

Catriona

By

Robert Louis Stevenson

CATRIONA

DEDICATION.

TO CHARLES BAXTER, Writer to the Signet.

My Dear Charles,

It is the fate of sequels to disappoint those who have waited for them; and my David, having been left to kick his heels for more than a lustre in the British Linen Company's office, must expect his late re-appearance to be greeted with hoots, if not with missiles. Yet, when I remember the days of our explorations, I am not without hope. There should be left in our native city some seed of the elect; some long-legged, hot-headed youth must repeat to-day our dreams and wanderings of so many years ago; he will relish the pleasure, which should have been ours, to follow among named streets and numbered houses the country walks of David

Balfour, to identify Dean, and Silvermills, and Broughton, and Hope

Park, and Pilrig, and poor old Lochend--if it still be standing,

and the Figgate Whins--if there be any of them left; or to push (on

a long holiday) so far afield as Gillane or the Bass. So, perhaps,

his eye shall be opened to behold the series of the generations,

and he shall weigh with surprise his momentous and nugatory gift of

life.

You are still--as when first I saw, as when I last addressed you--

in the venerable city which I must always think of as my home. And

I have come so far; and the sights and thoughts of my youth pursue

me; and I see like a vision the youth of my father, and of his

father, and the whole stream of lives flowing down there far in the

north, with the sound of laughter and tears, to cast me out in the

end, as by a sudden freshet, on these ultimate islands. And I

admire and bow my head before the romance of destiny.

R. L. S.

Vailima, Upolu,

Samoa, 1892.

CATRIONA--Part I--THE LORD ADVOCATE

CHAPTER I--A BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK

The 25th day of August, 1751, about two in the afternoon, I, David Balfour, came forth of the British Linen Company, a porter attending me with a bag of money, and some of the chief of these merchants bowing me from their doors. Two days before, and even so late as yestermorning, I was like a beggar-man by the wayside, clad in rags, brought down to my last shillings, my companion a condemned traitor, a price set on my own head for a crime with the news of which the country rang. To-day I was served heir to my position in life, a landed laird, a bank porter by me carrying my gold, recommendations in my pocket, and (in the words of the saying) the ball directly at my foot.

There were two circumstances that served me as ballast to so much sail. The first was the very difficult and deadly business I had still to handle; the second, the place that I was in. The tall, black city, and the numbers and movement and noise of so many folk, made a new world for me, after the moorland braes, the sea-sands and the still country-sides that I had frequented up to then. The throng of the citizens in particular abashed me. Rankeillor's son was short and small in the girth; his clothes scarce held on me; and it was plain I was ill qualified to strut in the front of a bank-porter. It was plain, if I did so, I should but set folk laughing, and (what was worse in my case) set them asking questions. So that I behooved to come by some clothes of my own, and in the meanwhile to walk by the porter's side, and put my hand

on his arm as though we were a pair of friends.

At a merchant's in the Luckenbooths I had myself fitted out: none

too fine, for I had no idea to appear like a beggar on horseback;

but comely and responsible, so that servants should respect me.

Thence to an armourer's, where I got a plain sword, to suit with my

degree in life. I felt safer with the weapon, though (for one so

ignorant of defence) it might be called an added danger. The

porter, who was naturally a man of some experience, judged my

accoutrement to be well chosen.

"Naething kenspeckle," {1} said he; "plain, dacent claes. As for

the rapier, nae doubt it sits wi' your degree; but an I had been

you, I would has waired my siller better-gates than that." And he

proposed I should buy winter-hosen from a wife in the Cowgate-back,
that was a cousin of his own, and made them "extraordinar
endurable."

