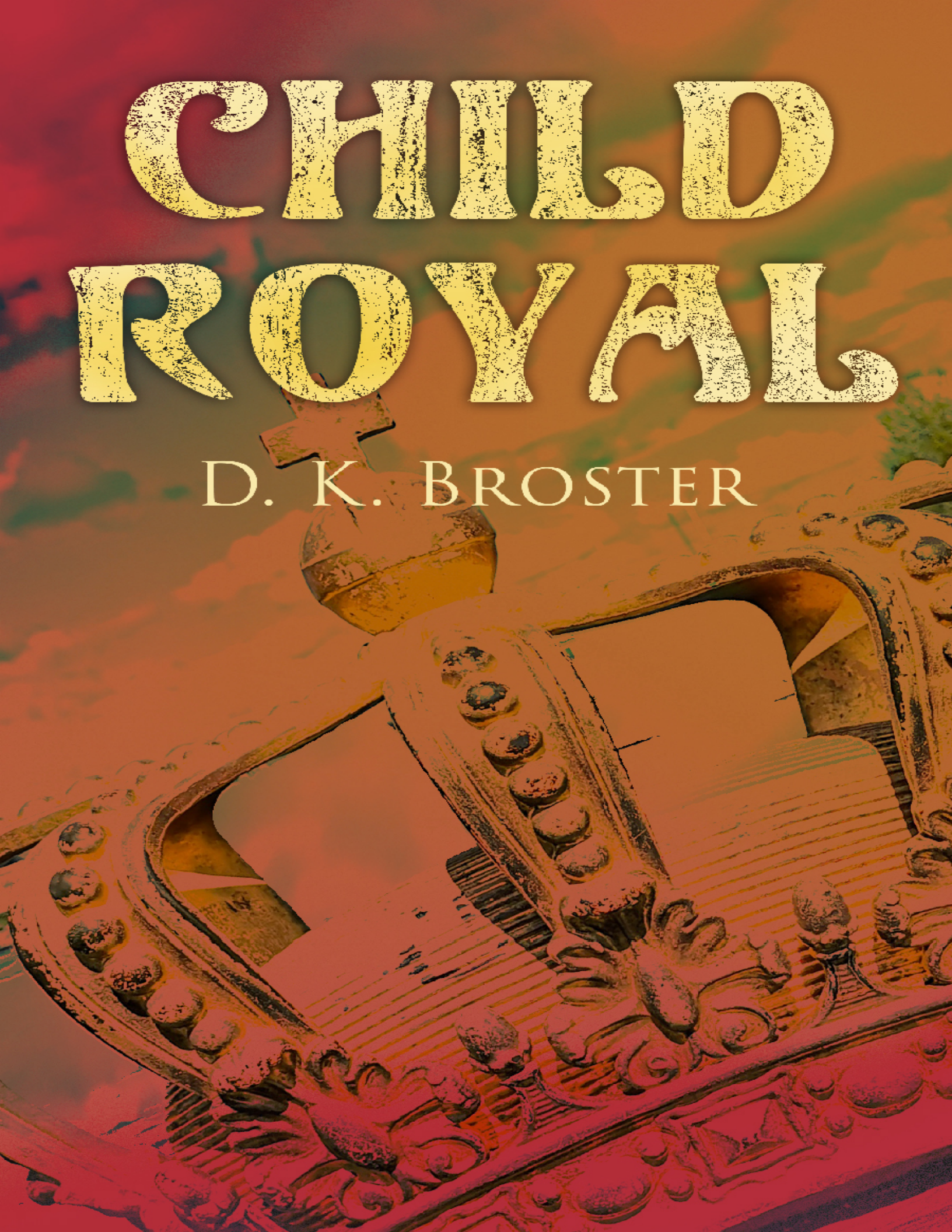
CHILD ROYAL

D. K. BROSTER



D. K. Broster

Child Royal

Historical Novel - The Story of Mary Queen of Scots

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To
Miss Jane T. Stoddart

In gratitude, since, without
her book on Mary’s girlhood,
this story would never have
been written.

THE PICTURE

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Before the flames so lamentably had their will of Garthrose House in 1896, there used to hang in the hall a small painting which caught the eye at once by its unlikeness to any of the more important-looking and better executed portraits of a later date, the Allan Ramsays, or the Raeburn, or even to the dark-backgrounded family pictures belonging to periods nearer to its own. Childish visitors in particular were sure to be attracted to this painting, and their questions were generally identical in substance: “Why is there another little picture painted inside this picture, please?” “Who is the little girl in it?” “Are the lady and gentleman her father and mother?” Or sometimes it would be, not a query, but a request: “Grandfather, will you show us the funny picture?”

