

## CHAPTER V—ST. IVES IS SHOWN A HOUSE

The lawyer was scarce gone before I remembered many omissions; and chief among these, that I had neglected to get Mr. Burchell Fenn's address. Here was an essential point neglected; and I ran to the head of the stairs to find myself already too late. The lawyer was beyond my view; in the archway that led downward to the castle gate, only the red coat and the bright arms of a sentry glittered in the shadow; and I could but return to my place upon the ramparts.

I am not very sure that I was properly entitled to this corner. But I was a high favourite; not an officer, and scarce a private, in the castle would have turned me back, except upon a thing of moment; and whenever I desired to be solitary, I was suffered to sit here behind my piece of cannon unmolested. The cliff went down before me almost sheer, but mantled with a thicket of climbing trees; from farther down, an outwork raised its turret; and across the valley I had a view of that long terrace of Princes Street which serves as a promenade to the fashionable inhabitants of Edinburgh. A singularity in a military prison, that it should command a view on the chief thoroughfare!

It is not necessary that I should trouble you with the train of my reflections, which turned upon the interview I had just concluded and the hopes that were now opening before me. What is more essential, my eye (even while I thought) kept following the movement of the passengers on

Princes Street, as they passed briskly to and fro—met, greeted, and bowed to each other—or entered and left the shops, which are in that quarter, and, for a town of the Britannic provinces, particularly fine. My mind being busy upon other things, the course of my eye was the more random; and it chanced that I followed, for some time, the advance of a young gentleman with a red head and a white great-coat, for whom I cared nothing at the moment, and of whom it is probable I shall be gathered to my fathers without learning more. He seemed to have a large acquaintance: his hat was for ever in his hand; and I daresay I had already observed him exchanging compliments with half a dozen, when he drew up at last before a young man and a young lady whose tall persons and gallant carriage I thought I recognised.

It was impossible at such a distance that I could be sure, but the thought was sufficient, and I craned out of the embrasure to follow them as long as possible. To think that such emotions, that such a concussion of the blood, may have been inspired by a chance resemblance, and that I may have stood and thrilled there for a total stranger! This distant view, at least, whether of Flora or of some one else, changed in a moment the course of my reflections. It was all very well, and it was highly needful, I should see my uncle; but an uncle, a great-uncle at that, and one whom I had never seen, leaves the imagination cold; and if I were to leave the castle, I might never again have the opportunity of finding Flora. The little impression I had made, even supposing I had made any, how soon it would die out! how soon I should sink to be a phantom memory, with which (in after days) she might amuse a husband and children! No,

the impression must be clenched, the wax impressed with the seal, ere I left Edinburgh. And at this the two interests that were now contending in my bosom came together and became one. I wished to see Flora again; and I wanted some one to further me in my flight and to get me new clothes. The conclusion was apparent. Except for persons in the garrison itself, with whom it was a point of honour and military duty to retain me captive, I knew, in the whole country of Scotland, these two alone. If it were to be done at all, they must be my helpers. To tell them of my designed escape while I was still in bonds, would be to lay before them a most difficult choice. What they might do in such a case, I could not in the least be sure of, for (the same case arising) I was far from sure what I should do myself. It was plain I must escape first. When the harm was done, when I was no more than a poor wayside fugitive, I might apply to them with less offence and more security. To this end it became necessary that I should find out where they lived and how to reach it; and feeling a strong confidence that they would soon return to visit me, I prepared a series of baits with which to angle for my information. It will be seen the first was good enough.

Perhaps two days after, Master Ronald put in an appearance by himself. I had no hold upon the boy, and pretermitted my design till I should have laid court to him and engaged his interest. He was prodigiously embarrassed, not having previously addressed me otherwise than by a bow and blushes; and he advanced to me with an air of one stubbornly performing a duty, like a raw soldier under fire. I laid down my carving; greeted him with a good deal of formality, such as I thought he

would enjoy; and finding him to remain silent, branched off into narratives of my campaigns such as Goguelat himself might have scrupled to endorse. He visibly thawed and brightened; drew more near to where I sat; forgot his timidity so far as to put many questions; and at last, with another blush, informed me he was himself expecting a commission.