But I had other matters on my hand more pressing. Here I was in
this old, black city, which was for all the world like a rabbit-
warren, not only by the number of its indwellers, but the
complication of its passages and holes. It was, indeed, a place
where no stranger had a chance to find a friend, let be another
stranger. Suppose him even to hit on the right close, people dwelt
so thronged in these tall houses, he might very well seek a day
before he chanced on the right door. The ordinary course was to
hire a lad they called a caddie, who was like a guide or pilot, led
you where you had occasion, and (your errands being done) brought

you again where you were lodging. But these caddies, being always employed in the same sort of services, and having it for obligation to be well informed of every house and person in the city, had grown to form a brotherhood of spies; and I knew from tales of Mr. Campbell's how they communicated one with another, what a rage of curiosity they conceived as to their employer's business, and how they were like eyes and fingers to the police. It would be a piece of little wisdom, the way I was now placed, to take such a ferret to my tails. I had three visits to make, all immediately needful: to my kinsman Mr. Balfour of Pilrig, to Stewart the Writer that was Appin's agent, and to William Grant Esquire of Prestongrange, Lord Advocate of Scotland. Mr. Balfour's was a non-committal visit; and besides (Pilrig being in the country) I made bold to find the way to it myself, with the help of my two legs and a Scots tongue. But

the rest were in a different case. Not only was the visit to Appin's agent, in the midst of the cry about the Appin murder, dangerous in itself, but it was highly inconsistent with the other. I was like to have a bad enough time of it with my Lord Advocate Grant, the best of ways; but to go to him hot-foot from Appin's agent, was little likely to mend my own affairs, and might prove the mere ruin of friend Alan's. The whole thing, besides, gave me a look of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds that was little to my fancy. I determined, therefore, to be done at once with Mr. Stewart and the whole Jacobitical side of my business, and to profit for that purpose by the guidance of the porter at my side. But it chanced I had scarce given him the address, when there came a sprinkle of rain--nothing to hurt, only for my new clothes--and we took shelter under a pend at the head of

a close or alley.

Being strange to what I saw, I stepped a little farther in. The narrow paved way descended swiftly. Prodigious tall houses sprang upon each side and bulged out, one storey beyond another, as they rose. At the top only a ribbon of sky showed in. By what I could spy in the windows, and by the respectable persons that passed out and in, I saw the houses to be very well occupied; and the whole appearance of the place interested me like a tale.

I was still gazing, when there came a sudden brisk tramp of feet in time and clash of steel behind me. Turning quickly, I was aware of a party of armed soldiers, and, in their midst, a tall man in a great coat. He walked with a stoop that was like a piece of

courtesy, genteel and insinuating: he waved his hands plausibly as he went, and his face was sly and handsome. I thought his eye took me in, but could not meet it. This procession went by to a door in the close, which a serving-man in a fine livery set open; and two of the soldier-lads carried the prisoner within, the rest lingering with their firelocks by the door.

There can nothing pass in the streets of a city without some following of idle folk and children. It was so now; but the more part melted away incontinent until but three were left. One was a girl; she was dressed like a lady, and had a screen of the Drummond colours on her head; but her comrades or (I should say) followers were ragged gillies, such as I had seen the matches of by the dozen in my Highland journey. They all spoke together earnestly in

Gaelic, the sound of which was pleasant in my ears for the sake of

Alan; and, though the rain was by again, and my porter plucked at

me to be going, I even drew nearer where they were, to listen. The

lady scolded sharply, the others making apologies and cringing

before her, so that I made sure she was come of a chief's house.

All the while the three of them sought in their pockets, and by

what I could make out, they had the matter of half a farthing among

the party; which made me smile a little to see all Highland folk

alike for fine obeisances and empty sporrans.

It chanced the girl turned suddenly about, so that I saw her face

for the first time. There is no greater wonder than the way the

face of a young woman fits in a man's mind, and stays there, and he

could never tell you why; it just seems it was the thing he wanted.

She had wonderful bright eyes like stars, and I daresay the eyes had a part in it; but what I remember the most clearly was the way her lips were a trifle open as she turned. And, whatever was the cause, I stood there staring like a fool. On her side, as she had not known there was anyone so near, she looked at me a little longer, and perhaps with more surprise, than was entirely civil.