And to the questions Sir Patrick Graham would answer: “No, my dear, the lady and gentleman are not the parents of the little girl; they are my ancestors—and yours as well,” he would add, if the case required it. Then, if the small visitor were below a certain stature, he or she might be lifted up. “Suppose we look closer. You see that crown on the frame of the picture of the little girl? *Now* can’t you guess who she is? . . . Mary Queen of Scots when she was quite small, between eight and nine years of age, though she looks a good deal older, doesn’t she, in that stiff bodice and that tight-fitting head-dress? The whole picture was painted when she was a child in France, before she was married to the little boy—the Dauphin—with whom she was brought up, and who became, you know, King Francis II of France.”

“Is that why there is a crown on the frame?”

“No, the crown is there because Mary was a Queen already. She had been Queen of Scots since she was a week old.”

“Did she have to do lessons, like us, when she was little?”

“Indeed she did, and when you go to Paris you will see her Latin exercise-book in the great library there.”

“But did she have toys, too?”

“Yes, and a great many pets, and dresses and jewels, because she was a very important little person, although she was only a child like you.”

“And why are those two people with stiff white things round their necks holding her picture like that?”

“Because they both had to do with her in those days, and they were very fond of her.”

And the child would gaze at that other child whose name at least was familiar, and perhaps her fate, too. The lady and gentleman in the painting, who were Sir Patrick’s ancestors, sat either side of a small table covered with a dark velvet cloth reaching to the floor. They were looking neither at the spectator nor at each other, but towards the oval picture of the little Queen, along the top of which the farthest hand of each was laid, thus holding it upright on the table.

It would probably be an older visitor to Garthrose who would observe further details in this somewhat unusual picture. On the front of the table-cloth was emblazoned a shield with the family quarterings, the scallop-shells and roses, surmounted by the mailed hand holding a rose branch which was the special cognisance of Graham of Garthrose, under the scroll bearing the motto which went with it, *Par heur et malheur*. There was nothing out of the common about this heraldic display, but what was apt to excite a connoisseur’s curiosity was the presence on the floor in the foreground of a sort of plaque, showing the same

shield traversed by the bend sinister of illegitimacy. Near it lay an open letter across which a little snake was crawling.

And to one such visitor old Sir Patrick said with a sigh: “Yes, some fated natures throw an early shadow. Even as a child Queen Mary was, through no fault of her own, the cause of anguish to those who loved her. We had cause enough in my family to know it. . . . You are familiar with her own chosen motto: *In my end is my beginning*? I sometimes think it should have been reversed.”

“That same thought has come to me before now,” answered his hearer. “There is, of course, a story—a dark story, perhaps—in that enigmatical picture?”

Sir Patrick Graham bent his handsome grey head in assent. “You shall hear it to-night, if you care to.”

THE STORY

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I. ARCHER OF THE GUARD

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(June-December, 1548)—(1)

The dogs were still barking down below in the court-yard, so recent was Ninian’s arrival. He was not too late; that much he had learnt from old Gib, all a-tremble with agitation and surprise, who had admitted him, and from his young sister Agnes also, now preparing their mother for his visit.

And while he waited in the oriel-windowed chamber overlooking the strath, the wind which had just brought him from France, and which was now sporting with the pennons of Monsieur d’Essé’s fleet in the Firth of Forth, buffeted the House of Garthrose with a good will, and, entering by various imperceptible crannies, set swaying on the wall the tapestry of Queen Semiramis and her train, so familiar to Ninian Graham in his boyhood. Staring at it now, on this June afternoon of 1548, he could scarcely believe that nearly seven years had passed since he had been home to Scotland. When last his eyes had rested on those bannered towers upon the wall, squat and formal behind the casques and spears of the Assyrian warriors, the catastrophe of Solway Moss was yet to come, and the disaster of Pinkie also; Leith and Edinburgh had not yet been sacked, nor hundreds of Border villages destroyed, and Jedburgh and Kelso, Dryburgh and Melrose, those fair abbeys, still stood inviolate. Then, also, the crown of Scotland had rested upon the brow of a King, not, as now, upon that of a little maid of five and a half. The queen in the arras, even though in the act of resigning her diadem to her son, still had the advantage there.

Turning away towards the window, Ninian began to detach his rapier, and, passing through a shaft of the June sunlight which, as it poured through the gules of a blazon in the glass, lay upon his shoulder for a moment like a stain of blood, came into a beam of untempered light—a man in the late thirties, spare, springy and upright. There was a faint touch of grey at his temples, but not a thread of it in the little pointed brown beard which left revealed a mouth more resolute than might well have accompanied eyes so reflective. His high boots were muddy with his fast riding from Leith; dust speckled the grey cloak flung over a chair. He had the bearing and air of the soldier he was, a soldier in alien service—though no Scot held it alien to serve, as he did, in the Scottish Archer Guard of King Henri II of France.

