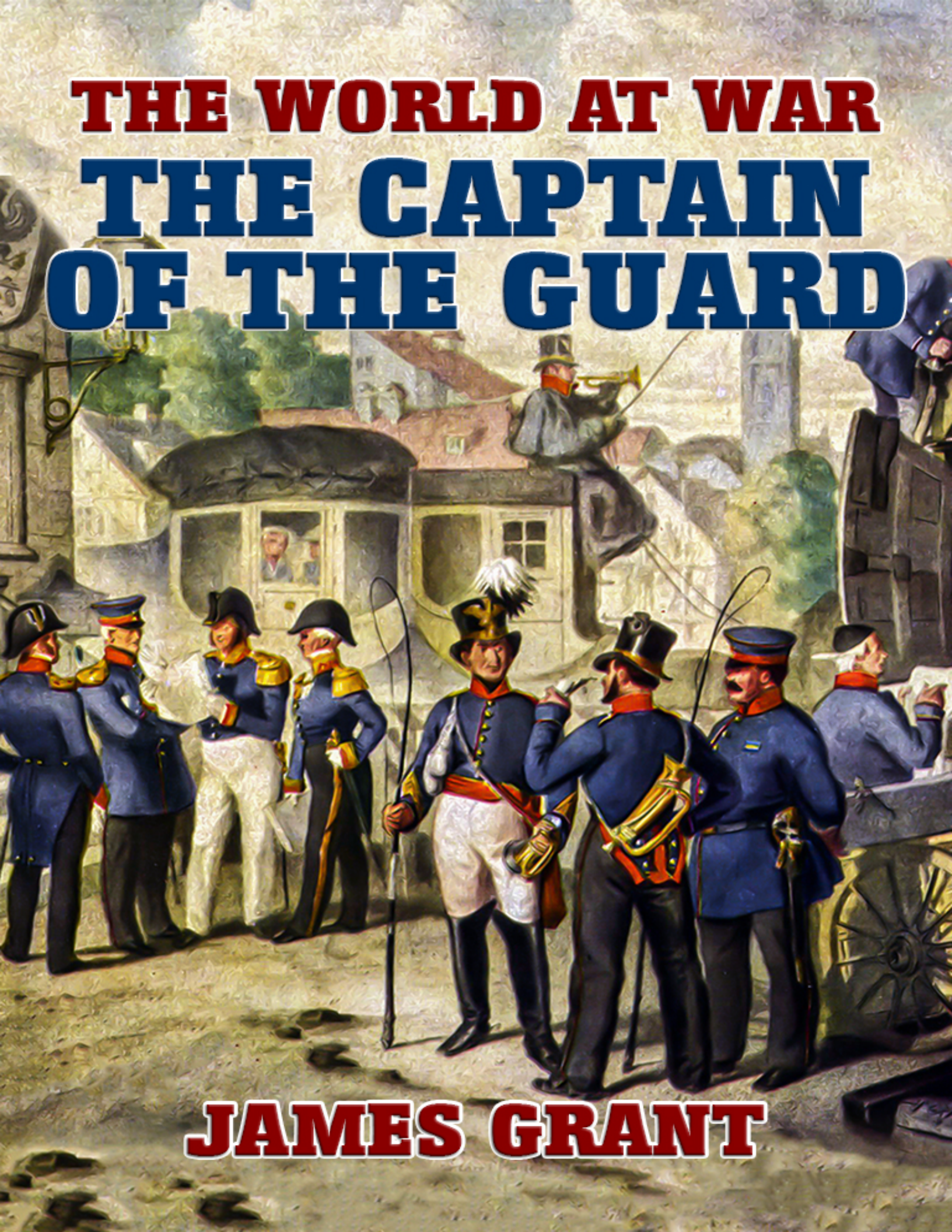
THE WORLD AT WAR

# THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD



JAMES GRANT

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# PREFACE.

Many of the scenes and episodes which are delineated in the following story are taken from the annals of Scotland.

Those which belong to romance I leave the reader to discover.