It went through my country head she might be wondering at my new clothes; with that, I blushed to my hair, and at the sight of my colouring it is to be supposed she drew her own conclusions, for she moved her gillies farther down the close, and they fell again to this dispute, where I could hear no more of it.

I had often admired a lassie before then, if scarce so sudden and

strong; and it was rather my disposition to withdraw than to come forward, for I was much in fear of mockery from the womenkind. You would have thought I had now all the more reason to pursue my common practice, since I had met this young lady in the city street, seemingly following a prisoner, and accompanied with two very ragged indecent-like Highlandmen. But there was here a different ingredient; it was plain the girl thought I had been prying in her secrets; and with my new clothes and sword, and at the top of my new fortunes, this was more than I could swallow. The beggar on horseback could not bear to be thrust down so low, or, at least of it, not by this young lady.

I followed, accordingly, and took off my new hat to her the best that I was able.

"Madam," said I, "I think it only fair to myself to let you understand I have no Gaelic. It is true I was listening, for I have friends of my own across the Highland line, and the sound of that tongue comes friendly; but for your private affairs, if you had spoken Greek, I might have had more guess at them."

She made me a little, distant curtsy. "There is no harm done," said she, with a pretty accent, most like the English (but more agreeable). "A cat may look at a king."

"I do not mean to offend," said I. "I have no skill of city manners; I never before this day set foot inside the doors of Edinburgh. Take me for a country lad--it's what I am; and I would

rather I told you than you found it out."

"Indeed, it will be a very unusual thing for strangers to be speaking to each other on the causeway," she replied. "But if you are landward {2} bred it will be different. I am as landward as yourself; I am Highland, as you see, and think myself the farther from my home."

"It is not yet a week since I passed the line," said I. "Less than a week ago I was on the braes of Balwhidder."

"Balwhither?" she cries. "Come ye from Balwhither! The name of it makes all there is of me rejoice. You will not have been long there, and not known some of our friends or family?"

"I lived with a very honest, kind man called Duncan Dhu Maclaren,"

I replied.

"Well, I know Duncan, and you give him the true name!" she said;

"and if he is an honest man, his wife is honest indeed."

"Ay," said I, "they are fine people, and the place is a bonny

place."

"Where in the great world is such another!" she cries; "I am loving

the smell of that place and the roots that grow there."

I was infinitely taken with the spirit of the maid. "I could be

wishing I had brought you a spray of that heather," says I. "And, though I did ill to speak with you at the first, now it seems we have common acquaintance, I make it my petition you will not forget me. David Balfour is the name I am known by. This is my lucky day, when I have just come into a landed estate, and am not very long out of a deadly peril. I wish you would keep my name in mind for the sake of Balwhidder," said I, "and I will yours for the sake of my lucky day."

"My name is not spoken," she replied, with a great deal of haughtiness. "More than a hundred years it has not gone upon men's tongues, save for a blink. I am nameless, like the Folk of Peace. {3} Catriona Drummond is the one I use."

Now indeed I knew where I was standing. In all broad Scotland
there was but the one name proscribed, and that was the name of the
Macgregors. Yet so far from fleeing this undesirable acquaintancy,
I plunged the deeper in.

"I have been sitting with one who was in the same case with
yourself," said I, "and I think he will be one of your friends.

They called him Robin Oig."

"Did ye so?" cries she. "Ye met Rob?"

"I passed the night with him," said I.

"He is a fowl of the night," said she.

"There was a set of pipes there," I went on, "so you may judge if the time passed."

"You should be no enemy, at all events," said she. "That was his brother there a moment since, with the red soldiers round him. It is him that I call father."

"Is it so?" cried I. "Are you a daughter of James More's?"

"All the daughter that he has," says she: "the daughter of a prisoner; that I should forget it so, even for one hour, to talk with strangers!"

Here one of the gillies addressed her in what he had of English, to know what "she" (meaning by that himself) was to do about "ta sneeshin." I took some note of him for a short, bandy-legged, red-haired, big-headed man, that I was to know more of to my cost.