Laying down his sword, the returned exile set one knee upon the window seat, threw open one of the small panes and looked out upon his elder brother’s domain. Between the soft green meadows, held in place as they were by the gentle hills on either side, shone the river of his boyhood. He could still rehearse its every curve. Rather more of the countryside was Graham property now, for Robert had extended and improved the lands of Garthrose, though without imagination, as a merchant builds up his business. Yet everything in the prospect before Ninian’s eyes spoke to him, as it had always done, of his father, that charming and masterful Malise Graham, who had run so royally through his wealth that, but for the portion of his first wife’s dowry secured to her children (and but for Robert’s careful husbandry) there would have been little left to keep up Garthrose to-day. Catherine Hepburn, Sir Malise’s second wife, had been almost portionless—the main reason for her son’s entering foreign service. But this marriage, unlike the first, had been a love match, which was perhaps the reason why Malise Graham had always received from that son a devotion which his occasional brutality had had no power to quench. Yes, everything about Garthrose spoke to Ninian of

his father, though that father was fifteen years dead. . . . And now Catherine Graham, who had mourned her husband so unremittingly, was following him. It was that news which had brought her son from France to-day.

The sound of the door opening caused Ninian to spring up. It was his half-brother who entered.

About Robert Graham of Garthrose there had never been any of his father's carefree grace and radiance. Stoutish, greying (for he was over fifty), a perpetual harassed frown upon his forehead, he came forward with a quick and heavy tread.

"Ninian! My dear brother!" Despite that troubled look, there was no lack of warmth in his voice as he embraced the traveller. "Ill news has brought you, brother—but a good wind natheless. I'm gey glad to see you again after these many years!"

Ninian returned the greeting as cordially. "And my mother? Agnes tells me——"

Robert shook his head, the frown deepening. "She was anointed this morning. Indeed, Ninian, we thought she would have passed yesterday. You are but just in time."

His brother stifled a sigh. "I wonder will she know me?" he said to himself. Then aloud: "How does your young brood, Robert, wanting their good mother?" For Robert's somewhat shrewish wife had died a couple of years ago, leaving, besides two sons of seventeen and fifteen, a whole nursery of younger folk.

But before Robert could more than touch the fringe of a complete answer to this question, Agnes returned to the room—the sister in whom Ninian had some ado to recognise the child of thirteen who had sat beside him on a stool at his last visit, asking him so many questions about France that their mother had rebuked her. She was a young woman now, in a wide-spreading green gown.

"The news of Ninian's coming hath not distressed your mother?" asked Robert Graham anxiously.

Agnes shook her gentle head. “Nay, for she was looking for it. Indeed, she has recovered her speech, which a while ago we thought gone. . . . Will you come with me now, Ninian?”

And seeing him glance down at his mud-splashed boots, she added: “Dear brother, *that’s* of small account!”

* * * * *

Was it possible to have become so small and shrunken when one was only fifty-three, and had been fair and fresh-coloured, like the miniature he had of her? In the enclosure of the great curtained bed, Lady Graham was lost, like a grey-haired child with watching eyes. She knew him; that was evident. Shaken with affection and emotion, the Archer knelt by the side of the bed and asked her blessing, kissing the thin hand as it slipped nervelessly from his head.

“Ninian, my dear son!” came the murmur; and again: “My dear, dear son!”

After he had kissed her and was seated by the bedside, she scanned him, for all her weakness, with intense eagerness, motioning for the curtains to be drawn farther apart. Then in her echo of a voice she asked him of his voyage, of his own health, of his circumstances; yet she seemed scarcely to listen to his answers, as she ceaselessly studied his face. And at last she said, less faintly:

“You grow liker your father . . . although he was of fair complexion . . . liker than Robert is, or his son James. . . . Doth he not, Agnes? But you scarce remember him, child . . . I mind me, before you were born, Ninian, how we used to ride . . .”

And from that moment onwards she talked more of her dead husband than of either Ninian or herself; talked of incidents and sayings, pathetic at this hour, which her love had preserved, as in amber. And as the flame sank, so did the mind become confused, till she was speaking of Malise

Graham as though he were alive, but absent. Her hands were twisting feebly together as she murmured, with her eyes fixed on her son's face:

"In France still, woe's me . . . with my Lord of Albany. . . . Bid him hasten home . . . hasten home . . . Ninian . . . he bides too long there . . ."