My wish has been to portray the state of the nation and its people during the reign of the second James, without afflicting the reader by obsolete words and obscure dialects, which few now care about, and still fewer would comprehend, but following history as closely as the network of my own narrative would permit.

In some of the proceedings of the Douglas family, and minor details, it has suited my purpose to adhere to other sources of information, rather than the "Peerage," or the folio of Master David Hume, of Godscroft, the quaint old historian of the House of Douglas.

*March, 1862.*

# CHAPTER I.
# THE FOUR COFFINS.

God save the king, and bless the land
In plenty, joy, and peace;
And grant henceforth that foul debate
'Twixt noblemen may cease.—CHEVY CHASE.

On the evening of the 22nd November, 1440, the report of a brass carthoun, or cannon-royale, as it pealed from the castle of Edinburgh, made all who were in the thoroughfares below raise their eyes to the grey ramparts, where the white smoke was seen floating away from the summit of King David's Tower, and then people were seen hastening towards the southern side of the city, where the quaint old streets and narrow alleys opened into the fields, or the oakwoods of Bristo and Drumsheugh.

Crowds from all quarters pressed towards the Pleasance, the route by which the great earl of Douglas (duke of Touraine and lord of Longoville), who had been invited to visit the young king, was expected to enter the city. Curiosity was excited, as it was anticipated that his train would be a brilliant one. All in the secluded metropolis of the north were on tiptoe to behold a sight such as they had not been gratified with since the ambassadors of Amadeus VIII., duke of Savoy, had come to ask the hand of the king's little sister, Annabella, for his son, the valiant Louis Count de Maurienne, to whom, however, she preferred a Scottish earl, with a Scottish home, on the bonnie banks of the Clyde.

The boom of the same cannon brought to the bartizan of the great tower whereon it stood four armed men, who immediately turned their eyes towards the south.

Two of these were men well up in years. They wore furred caps of maintenance, denoting their high rank or position, and had long crimson robes, with capes of ermine that fell to their elbows. Beneath these flowing garments there glittered at times their steel habergeons, and the embroidered belts which sustained their swords.

One was a man of a tall figure and noble presence, with a long, grave, and pleasing face.

The other was equally noble in bearing, but his face was less pleasing in expression, for his temples were hollow, his eyes keen, his brows knit, and there played about his thin, cruel lips a crafty but courtly smile.

"Summon Romanno, the constable; bid him display the king's standard—call the garrison to their arms—shut gates and barriers," were the orders given rapidly by both at the same moment.

The first was Sir Alexander Livingstone, of Callendar, Regent of Scotland, and governor of the young king, James II., then in his eleventh year.

The second was Sir William Crichton of that ilk, the Lord Chancellor, appointed by the Parliament, after the murder of the late King James I., in the Black Friary, at Perth.

"Red-haired Achanna, with his Judas-coloured red beard, has played his cards well for us and for the king," said the Chancellor, with a crafty smile.

"Achanna," replied the Regent, grimly; "yes, a wretch born with the stamp of hell on his forehead—a hireling clerk, as well as swashbuckler."

"But a useful man withal, and said to be a go-between of Douglas and Duke Robert of Albany."

James Achanna, the person to whom they referred, was a red-haired and red-bearded gentleman, of Galloway, outwardly a stanch adherent of Douglas, but in the secret pay of his enemies, the Regent and Chancellor. Thus he had conveyed the artful message by which the hostile earl, and the chief members of his family, were *lured* to visit the court of the young king.

"So he is in sight at last," said the Regent through his clenched teeth; "do you see his train, my lord?"

"Aye; on the road by Kirk-liberton. He is coming down the brae in his bravery, with banner and spear, but that pride shall have a fall, for he comes to his doom."

"But, Chancellor, his countess and her sister," whispered the Regent; "they—they——"

"Well; what of them?"

"Must they too perish?"

"Let the whole brood perish at one fell swoop," was the fierce response, in a husky whisper. "Had they but one neck, I tell thee, Livingstone, it should be laid on the block that awaits the Douglas in the hall below us."

"Hush!"

"And wherefore hush?" continued the elder statesman, fiercely.