‘Well,’ said I, ‘they are fine troops, your British troops in the Peninsula. A young gentleman of spirit may well be proud to be engaged at the head of such soldiers.’

‘I know that,’ he said; ‘I think of nothing else. I think shame to be dangling here at home and going through with this foolery of education, while others, no older than myself, are in the field.’

‘I cannot blame you,’ said I. ‘I have felt the same myself.’

‘There are—there are no troops, are there, quite so good as ours?’ he asked.

‘Well,’ said I, ‘there is a point about them: they have a defect,—they are not to be trusted in a retreat. I have seen them behave very ill in a retreat.’

‘I believe that is our national character,’ he said—God forgive him!—with an air of pride.

'I have seen your national character running away at least, and had the honour to run after it!' rose to my lips, but I was not so ill advised as to give it utterance. Every one should be flattered, but boys and women without stint; and I put in the rest of the afternoon narrating to him tales of British heroism, for which I should not like to engage that they were all true.

'I am quite surprised,' he said at last. 'People tell you the French are insincere. Now, I think your sincerity is beautiful. I think you have a noble character. I admire you very much. I am very grateful for your kindness to—to one so young,' and he offered me his hand.

'I shall see you again soon?' said I.

'Oh, now! Yes, very soon,' said he. 'I—I wish to tell you. I would not let Flora—Miss Gilchrist, I mean—come to-day. I wished to see more of you myself. I trust you are not offended: you know, one should be careful about strangers.'

I approved his caution, and he took himself away: leaving me in a mixture of contrarious feelings, part ashamed to have played on one so gullible, part raging that I should have burned so much incense before the vanity of England; yet, in the bottom of my soul, delighted to think I had made a friend—or, at least, begun to make a friend—of Flora's brother.

As I had half expected, both made their appearance the next day. I

struck so fine a shade betwixt the pride that is allowed to soldiers and the sorrowful humility that befits a captive, that I declare, as I went to meet them, I might have afforded a subject for a painter. So much was high comedy, I must confess; but so soon as my eyes lighted full on her dark face and eloquent eyes, the blood leaped into my cheeks—and that was nature! I thanked them, but not the least with exultation; it was my cue to be mournful, and to take the pair of them as one.

‘I have been thinking,’ I said, ‘you have been so good to me, both of you, stranger and prisoner as I am, that I have been thinking how I could testify to my gratitude. It may seem a strange subject for a confidence, but there is actually no one here, even of my comrades, that knows me by my name and title. By these I am called plain Champdivers, a name to which I have a right, but not the name which I should bear, and which (but a little while ago) I must hide like a crime. Miss Flora, suffer me to present to you the Vicomte Anne de Kéroual de Saint-Yves, a private soldier.’

‘I knew it!’ cried the boy; ‘I knew he was a noble!’

And I thought the eyes of Miss Flora said the same, but more persuasively. All through this interview she kept them on the ground, or only gave them to me for a moment at a time, and with a serious sweetness.

‘You may conceive, my friends, that this is rather a painful confession,’

I continued. 'To stand here before you, vanquished, a prisoner in a fortress, and take my own name upon my lips, is painful to the proud. And yet I wished that you should know me. Long after this, we may yet hear of one another—perhaps Mr. Gilchrist and myself in the field and from opposing camps—and it would be a pity if we heard and did not recognise.'

They were both moved; and began at once to press upon me offers of service, such as to lend me books, get me tobacco if I used it, and the like. This would have been all mighty welcome, before the tunnel was ready. Now it signified no more to me than to offer the transition I required.