Her eyes wavered, the lids sank; Agnes beckoned Ninian out.

"I have fatigued her," he said remorsefully, once beyond the door.

"No, no. But she wanders in her wits more than of custom. I think the end is not far off. I shall send for Father Sandys."

"Yet she doth not wander so much as you think, Agnes," replied her brother gently. "Our father was in France once with my Lord Albany. He was there for a year, I remember, when I was a boy—years before you were born. 'Tis not so unnatural that, since our mother seems to think of him as still alive, she should fancy him to be in France now, as he is not by her bedside."

(2)

Bewailing the ills of their country at the hands of the English, Robert Graham paced restlessly to and fro in front of the deplenished supper-table at the upper end of the raftered hall. Ninian sat back in his chair listening to him. The servants had some time ago withdrawn from their own table at the lower end, Agnes had quitted her brothers' side for her mother's, and young James and Henry, Robert's two elder sons, had left in obedience to their father's dismissal.

But not before they had been permitted to question their uncle about the famous corps to which he belonged, and which, it appeared, young Henry cherished an idea of joining one day. So Ninian, smiling, had answered: Yes, the Scottish

Archers were all of good birth, and they did always guard the King’s person at home or abroad, an honour they divided with the Cent Gentilshommes. Moreover, Ninian told the boy, the Captain of the Archer Guard had the privilege of the nearest place to the King at his coronation, and the coronation robe for his perquisite, and he always received from the King’s hands any town-keys which had been delivered or presented to His Majesty. When the King of France crossed a river, it was the Scottish Archers who went ahead to guard the bridge or the boat; when he was in church it was they who guarded the entries as well as his person. Jacques de Lorges, Comte de Montgomery—himself of Scottish descent—was the captain, but would probably be succeeded before long by his son Gabriel, to whom the reversion had been promised.

“So you must not aspire to the captaincy of the Guard when you join it, Henry,” finished his uncle.

But now that the lads were gone from the hall, the only company left to the half-brothers were the two dogs watching their master, and Malise Graham looking down upon his sons from his full-length portrait on the wall.

Auburn-haired, assured, a hidden sparkle in the eyes, he stood there with legs planted apart and a hawk on his wrist, in all that bravery of twenty years earlier, which lent so much width to a man’s figure. His dark velvet doublet was cut down to the waist in front to show the then fashionable waistcoat, all slashed and purfled, and square across the neck, exposing the base of the throat; his jerkin of fine blue cloth was lined and thickly edged with miniver. Even in the immobility of paint, the suggestion of vitality drew the eye, and half the time, aware or unaware, Ninian was looking up at him.

“And now,” Robert finished his diatribe against the English invaders, “now they have established themselves in Haddington!”

“But not for long, we’ll hope,” responded his brother. “Has not His Most Christian Majesty just sent six thousand men to turn them out?”

After asking Ninian for particulars about this force, with which he had come over, Robert passed on to the internal situation in Scotland. Since Cardinal Beaton’s murder at St. Andrews two years ago, things had gone from bad to worse, for his death had been an irreparable loss to the National party. The mention of the Cardinal led him not unnaturally to the subject of his assassins and “the spread of the pernicious doctrines called Reformed.” They were troubled with this in France too, were they not? Though he did not deny that there was much corruption in the Church, Robert thanked God that he himself still stood fast for the old faith in these half-heretical days. . . . But he had great difficulties in his worldly affairs (thus he continued to bemoan himself). There was no one to help him with the estate, even now that he had managed to build it up again after their father’s —Christ assoil him—after their father’s extravagances. James was but seventeen and more bookish than he liked; Henry had this whim for foreign service. If their Uncle John had not died three years ago, he might have been of assistance. As it was, there was no one to whom he could turn.

Ninian expressed commiseration. He was not unaware of what was coming. Sure enough it came. Had he never thought of leaving French service? Had he never thought (if he had put by a sufficient sum) of returning to Scotland, and settling down and marrying? Married or unmarried, there would be plenty of room for him at Garthrose, and a warm welcome to boot.

Ninian read his brother’s mind; a welcome, and the unpaid office of grieve. He smiled, not unkindly. It was something to feel that he was needed in the home which he had loved as a boy. He did not blame Robert for wishing to make use of him.

“I am a soldier, Robert,” he answered, “and know little of any other trade. And though I am a young man no longer, ’tis a thought early to lay down the tools of mine at eight and thirty.”

“Aye,” nodded Robert reflectively, “that’s true. But, brother, I wonder that at eight and thirty you have not thought of marriage? Or are you perchance wed in France?”

The Archer shook his head. “Neither wed, nor thinking of it.”