"Know ye not that Sir Patrick Gray loves the earl's cousin?" said the Regent, glancing hastily at their two companions, who stood a little way from them.

"Murielle Douglas," replied Crichton, grinding his sharp teeth; "well, be it so; but I shall give her a colder gudeman

than the king's liege subject, and the Captain of his Guard—will God I shall!"

The Regent waved his gloved hand to impress the caution he wished his colleague to observe, and, as if afraid to trust his discretion further, withdrew to a corner of the rampart enclosing the summit of the great tower, which then formed the donjon or keep of the castle of Edinburgh; but ever and anon, as the gleam of arms flashed in the sunlight, on the green pastoral slopes of Liberton, they exchanged a deep and bitter smile.

Two handsome young men, who had not yet spoken, but who attended them and stood apart, were sheathed in complete armour, and wore the beautiful bascinets of that reign; these had a tube for the plume, and were encircled by a camaile like the old caps of the Templars. They had gorgeous military girdles and long swords, globular corslets, and wide hanging sleeves of scarlet cloth lined with yellow silk (the royal colours), depending from their shoulders; this was a very anomalous fashion with armour, but formed a portion of the military foppery of that day.

He with the short beard and black moustache, in the prime of strength and manhood, is Sir Patrick Gray, a younger son of the lord of Foulis, and *Captain of the King's Guard*; and he, the less in stature, the junior in years, with fair hair and merry eyes, is Sir Thomas MacLellan of Bombie, his cousin and friend, and lieutenant of the same guard, which the Regent had embodied to protect the person of the young king from the perils amid which his father had perished—perils which the house of Douglas seemed about to revive.

"Do you see, gentlemen, how the lances in his train glitter, as they come rank on rank over yonder long green brae?" said the Regent, turning round; "by my soul, Lord Chancellor, he has an escort that might befit a king!"

"A train of cut-throats, swashbucklers, and scrape-trenchers; MacDouals, MacGhies, Achannas, and MacCombies——"

"Chancellor, do not add MacLellans, I pray you," interrupted the lieutenant of the guard.

"The broken men of Galloway," continued the Chancellor, wrathfully; "the bullyrooks of Thrave—outlaws, whose unchristian acts would put to shame the pagans of Argier or Cathay—of the Soldan or Prester John! and I say so, under favour, Sir Thomas," he added, turning with a sudden smile to the lieutenant, who was chief of the MacLellans of Bombie, a powerful family, whose lands were surrounded by those of the Douglases and their adherents.

"Do you include the Lord Abbot of Tongland among those rare fellows?" asked Sir Thomas, who was piqued for the honour of his native province.

"An abbot who acts as the earl's beadsman can be little better," was the sour reply.

The young man bit his moustache impatiently, but the more politic Regent, to soothe the irritation which his colleague's words were inspiring, said hastily to one who had hitherto been silent, "Sir Patrick Gray, how many followers think you, by your soldier's eye, the earl hath under his banner yonder?"

"At least two thousand men, with horse and spear, if I may judge by the breadth of the road, and the cloud of dust they raise," replied the captain of the guard, with soldier-like brevity and confidence.

"Two thousand!" muttered the Regent; "passing strong for a mere subject."

"Douglas never leaves his castle gates with less," said MacLellan; "and wherefore marvel? They are not so many after all for such an earl as Douglas, when the laird of

Roslin's daughter never enters Edinburgh with less than seventy mounted gentlemen in her train, each clad in a velvet jupon, with a chain of gold at his neck."

"Two thousand lances," muttered the Chancellor also, stroking his shaven chin, for beards were only worn by soldiers at that time, and not always by them.

"And you have but three hundred men-at-arms in garrison here—billmen and cannoneers?" whispered the Regent.

"But they are all my own vassals, men bred under my roof-tree since they were boys of the belt; these, with a hundred pikes of the king's guard, are more than enough for our purpose, within a castle so strong as this," replied the Chancellor, whose pale lips quivered with the nervous fury he strove in vain to conceal from the two gentlemen who stood at the other corner of the bartizan; for a plot had been laid to destroy the mighty earl of Douglas, one of those dark, terrible, and sudden plots, which, under the name of *raids*, so frequently convulsed the kingdom of Scotland, and marked its martial annals with blood and crime, the only shadows that tinge a great and glorious past.