'My dear friends,' I said—'for you must allow me to call you that, who have no others within so many hundred leagues—perhaps you will think me fanciful and sentimental; and perhaps indeed I am; but there is one service that I would beg of you before all others. You see me set here on the top of this rock in the midst of your city. Even with what liberty I have, I have the opportunity to see a myriad roofs, and I dare to say, thirty leagues of sea and land. All this hostile! Under all these roofs my enemies dwell; wherever I see the smoke of a house rising, I must tell myself that some one sits before the chimney and reads with joy of our reverses. Pardon me, dear friends, I know that you must do the same, and I do not grudge at it! With you, it is all different. Show me your house then, were it only the chimney, or, if that be not visible, the quarter of the town in which it lies! So, when I look all

about me, I shall be able to say: "There is one house in which I am not quite unkindly thought of."

Flora stood a moment.

'It is a pretty thought,' said she, 'and, as far as regards Ronald and myself, a true one. Come, I believe I can show you the very smoke out of our chimney.'

So saying, she carried me round the battlements towards the opposite or southern side of the fortress, and indeed to a bastion almost immediately overlooking the place of our projected flight. Thence we had a view of some foreshortened suburbs at our feet, and beyond of a green, open, and irregular country rising towards the Pentland Hills. The face of one of these summits (say two leagues from where we stood) is marked with a procession of white scars. And to this she directed my attention.

'You see these marks?' she said. 'We call them the Seven Sisters. Follow a little lower with your eye, and you will see a fold of the hill, the tops of some trees, and a tail of smoke out of the midst of them. That is Swanston Cottage, where my brother and I are living with my aunt. If it gives you pleasure to see it, I am glad. We, too, can see the castle from a corner in the garden, and we go there in the morning often—do we not, Ronald?—and we think of you, M. de Saint-Yves; but I am afraid it does not altogether make us glad.'



‘Mademoiselle!’ said I, and indeed my voice was scarce under command, ‘if you knew how your generous words—how even the sight of you—relieved the horrors of this place, I believe, I hope, I know, you would be glad. I will come here daily and look at that dear chimney and these green hills, and bless you from the heart, and dedicate to you the prayers of this poor sinner. Ah! I do not say they can avail!’

‘Who can say that, M. de Saint-Yves?’ she said softly. ‘But I think it is time we should be going.’

‘High time,’ said Ronald, whom (to say the truth) I had a little forgotten.

On the way back, as I was laying myself out to recover lost ground with the youth, and to obliterate, if possible, the memory of my last and somewhat too fervent speech, who should come past us but the major? I had to stand aside and salute as he went by, but his eyes appeared entirely occupied with Flora.

‘Who is that man?’ she asked.

‘He is a friend of mine,’ said I. ‘I give him lessons in French, and he has been very kind to me.’

‘He stared,’ she said,—‘I do not say, rudely; but why should he stare?’

'If you do not wish to be stared at, mademoiselle, suffer me to recommend a veil,' said I.

She looked at me with what seemed anger. 'I tell you the man stared,' she said.

And Ronald added. 'Oh, I don't think he meant any harm. I suppose he was just surprised to see us walking about with a pr--- with M. Saint-Yves.'

But the next morning, when I went to Chevenix's rooms, and after I had dutifully corrected his exercise—'I compliment you on your taste,' said he to me.

'I beg your pardon?' said I.

'Oh no, I beg yours,' said he. 'You understand me perfectly, just as I do you.'

I murmured something about enigmas.

'Well, shall I give you the key to the enigma?' said he, leaning back.

'That was the young lady whom Goguelat insulted and whom you avenged. I do not blame you. She is a heavenly creature.'

'With all my heart, to the last of it!' said I. 'And to the first also,

if it amuses you! You are become so very acute of late that I suppose you must have your own way.'

'What is her name?' he asked.

'Now, really!' said I. 'Do you think it likely she has told me?'

'I think it certain,' said he.

I could not restrain my laughter. 'Well, then, do you think it likely I would tell you?' I cried.

'Not a bit.' said he. 'But come, to our lesson!'