“You have no fair French demoiselle in mind? You’ll have seen no lack of beauties in these years of service about the person of King Francis!” hazarded Robert, with a sort of heavy playfulness.

Ninian shook his head again. Not to Robert was he going to speak of that grave by the Dordogne which had claimed Béatrice des Illiers so soon after the betrothal ring was on her finger.

“The years go so fast now,” he replied rather sadly, “and a man thinks himself still young, and wakes one morning to see the grey at his temples. I may not be old enough to sit in the ingle-nook, but I’m over old to go a-wooing.”

“Too old! Havers, brother! However, I jalouse you’ll have had your distractions; they would come easily your way over there,” answered Robert, not without envy. “We have no court beauties here, since there is no court worth the name. Tell me, has there been much change in France since the new King came to the throne last year? You wrote that it was thought he would much curtail his father’s extravagance.”

“Aye, he began with some measure of reform,” said Ninian dryly, “but, though he has been on the throne but a year and a bare three months, there is already more lavish spending than ever in King Francis’s day.”

Robert shook his head. “And what of that mistress so much older than himself. We hear he hath not discarded her now that he is King?”

“By no means! Save in name, Madame la Grande Sénéschale is Queen of France now.”

“And what says the Italian Queen to her?”

“Gives her nothing but fair words and calls her ‘Madame Diane,’ as though she were royal. They are good friends enough—to the eye—and Madame Diane tends the Queen when she is ill, and spends much care upon the King’s children, the Dauphin and the little princesses. But what Madame Catherine thinks in her heart I do not know—there is not a soul knows, I believe. She is like . . . like a figure in a tapestry,” said Ninian, suddenly remembering Queen Semiramis in her suspended life upstairs. “Yet some day the wind will blow and she will move.”

For all at once it seemed to him that everyone over there at the court of Henri II was no more than a personage in an arras. But that was absurd, because neither the Grande Sénéschale, nor the Constable de Montmorency, nor Messieurs de Guise were in the least figures woven of threads to which only the wind could give life. The King, perhaps . . . ?

He was roused from his brief contemplation of this flight of fancy. “The talk still goes on,” Robert was saying, “of betrothing our own sovereign lady to the little Dauphin and sending her to France.”

“’Twould be the only sure course to save her from the claws of England,” agreed his brother. “And it is no new notion. But there have been rumours of other matches, have there not?”

“Wild tales, with nothing in them. In January it was to be the young Earl of Kildare; last March the King of Denmark’s brother. But the French match, as we all know, is the match for Scotland.”

“Where is her little Grace now?”

“At Dumbarton, strongly guarded. She has been there since the month of February, when she was brought from Stirling. Before that, save for a few weeks after Pinkie fight,

she was hidden in these very parts, as perchance you may have heard—in the Priory of Inchmahome, on the isle in the Lake of Menteith."

"I had heard something of it. I would she were there now, since it is so near. I might have contrived to get a sight of her," said the exile.

"Yet if she be taken to France, brother, you will have your fill of seeing the child there!"

"My fill, no. But now and again I may set eyes upon her."

"Why, Ninian," protested his elder, "you speak as though you were not ever about the King's person!"

"Why, so I am, in my shift of duty. But the King's children are not, and I'm thinking that 'tis with them that her Grace will be brought up."

And he explained that in France the royal nursery was scarcely ever established in the same place as the Court, and small wonder, seeing how extremely peripatetic was the latter, now at Fontainebleau, now at St. Germain, now at Blois or Amboise—always, it might be said, upon the road. Not indeed that the royal children also did not change their residence from time to time, but less frequently.

He had barely finished when Agnes came in again to say that their mother craved another sight of him before she slept.

"Sleep? Is she disposed for sleep already?" exclaimed Robert. "It is not her wont. Is not that of good omen?"

"Of the best, I think, brother," replied the girl. "It must be Ninian's coming that has brought about the change."

"You see, Monsieur l'Archer," said Robert, again heavy-handedly, "that it behoves you bide here at Garthrose!"

(3)

Though the eastern windows of the little fourteenth-century chapel at Garthrose were scarcely more than slits, a solitary

gleam of sunshine was enough to pale the altar candles for a moment. Soon they would cease to burn at all, for the week's mind mass for the soul of Catherine Graham was just over.

Kneeling there in his mourning garments beside his young sister, Ninian found it hard to believe that the respite had come to an end seven days ago. For a respite there had been; his mother had lived on for five weeks after his arrival. And now there was nothing to keep him longer in Scotland, for he had learnt that he need have no anxious thoughts about his sister Agnes's future. John Crichton of Fentonhill was all eagerness to provide for that, now that Lady Graham no longer claimed her daughter's care. Stealing a look at Agnes now, as with fast-joined hands and closed eyes she prayed for their mother's soul, Ninian thought she looked more like a nun than a bride-to-be.