The soldiers, pages, and idlers of the castle who had been playing at troy, chess, or shovel-board, for the bonnet pieces and silver pennies of King James, relinquished their sport, and crowded to the ramparts to observe the approach of the now obnoxious and turbulent Douglas.

And now, for a time, these four persons described continued to observe in silence the approaching train of the great feudal peer, the lances of whose vassalage (among them were many knights, barons, and gentlemen of his surname) glinted brightly in the evening sun, as they moved down the northern slope of Liberton, past the old tower built by David Liberton, sergeant of the overward of the constabulary of Edinburgh, in the time of David II., and past the older

church, the foundation of which fond tradition unvaryingly ascribed to Macbeth, though, mysteriously enough, on its demolition in 1815, there was found in its base an iron medal of the 13th century, inscribed in Russian characters, "*The Grand Prince St. Alexander Yaroslavitch Neffvskoy*."

On the earl's train disappearing among the wooded hollows which lay between the city and the furzy slope of Braid and Liberton, the captain of the guard and his kinsman the lieutenant, with their esquires, pages, and lacqueys passed forth from the castle, to swell the retinue of the chief magistrate of the city, Sir Thomas Cranston of that ilk, baron of Denholm and Stobs, warden of the marches, and one of the conservators of peace upon the borders, for the steel-gloved provosts of those stirring times were men of a different metal from the men of words, who "twaddle" in the same place in this age of steam and electricity.

As they passed out, the king's master butcher entered the gateway of the fortress, accompanied by a peddie or foot-boy, bearing a covered bundle upon a trencher.

This covered bundle contained a *black bull's head*.

"See you *that*, Sir Alexander?" said the Chancellor, twitching the furred sleeve of his compatriot.

"The black bull's head!" said the other, with an irrepressible shudder.

"Yes; for the banquet to-morrow."

"Holy Dame!"

"It is the fatal signal, to be placed on the table the moment the king rises."

"The king! Oh, Chancellor," said the Regent, in a voice that turned almost to a groan, "after all I have urged, mean you that he, poor boy, shall share the odium of our act—a deed

at which one half of Scotland, and perhaps all France, may cry aloud?"

"Let them cry; the *end* shall sanctify the means. With Douglas in his grave, the great seal will be firmer in my hands, the sceptre lighter in yours, and the crown shall shine the brighter on the head of him whose father was wronged and slain by such as Douglas in the Black Friary at Perth."

"I pray God all may end as you predict," said the Regent, doubtfully; "but yet I shudder when contemplating this lure —this snare; the mock banquet, the mock tribunal, and the bloody lykewake of the morrow."

That night, after dusk, four coffins were secretly conveyed up the rock, and through the west postern of the castle, by James Achanna and other "muffled" or masked men, and these were concealed in the chancellor's private closet, the door of which opened off the great hall of David's tower.

These coffins were covered with crimson velvet and had nails, handles, and plates of gold, or at least of richly gilt work.

The first had the name of the most potent prince William, sixth earl of Douglas, third duke of Touraine, lord of Longoville, Galloway, Annandale, and Liddesdale, *qui obit 23rd Nov., 1440*, in his seventeenth year.

The second coffin bore the name of his younger brother, Lord David, *qui obit 23rd Nov., 1440*.

The third bore the name of his countess, Margaret Douglas, so famed for her beauty as the Fair Maid of Galloway, *qui obit 23rd Nov., 1440*, in her eighteenth year.

The fourth bore the name of his sister, Lady Murielle Douglas, two years younger, with the same fatal inscription, *qui obit 23rd Nov., 1440*.

Beyond these four coffins, in the gloom of that vaulted closet, were a grindstone, an axe, and a block.

We have opened our story on the evening of the TWENTY-SECOND November; thus we shall soon see with what intent these terrible objects were provided.

