterly direction, ran him to family worship. But there was still work to do for the other two. Walking home alone that night from Mr. Patullo's party, Mr. Cathro had an uncomfortable feeling that he was being dogged. When he stopped to listen, all was at once still, but the moment he moved onward he again heard stealthy steps behind. He retired to rest as soon as he reached his house, to be wakened presently by a slight noise at the window, whence the flag-post protruded. It had been but a gust of wind, he decided, and turned round to go to sleep again, when crash! the post was plucked from its place and cast to the ground. The dominie sprang out of bed, and while feeling for a light, thought he heard scurrying feet, but when he looked out at the window no one was to be seen; Vivat Regina lay ignobly in the gutters. That it could have been the object of an intended theft was not probable, but the open window might have tempted thieves, and there was a possible though risky way up by the spout. The affair was a good deal talked about at the time, but it

remained shrouded in a mystery which even we have been unable to penetrate.

On the heels of the Queen's birthday came the Muckley, the one that was to be known to fame, if fame was willing to listen to Corp, as Tommy's Muckley. Unless he had some grand aim in view never was a boy who yielded to temptations more blithely than Tommy, but when he had such aim never was a boy so firm in withstanding them. At this Muckley he had a mighty reason for not spending money, and with ninepence in his pocket clamoring to be out he spent not one halfpenny. There was something uncanny in the sight of him stalking unscathed between rows of stands and shows, everyone of them aiming at his pockets. Corp and Gav, of course, were in the secret and did their humble best to act in the same unnatural manner, but now and again a show made a successful snap at Gav, and Corp had gloomy fears that he would lose his head in presence of the Teuch and Tasty, from which humiliation indeed he was only saved by the happy idea of requesting Tommy to shout "Deuteronomy!" in a warning voice, every time they drew nigh Californy's seductive stand.

Was there nothing for sale, then, that the three thirsted to buy? There were many things, among them weapons of war, a pack of cards, more properly called Devil's books, blue bonnets suitable for Highland gentlemen, feathers for the bonnets, a tin lantern, yards of tartan cloth, which the deft fingers of Grizel would convert into warriors' sashes. Corp knew that these purchases were in Tommy's far-seeing eye, but he thought the only way to get them was to ask the price and then offer half. Gav, the scholar, who had already reached daylight through the first three books of Euclid, and took a walk every Saturday morning with his father and Herodotus, even Gav, the scholar, was as thick-witted as Corp.

"We'll let other laddies buy them," Tommy explained in his superior way, "and then after the Muckley is past, we'll buy them frae them."

The others understood now. After a Muckley there was always a great dearth of pence, and a moneyed man could become owner of Muckley purchases at a sixth part of the Muckley price.

"You crittur!" exclaimed Corp, in abject admiration.

But Gav saw an objection. "The feck of them," he pointed out, "will waur their siller on shows and things to eat, instead of on what we want them to buy."

"So they will, the nasty sackets!" cried Corp.

"You couldna blame a laddie for buying Teuch and Tasty," continued Gav with triumph, for he was a little jealous of Tommy.

"You couldna," agreed Corp, "no, I'll be dagont, if you could," and his hand pressed his money feverishly.

"Deuteronomy!" roared Tommy, and Corp's hand jumped as if it had been caught in some other person's, pocket.

"But how are we to do?" he asked. "If you like, I'll take Birkie and the Haggerty-Taggertys round the Muckley and fight ilka ane that doesna buy--"

"Corp," said Tommy, calmly, "I wonder at you. Do you no ken yet that the best plan is to leave a thing to me?"

"Blethering gowks that we are, of course it is!" cried Corp, and he turned almost fiercely upon Gav. "Lippen all to him," he said with grand confidence, "he'll find a wy."

And Tommy found a way. Birkie was the boy who bought the pack of cards. He saw Tommy looking so-woe-begone that it was necessary to ask the reason.

"Oh, Birkie, lend me threepence," sobbed Tommy, "and I'll give you sixpence the morn."

"You're daft," said Birkie, "there's no a laddie in Thrums that will have one single lonely bawbee the morn."

"Him that buys the cards," moaned Tommy, "will never be without siller, for you tell auld folks fortunes on them at a penny every throw. Lend me threepence, Birkie. They cost a sic, and I have just--"

"Na, na," said greedy Birkie, "I'm no to be caught wi' chaff. If it's true, what you say, I'll buy the cards mysel'."