Robert and his two sons left the chapel; then the servants clattered out. Brother and sister knelt side by side for a while longer, until Ninian, with a sigh, rose and offered his arm to Agnes. They came out silently into the grey, cloudy morning—and to the perception that the courtyard of Garthrose House was full of strange horsemen. Agnes hung back, surprised.

"Ninian, who are these?"

But her Archer brother was for the moment as much at a loss as she, though he saw at once the badge they bore, three red cinquefoils on a silver ground. His memory, rusted by his exile, would not interpret the cognisance. Then a figure ran down the steps and his young nephew James came hastening towards him.

"My father has sent me to fetch you, sir, for my Lord Livingstone is here, and asking for you."

"Lord Livingstone!" exclaimed Ninian astonished. "Lord Livingstone, one of the Queen's Keepers—and asking for me?"

“He is our kinsman on our mother’s side, Ninian,” Agnes reminded him gently. “He has perhaps heard . . .”

They went together up the steps, but at the top the girl slipped away. Ninian went alone into the hall chamber. There stood Robert with a richly-dressed gentleman, red-faced and grey-bearded, whom he had evidently just induced to seat himself in the high-backed chair of honour.

But the gentleman at once heaved himself out again. “Is this Master Ninian Graham? Kinsman, I hope that you as well as your good brother here will forgive this unheralded visit to a house of mourning?”

He held out his hand. “My lord,” murmured the still astonished Ninian, “your presence here at all . . .” For he knew that since the decision had been finally taken to send the little Queen to France without loss of time, Lord Livingstone as well as his fellow Keeper, Lord Erskine, must be immersed in preparations.

“Aye, aye, I have weighty matters on my shoulders these days,” completed the visitor, with a sigh not devoid of satisfaction. “Nevertheless, I would have come to Garthrose before, although I had not heard till three days agone of my poor cousin’s death. I have but snatched an hour now to ride hither to present you with my condolences and to say a prayer at her graveside. . . . Poor Catherine; I mind her as a lass. I was at her wedding too . . . a fair bride she made, and a loving one.”

Lord Livingstone turned suddenly about, as if seeking something, and found it—upon the wall. Malise Graham seemed to give him back look for look; and after a second or two the Lord Keeper removed his gaze.

“My lord,” here said Robert, indicating the food and wine which was being hurried in, “you will, I hope, take some refreshment?”

But their visitor, saying that he had recently broken his fast, would accept no more than a cup of wine and a morsel of bread. Ninian served him and then sat down by his side,

and found after a while his noble kinsman enquiring how he intended to return to France. He answered that he supposed he should find some vessel or other at Leith, that he must get back to his duties as soon as possible and that he would not have lingered even these few days since his mother's death, but that there were her affairs to set in order.

Lord Livingstone wiped his beard. "But know you where to find King Henry when you land? Was he not about to set out for Piedmont when you left France?"

"He had already done so, my lord. It was on the way thither that I received news of my mother's illness and obtained leave of absence to go to her. And when I reached the coast I was just in time to procure a passage to Scotland in M. d'Essé's squadron."

At that Lord Livingstone threw down his napkin as one who receives illumination. "'Tis in a squadron, then, that you shall return, kinsman! I'll contrive that you shall embark upon one of the French galleys which are to take the Queen's Grace to France. God willing, we set sail in a few days from Dumbarton, for the galleys have already passed the Pentland Firth."

"The Pentland Firth!" exclaimed Robert in amazement. "In God's name, what do they up there?"

The Lord Keeper smiled. "Why, good Master Graham, they fool the English, to be sure, who look to see them setting forth for France from our eastern coast. And while they watch it the galleys with her Majesty on board will slip out of the Clyde."

"By'r Lady, well thought of!" said Robert Graham. "But . . . galleys, my lord, *galleys*, off the northern shores, in those seas!"

Lord Livingstone nodded complacently. "Aye, I believe no galley hath ever confronted them before. But it is high summer, and M. de Villegaignon a skilled and seasoned sailor. So, if they make the Clyde safely, will it like you to sail for France in one of them, cousin Ninian?"

“Nothing would like me better, my lord,” answered his kinsman gratefully. “And thus I might chance, also, to get a sight of my sovereign lady, who was not even born when last I was in Scotland.”

“I shall contrive that too, if I can,” the Lord Keeper assured him. “And you will see that she is the rarest child the sun ever shone upon. I counsel you, then, to be at Dumbarton in three or four days’ time.”