# CHAPTER II.
# WILLIAM, DUKE OF TOURAINE.

Vails not to tell each hardy clan,
From the fair middle marches come;
The Bloody Heart blazed in the van,
Announcing Douglas, dreaded name!—Scott.

At this time the house of Douglas, one which in past ages had ever led the van of battle in the cause of Scottish honour and liberty, had attained the most exorbitant, and in that warlike and feudal epoch, dangerous power—a power that never ceased to menace the freedom of the people on one hand, and the independence of the throne on the other.

William, sixth earl of Douglas, and third duke of Touraine, had just succeeded to the vast possessions of his family by the death of his father, Archibald, who had been Lieutenant-General of Scotland, and Marshal of France, and who died at Restalrig, in 1439.

In his seventeenth year, William found himself master of all the princely heritage his warlike sire had left him, the earldom of Douglas, with the lordships of Bothwell, Annandale, and Liddesdale; the county of Longoville, and the dukedom of Touraine, "the garden of France."

To these he had added the principality of Galloway, the county of Wigton, and the lordship of Balvenie, by marriage with his cousin, Margaret, the Fair Maid of Galloway, a high-born girl of great beauty and spirit, who was one year his senior, and whose proud and fiery temper made her prove his evil mentor in many an act of folly and outrage; while Lady Murielle, the younger and gentler sister, whose

loveliness was long embalmed in many a sweet old Galloway song, strove anxiously, but vainly, to avert them.

Even in that age of pride, vain of his lofty ancestry, which he could trace back through a long line of brave and loyal nobles to that Sholto Dhu-glas, the grey and swarthy warrior, who, in the eighth century, slew Donald of the Isles —rendered powerful by the vast number, the unity and rank of his vassalage, by the strength of his fortresses and extent of his territories, which included the richest and most important districts of the kingdom; hourly told by high-born and artful flatterers that he possessed wealth equal, and armed forces superior, to the king, this rash young noble had of late begun to assume all the state of a crowned head.

On the death of his father, he sent into France two ambassadors to Charles VII., to make his oath of fealty for the dukedom of Touraine.

These unwise envoys, Sir Alan Lauder, of the Bass, a knight of Lothian, and Sir Malcolm Fleming, lord of Biggar and Cumbernauld, were received by the French monarch with a degree of state and ceremony on which the Regent and Chancellor of Scotland, as guardians of its young king, could not fail to look with jealous eyes; thus, stifling their secret piques and heart-burnings, they resolved to coalesce for the public weal, and to watch, win, or CRUSH this warlike feudatory, whose power, ambition, and splendour overtopped the throne, and threatened to extinguish themselves.

On the other hand, flattered by the messages of Charles the Victorious, despising the Regent and Chancellor as mere knights of Lothian, the young earl became guilty of outrages, and evinced an arrogance, that made all tremble for the issue.

When he left any of his castles, he never rode with less than one or two thousand knights and horsemen in his train, all brilliantly armed and accoutred; and this haughty retinue frequently carried havoc, and always terror, wherever they appeared. His household was magnificent; he appointed his petty officers of state, and within his castle-halls of Thrave, Bothwell, and Douglas, held courts which rivalled the meetings of Parliament; while, to the many royal summonses sent him, scornful and insolent answers, dictated by his friends, or rather by those who were the friends of his father, the knights Fleming and Lauder, were returned to the Regent and Chancellor.

Under his banner and name, his followers, many of whom were nobles, thus filled the land with outrage and tumult. The people were without protection and without redress, while the court of the young king was daily crowded by suppliants who cried for vengeance.

"There were," saith Lyndessy, in his Chronicles, "so many widows, bairns, and infants seeking redress for husbands, kindred, and friends, who had been cruelly slain by wicked murderers; siclike, many for hership, theft, and reif, that there was no man but would have had ruth and pity to hear the same. Soon murder, theft, and slaughter were in such common dalliance among the people, and the king's power had fallen into such contempt, that no man *wist* where to seek refuge unless he swore himself a servant to some common murderer or tyrant, to maintain himself against the invasion of others, or else gave largely of his gear to save his life, and afford him peace and rest."