Having thus got hold of him, Tommy led Birkie to a stand where the King of Egypt was telling fortunes with cards, and doing a roaring trade

among the Jocks and Jennys. He also sold packs at sixpence each, and the elated Birkie was an immediate purchaser.

"You're no so clever as you think yoursel!" he said triumphantly to Tommy, who replied with his inscrutable smile. But to his satellites he said, "Not a soul will buy a fortune frae Birkie. I'll get thae cards for a penny afore next week's out."

Francie Crabb found Tommy sniggering to himself in the back wynd. "What are you goucking at?" asked Francie, in surprise, for, as a rule, Tommy only laughed behind his face.

"I winna tell you," chuckled Tommy, "but what a bar, oh, what a divert!"

"Come on, tell me."

"Well, it's at the man as is swallowing swords ahint the menagerie."

"I see nothing to laugh at in that."

"I'm no laughing at that. I'm laughing at him for selling the swords for ninepence the piece. Oh, what ignorant he is, oh, what a bar!"

"Ninepence is a mislaird price for a soord," said Francie. "I never gave ninepence."

Tommy looked at him in the way that always made boys fidget with their fists.

"You're near as big a bar as him," he said scornfully. "Did you ever see the sword that's hanging on the wall in the backroom at the post-office?"

"No, but my father has telled me about it. It has a grand name."

"It's an Andrea Ferrara, that's what it is."

"Ay, I mind the name now; there has been folk killed wi' that soord."

This was true, for the post-office Andrea Ferrara has a stirring history, but for the present its price was the important thing. "Dr. McQueen offered a pound note for it," said Tommy.

"I ken that, but what has it to do wi' the soord-swallower?"

"Just this; that the swords he is selling for ninepence are Andrea Ferraras, the same as the post-office ones, and he could get a pound a piece for them if he kent their worth. Oh, what a bar, oh, what--"

Francie's eyes lit up greedily, and he looked at his two silver shillings, and took two steps in the direction of the sword-swallower's, and faltered and could not make up his agitated mind. Tommy set off toward the square at a brisk walk.

"Whaur are you off to?" asked Francie, following him.

"To tell the man what his swords is worth. It would be ill done no to tell him." To clinch the matter, off went Tommy at a run, and off went Francie after him. As a rule Tommy was the swifter, but on this occasion he lagged of fell purpose, and reached the sword-swallower's tent just in time to see Francie emerge elated therefrom, carrying two Andrea Ferraras. Francie grinned when they met.

"What a bar!" he crowed.

"What a bar!" agreed Tommy, and sufficient has now been told to show that he had found a way. Even Gav acknowledged a master, and, when the accoutrements of war were bought at second hand as cheaply as Tommy had predicted, applauded him with eyes and mouth for a full week, after which he saw things in a new light. Gav of course was to enter the bursary lists anon, and he had supposed that Cathro would have the last year's schooling of him; but no, his father decided to send him for the grand final grind to Mr. Ogilvy of Glen Quharity, a famous dominie between whom and Mr. Dishart existed a friendship that none had ever got at the root of. Mr. Cathro was more annoyed than he cared to show, Gav being of all the boys of that time the one likeliest to do his teacher honor at the university competitions, but Tommy, though the decision cost him an adherent, was not ill-pleased, for he had discovered that Gav was one of those irritating boys who like to be leader. Gav, as has been said, suddenly saw Tommy's victory over Messrs. Birkie, Francie, etc., in a new light; this was because when he wanted back the shilling which he had contributed to the funds for buying their purchases, Tommy replied firmly:

"I canna give you the shilling, but I'll give you the lantern and the tartan cloth we bought wi' it."

"What use could they be to me at Glen Quharity?" Gav protested.

"Oh, if they are no use to you," Tommy said sweetly, "me and Corp is willing to buy them off you for threepence."

Then Gav became a scorner of duplicity, but he had to consent to the bargain, and again Corp said to Tommy, "Oh, you crittur!" But he was sorry to lose a fellow-conspirator. "There's just the twa o' us now," he sighed.

"Just twa!" cried Tommy. "What are you havering about, man? There's as many as I like to whistle for."

"You mean Grizel and Elspeth, I ken, but--"

"I wasna thinking of the womenfolk," Tommy told him, with a contemptuous wave of the hand. He went closer to Corp, and said, in a low voice, "The McKenzies are waiting!"

"Are they, though?" said Corp, perplexed, as he had no notion who the McKenzies might be.