(4)

Armed men, waiting ships, a wide river stippled by the wind, a nursery of five excited little girls to be embarked from the frowning steeps of Dumbarton—and one of them a Queen. In addition, a retinue of nobles and gentlemen, young and old; Monsieur Artus de Maillé, Sieur de Brézé, the French ambassador, full of solicitude and the last recommendations of the Queen Mother, Mary of Lorraine; the Lords Erskine and Livingstone, appointed for “the keiping of our Soverane Ladeis persoun”; Lady Fleming, her “governess” who, being a natural daughter of King James IV, was also the aunt of her royal charge; Lord Robert and Lord John Stuart, the two youngest of the Queen’s four bastard brothers, and a number of serving men and women. Most certainly that seaman of experience and Knight of Malta, the Sieur de Villegaignon, had his hands full.

One hundred and twelve years earlier, from this same port of Dumbarton, another child princess of the House of Stuart, but little older, had set sail for her marriage to the future King of France. She left behind her broken-hearted parents, and went herself, all unknowing, to a broken heart. But with the widowed Mary of Lorraine the compensations far outweighed the sorrow of parting with her only child. Her ambitions for her daughter and the strong family feeling which ran in her Guise blood were alike gratified by that

daughter’s coming betrothal to the heir of France. The marriage would lift to yet greater eminence that ambitious and already very influential princely house. In France the little Mary, France’s future queen, would still be under Guise tutelage, for when her grandfather, Duke Claude of Lorraine, and her grandmother the Duchess Antoinette, and her great-uncle the rich and powerful Cardinal of Lorraine should have passed away, there would still remain her six uncles, of whom two were already high in royal favour. So much for the family fortunes. More important still, once in France and betrothed to the Dauphin, Mary of Scotland would be safe from any further attempt of the English to wed her to their young King, Edward VI. and to make a vassal kingdom for themselves beyond Tweed.

Before the summer sunset had ceased to colour the waters of the Clyde, the embarkation with all its turmoil had been successfully carried through, and the French galleys with their passengers were anchored for the night, to await a favouring breeze next morning. The fresh wind of the earlier part of the day had almost entirely died down, but what remained was still south-westerly, and the master of Ninian’s galley, the *Sainte Catherine*, averred that he liked the look of the sunset not at all. But, inexperienced and excited, the Scottish lords and ladies of the Queen’s train were fain to think it augured well for their voyage towards that Paradise of their dreams, the Court of France.

In a small, richly-decked cabin in the stern of the Queen’s galley, the *Saint Michel l’Archange*, the hanging lamp burnt already, swinging almost imperceptibly over a narrow bed behind which was stretched on the bulkhead a tapestry with the arms of Scotland. On either side of this bed were two slightly wider ones, for there was not room on board to give the Queen of Scots a cabin to herself, and she must share it with her four little namesakes and playmates of Livingstone, Beaton, Seton and Fleming. Laid two and two, tired out with the day’s happenings, for they were none of them much

above six years old, these playmates were now drowsy, save little Mary Seton, who was already feeling sick, and was tearfully proclaiming the fact to the annoyance of her sleepy bedfellow, Mary Livingstone, snuggling away from her companion beneath the bed-clothes.

All at once there was a stir in the central bed, and the Queen of Scots sat up. The embroidered nightcap which fitted her little head so tightly could not altogether imprison her young red-gold hair; her eyes were bright with disdain.

“Foolish little Seton!” she said contemptuously in the French which was her mother’s tongue. “This is but the river, and we are at anchor! What will you do when we are upon the ocean?”

“Lie down, your Grace, I beseech you!” adjured the maid of honour, Magdalen Lindsay, who, being at the moment the only attendant on the royal sleeping cabin, had come over to comfort Mary Seton. And stooping over the whimpering child she said kindly, “It is but fancy that takes you, my dear. Shut your eyes, and think that you are in Stirling or Dumbarton again.”

“I wish I were!” gulped the sufferer. “I do not want to go to France in this ship!”

“Not want to go to France!” exclaimed the Queen, her childish voice shrill with scorn and amazement. “Mary Beaton, do you hear that?”

A sleepy sigh was the only response from the other double bed.

“If indeed you do not want to go to France, little coward,” continued the royal child, “I will leave you behind. You shall be put into a boat to-morrow morning, and I will tell M. de Villegaignon to have you taken back to Dumbarton, all by yourself, and we will sail without you!”

At this prospect the already tried Mary Seton burst into howls. A determined presence with a white coif and wide skirts was immediately in the cabin—Janet Sinclair, the

Queen’s nurse, who was accompanying her to France, though it was assumed that she would not remain there.