Not content with having produced all this, the young duke, or earl, urged by his ambitious counsellors, dared openly to impugn the king's title to the crown, affecting to prefer the claims of his own uncle, Malise, earl of Strathearn, who was descended from Euphemia Ross, the second queen of

Robert II.; and he intrigued with Robert Stuart, the exiled son of the king's uncle, the late Murdoch, duke of Albany, to subvert the Royal succession.

Sir Alexander Livingstone, the Regent, and Sir William Crichton, the Lord Chancellor, saw that a crisis had come in the affairs of the realm; that the throne and their own position must sink together beneath the overweening power of Douglas unless a dreadful blow were struck; and thus, with all the dark ferocity and stern subtlety of the age in which they lived, they prepared to *strike it*!

James Hanna, or Achanna, one of those smooth-tongued political villains, of whom Scotland has in all ages produced a plentiful brood—a wretch who for gold contrived to be a secret adherent and deluder of both parties, was despatched with a royal message to Douglas's castle of Thrave, in the name of the Regent and Chancellor.

In this mandate, which bore the privy seal of the realm, they "professed the highest esteem for the young earl's character, and a profound regret for the petty jealousies which had so long separated them. They anxiously and earnestly solicited his august presence at court that he might cultivate the friendship of his sovereign, now in his eleventh year, and lend his great talents and influence to the administration of affairs—while the presence of the countess and her sister, Lady Murielle, could not fail to shed some rays of splendour on the court, and be a source of joy to the young princesses, the sisters of his majesty."

This document, so fulsome when addressed to an almost untutored boy, added, that on the vigil of St. Catherine, a banquet in celebration of their friendship and the extinction of discord would be royally held in the great hall of the castle at Edinburgh.

The young earl smiled scornfully on hearing this missive read by the wily Achanna on his knees; but he tossed from his wrist a hawk with which he had been playing, and replied—

"My father never yielded to James I., nor will I to James II., and his two cock lairds of Lothian, who pretend to govern Scotland. Nevertheless, we shall mount and go, were it but to flaunt our bravery at court."

Sir Malcolm Fleming, of Cumbernauld, an old and faithful friend of his father, urged him to mistrust Crichton and remain among his followers; but the desire to dazzle his enemies by the splendour of his retinue, and the *arguments* of his kinsman, the earl of Abercorn, outweighed all that the more faithful and wary could advance.

And herein lay a secret which death might reveal to him; but in life he would never discover.

James the Gross, earl of Abercorn, had loved, but in vain, the beautiful Maid of Galloway, who preferred her younger and more handsome cousin, Earl William; but James was the next heir to the latter, if he and Lord David died without children: thus avarice, ambition, and revenge spurred him on, and caused him to urge the immediate acceptance of the Chancellor's invitation, and *his* energetic advice, with the young earl's vain-glorious wish, bore down all the faithful Fleming could urge.

James Achanna was the villainous tool who worked for him in the dark; and herein was another secret; for Achanna had been a page to the father of the countess, and had loved her too.

This love had expanded suddenly, like a flower that blooms in a night under a tropical moon, and the coquette soon discovered it.

"You love me?" said she imperiously, reining up her horse, as they one day rode side by side near the loch of the Carlinwark.

"Yes," said the page, tremulously, and covered with confusion by the abruptness of the question.

"How old are you, James Achanna?"

"I am four-and-twenty, madam."

"You are but a boy," said she, laughing.

"I am six years *your* senior," he replied, gathering courage.

"And you think me beautiful?"

"Oh, madam!"

"At your age boys think all women beautiful. But, my presuming page, you must cease with this folly and learn to know your place, or it may be changed to one more exalted;" and she pointed with her riding-switch to a stone corbel called the gallows-knob above the gate of Thrave.

The cheek of Achanna grew deadly pale; he ceased the "folly;" but from thenceforth thought only of revenge, and afterwards entered readily into the scheme by which the Douglases were lured to Edinburgh.

Thus, summoning Sir Alan Lauder, his Master of the Horse, the young earl, with all the impetuosity of a pampered boy, ordered his train to be assembled, and set forth for the capital.