"There can be none the day, Neil," she replied. "How will you get 'sneeshin,' wanting siller! It will teach you another time to be more careful; and I think James More will not be very well pleased with Neil of the Tom."

"Miss Drummond," I said, "I told you I was in my lucky day. Here I am, and a bank-porter at my tail. And remember I have had the hospitality of your own country of Balwhidder."

"It was not one of my people gave it," said she.

"Ah, well," said I, "but I am owing your uncle at least for some
springs upon the pipes. Besides which, I have offered myself to be
your friend, and you have been so forgetful that you did not refuse
me in the proper time."

"If it had been a great sum, it might have done you honour," said
she; "but I will tell you what this is. James More lies shackled
in prison; but this time past they will be bringing him down here
daily to the Advocate's. . . ."

"The Advocate's!" I cried. "Is that . . . ?"

"It is the house of the Lord Advocate Grant of Prestongrange," said she. "There they bring my father one time and another, for what purpose I have no thought in my mind; but it seems there is some hope dawned for him. All this same time they will not let me be seeing him, nor yet him write; and we wait upon the King's street to catch him; and now we give him his snuff as he goes by, and now something else. And here is this son of trouble, Neil, son of Duncan, has lost my four-penny piece that was to buy that snuff, and James More must go wanting, and will think his daughter has forgotten him."

I took sixpence from my pocket, gave it to Neil, and bade him go about his errand. Then to her, "That sixpence came with me by Balwhidder," said I.

"Ah!" she said, "you are a friend to the Gregara!"

"I would not like to deceive you, either," said I. "I know very little of the Gregara and less of James More and his doings, but since the while I have been standing in this close, I seem to know something of yourself; and if you will just say 'a friend to Miss Catriona' I will see you are the less cheated."

"The one cannot be without the other," said she.

"I will even try," said I.

"And what will you be thinking of myself!" she cried, "to be

holding my hand to the first stranger!"

"I am thinking nothing but that you are a good daughter," said I.

"I must not be without repaying it," she said; "where is it you
stop!"

"To tell the truth, I am stopping nowhere yet," said I, "being not
full three hours in the city; but if you will give me your
direction, I will be no bold as come seeking my sixpence for
myself."

"Will I can trust you for that?" she asked.

"You need have little fear," said I.

"James More could not bear it else," said she. "I stop beyond the village of Dean, on the north side of the water, with Mrs.

Drummond-Ogilvy of Allardyce, who is my near friend and will be glad to thank you."

"You are to see me, then, so soon as what I have to do permits,"

said I; and, the remembrance of Alan rolling in again upon my mind,

I made haste to say farewell.

I could not but think, even as I did so, that we had made

extraordinary free upon short acquaintance, and that a really wise

young lady would have shown herself more backward. I think it was

the bank-porter that put me from this ungallant train of thought.

"I thocht ye had been a lad of some kind o' sense," he began,

shooting out his lips. "Ye're no likely to gang far this gate. A

fule and his siller's shune parted. Eh, but ye're a green

callant!" he cried, "an' a veecious, tae! Cleikin' up wi'

baubeejoes!"

"If you dare to speak of the young lady. . ." I began.

"Leddy!" he cried. "Haud us and safe us, whatten leddy? Ca' THON

a leddy? The toun's fu' o' them. Leddies! Man, its weel seen

ye're no very acquaint in Embro!"

A clap of anger took me.

"Here," said I, "lead me where I told you, and keep your foul mouth shut!"

He did not wholly obey me, for, though he no more addressed me directly, he very impudent sang at me as he went in a manner of innuendo, and with an exceedingly ill voice and ear -

"As Mally Lee cam doun the street, her capuchin did flee,

She cuist a look ahint her to see her negligee.

And we're a' gaun east and wast, we're a' gann ajee,

We're a' gaun east and wast courtin' Mally Lee."