“What’s this? Greetin’ a’ready? What gars the wean, Mistress Lindsay? And you, your Grace, lie ye doun!”

Her Grace assumed a mutinous expression, but after a moment she obeyed. So did Mary Seton obey a rather fierce injunction to cease her lamentations; and when, some quarter of an hour later, Janet having departed again, Lady Fleming herself entered the cabin, every one of the little girls was asleep. She stood a moment by the Queen’s couch, then bent over her own little daughter, curled up unstirring beside Mary Beaton, and smiled.

Mother of six children, widowed of the husband who had fallen at the battle of Pinkie only the year before, Lady Fleming at eight and thirty, in the plentitude of a rich, full-blossoming beauty, was still very attractive to men. And she had a way with her own sex too; at least she had in the past shown her young kinswoman Magdalen Lindsay a marked kindness, for no ascertainable reason. And now she had procured for her the envied post of maid of honour—dignified by that title, though it was rather that of bedchamber woman—procured it too with some difficulty, seeing that the daughters of many noble Scottish houses coveted it, and that Magdalen Lindsay’s widowed father would only consent to her absence for a year.

“’Tis to be hoped,” said this benefactress in lowered tones to her protégée, “that Mary Seton will not be queasy again, and awaken the rest of the children.”

“If she is,” answered the girl, “I will take her to my own bed in the little cabin yonder.”

(5)

The wonderful good fortune which had attended Villegaignon’s galleys in the voyage right round the north of

Scotland—a voyage the like of which vessels so little suited to such seas had never made before—now deserted them entirely. Almost immediately the weather deteriorated, and though it was high summer the sky put on the gloom of November, and the sea its turbulence. And when, after delays in the river caused by the adverse wind, the convoy was at length launched forth into the Firth of Clyde, between the long finger of Kintyre and the Ayrshire coast, a real tempest snarled about the slender vessels. Having so precious a cargo M. de Villegaignon thereupon put back for safety into the harbour of Lamlash in Arran, behind the shelter of Holy Island.

Despite his kinship with Lord Livingstone, Ninian Graham was not of sufficient importance to be among those who made the voyage in the royal galley, nor, for all his desire to see his little Queen, had he expected such a privilege. But it was here at Lamlash that the ill wind not only brought him the fulfilment of his wish to set eyes upon her, but blew open the gate to all that followed.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon of the day succeeding that on which the squadron had sought refuge at Lamlash. The sea had marvellously abated, but the sky was still angry enough to make it prudent to defer departure till the morrow. Leaning against the bulwark on the poop of the *Sainte Catherine*, Ninian was staring idly at the long, slim shapes of the anchored galleys, built for speed rather than for encountering heavy seas, and relying more upon their banks of oars than upon their triangular sails. A small boat, he saw, had put off from the *Saint Michel l'Archange*, and was pulling towards the *Sainte Catherine*. He noticed it, but no more, his thoughts busy with memories of his mother and of Garthrose.

Some minutes later the captain of the galley approached him. "Monsieur l'archer, a messenger is come for you from the Queen's galley."

Ninian turned, and saw the cinquefoil badge once more. Its wearer removed his cap.

“If it please you, Master Graham, my lord requests your presence that he may present you to her Majesty the Queen.”

When Ninian boarded the *Saint Michel* he found his distinguished relative awaiting him.

“Welcome, kinsman,” said he, clutching his fur-bordered mantle closer about him. “I bethought me to take advantage of this delay to present you, as I promised, to the Queen’s Grace, lest it should not be possible upon arrival in France. But when I saw you tossing about in that cockle boat, I doubted if the summons pleased you.”

“Indeed it did, my lord,” Ninian assured him gratefully. “For I too have doubted whether upon landing I should have that privilege, seeing that I must hasten back with all speed to the Archer Guard.”

“God knows whether we shall ever land in France at all, as things have fallen out,” responded the Lord Keeper rather dismally, as they engaged in an alleyway. “Even should we have fair winds henceforward, this delay will have given the English the chance to waylay us. You will find great quantity of people round her Majesty, I fear.”

He was right. The long, narrow poop cabin was full of the Queen’s train, and Ninian could see nothing at first but a throng of gentlemen and ladies, though almost immediately he heard above their voices the sound of childish laughter. Next moment the nearest group, recognising the Lord Keeper, parted to allow him passage, and the Archer, following him, saw in a space cleared in the centre of the cabin, three little girls in their long stiff kirtles playing at ball, watched and applauded by the bystanders. Yet as Lord Livingstone paid no heed to them, Ninian knew that none of them was the Queen.

But farther away were two others, engrossed with a large bell-shaped wicker cage, containing a couple of quails,