"And Lochiel has twa hunder spearsmen."

"Do you say so?"

"Young Kinnordy's ettling to come out, and I meet Lord Airlie, when the moon rises, at the Loups o' Kenny, and auld Bradwardine's as spunky as ever, and there's fifty wild Highlandmen lying ready in the muckle cave of Clova."

He spoke so earnestly that Corp could only ejaculate, "Michty me!"

"But of course they winna rise," continued Tommy, darkly, "till he lands."

"Of course no," said Corp, "but--wha is he?"

"Himsel'," whispered Tommy, "the Chevalier!"

Corp hesitated. "But, I thought," he said diffidently, "I thought you--"

"So I am," said Tommy.

"But you said he hadna landed yet?"

"Neither he has."

"But you--"

"Well?"

"You're here, are you no?"

Tommy stamped his foot in irritation. "You're slow in the uptak," he said. "I'm no here. How can I be here when I'm at St. Germain's?"

"Dinna be angry wi' me," Corp begged. "I ken you're ower the water, but when I see you, I kind of forget; and just for the minute I think you're here."

"Well, think afore you speak."

"I'll try, but that's teuch work. When do you come to Scotland?"

"I'm no sure; but as soon as I'm ripe."

At nights Tommy now sometimes lay among the cabbages of the school-house watching the shadow of Black Cathro on his sitting-room blind. Cathro never knew he was there. The reason Tommy lay among the cabbages was that there was a price upon his head.

"But if Black Cathro wanted to get the blood-money," Corp said apologetically, "he could nab you any day. He kens you fine."

Tommy smiled meaningly. "Not him," he answered, "I've cheated him bonny, he hasna a notion wha I am. Corp, would you like a good laugh?"

"That I would."

"Weel, then, I'll tell you wha he thinks I am. Do you ken a little house yont the road a bitty irae Monypenny?"

"I ken no sic house," said Corp, "except Aaron's."

"Aaron's the man as bides in it," Tommy continued hastily, "at least I think that's the name. Well, as you ken the house, you've maybe noticed a laddie that bides there too?"

"There's no laddie," began Corp, "except--"

"Let me see," interrupted Tommy, "what was his name? Was it Peter? No. Was it Willie? Stop, I mind, it was Tommy."

He glared so that Corp dared not utter a word.

"Have you notitched him?"

"I've--I've seen him," Corp gasped.

"Well, this is the joke," said Tommy, trying vainly to restrain his mirth, "Cathro thinks I'm that laddie! Ho! ho! ho!"

Corp scratched his head, then he bit his warts, then he spat upon his hands, then he said "Damn."

The crisis came when Cathro, still ignorant that the heather was on fire, dropped some disparaging remarks about the Stuarts to his history class. Tommy said nothing, but--but one of the school-windows was without a snib, and next morning when the dominie reached his desk he was surprised to find on it a little cotton glove. He raised it on high, greatly puzzled, and then, as ever when he suspected knavery, his eyes sought Tommy, who was sitting on a form, his arms proudly folded. That the whelp had put the glove there, Cathro no longer doubted, and he would have liked to know why, but was reluctant to give him the satisfaction of asking. So the gauntlet--for gauntlet it was--was laid aside, the while Tommy, his head humming like a beeskep, muttered triumphantly through his teeth, "But he lifted it, he lifted it!" and at closing time it was flung in his face with this fair tribute:

"I'm no a rich man, laddie, but I would give a pound note to know what you'll be at ten years from now."

There could be no mistaking the dire meaning of these words, and Tommy hurried, pale but determined, to the quarry, where Corp, with a barrow in his hands, was learning strange phrases by heart, and finding it a help to call his warts after the new swears.

"Corp," cried Tommy, firmly, "I've set sail!"

On the following Saturday evening Charles Edward landed in the Den. In his bonnet was the white cockade, and round his waist a tartan sash; though he had long passed man's allotted span his face was still full of fire, his figure lithe and even boyish. For state reasons he had assumed the name of Captain Stroke. As he leapt ashore from the bark, the Dancing Shovel, he was received right loyally by Corp and other faithful adherents, of whom only two, and these of a sex to which his House was

ever partial, were visible, owing to the gathering gloom. Corp of that ilk sank on his knees at the water's edge, and kissing his royal master's hand said, fervently, "Welcome, my prince, once more to bonny Scotland!" Then he rose and whispered, but with scarcely less emotion, "There's an egg to your tea."