Achanna preceded him on the spur, and reached Edinburgh a day or two before him.

The reader will now begin to perceive why those *four* coffins were conveyed by him, under cloud of night, into the vaults of David's Tower; and why a black bull's head, the ancient symbol of sudden death and slaughter among the Celtic

Scots, was concealed by the King's master-butcher in the cabinet of the Chancellor.

# CHAPTER III.
# THE ENTRANCE.

So many and so good
  Of the Douglases have been;
Of one surname in Scotland
  Never yet were seen.—OLD RHYME.

Mounted on fine horses, the bridles and saddles of which were covered by elaborate steel and silver bosses, Sir Patrick Gray, Captain of the King's Guard, with his cousin and Lieutenant, Sir Thomas MacLellan, of Bombie, fully armed and equipped, rode down the steep path from the castle, and, traversing the town, proceeded towards the street by which the earl of Douglas and his train were expected to enter.

For small bonnets of fine blue Flemish cloth, they had relinquished their heavy bascinets, with their large plumes and velvet tippets, which were borne behind them by pages.

The Captain of the Guard was preceded by a mounted esquire, Andrew Gray, of Balgarno, bearing his banner *gules*, a lion rampant, within a border engrailed.

Save the black or grey-robed Dominicans or Franciscans, and priests of other religious orders, all the men of every rank who crowded the thoroughfares that led towards St. Mary's Wynd and the straggling street which ascended from thence to the convent of St. Mary de Placentia (whence to this day it is still named the Pleasance), were well armed with habergeons and caps of steel, swords, daggers, knives, and Jedwood axes—for the paths of life, even for the greatest and noblest in Scotland, were not strewn with roses in those days, but rather with briars in the shape of blades

and spears, woes, wars, tumults, and turmoils, such as their descendants cannot realize in these our days of peace and good order.

Parting on all sides before the esquire, who bore the banner, the people made way for the Captain of the Guard, who with his kinsman joined the attendants of the chief magistrate, Sir Thomas Cranstoun, who was sheathed in complete mail—all save the head—and wore at his gorget a massive chain of fine gold, the links of which glittered among the white hair of his flowing beard.

He was bravely mounted on a great Clydesdale battle-horse; he wielded a heavy steel mace and wore a glittering jupon, on which were embroidered the arms of his family quartered with the triple castle of the city.

He was accompanied by all "the honest men" of the city (*honest* men meant tradesmen—but this was in 1440), preceded by the four baillies, the treasurer, the older corporations, such as the fleshers, the furriers, the cordiners, the candlemakers, and others, under their several devices and banners, and all armed to the teeth. These martial craftsmen lined the narrow and crowded wynd, and from thence up the broader High Street, by which the earl was expected to proceed direct to the castle.

And now, to swell the multitude, came several officers of state, accompanied by the heads of all the religious houses and the heralds of the king. Among them were William Lord Hay, the High Constable; Walter Halyburton, the Lord High Treasurer, and William Turnbull, a canon of Glasgow, who was Lord Privy Seal. Amid the buzz of the assembled multitude, on the varied colours of whose costumes the bright evening sunlight fell in flakes between the broken masses of the picturesque old streets, there were occasionally heard half audible expressions of anxiety for the issue of this noble's visit, as his family and vast retinue

of military retainers were so dreaded for their petulance and turbulence, that all the booth-holders and craimers had closed their places of business and buckled on their armour to be ready for any emergency. In the same spirit the baillies wore shirts of mail under their velvet gowns, and the alarm increased rather than diminished when the Provost was heard to say to Sir Patrick Gray—"I am glad the King's Guard are in readiness, for the wild men of Galloway and those scurvy thieves and bullyrooks of Annandale who follow the banner of Douglas, are certain to work mischief in the town."

Such was the state of feeling in Edinburgh when the long, glittering, and steel-clad train of the mighty Douglas was seen descending the slope past the convent of St. Mary, of which no relic now survives save a fine alabaster carving which represents our Saviour brought before the Jewish High Priest; and the excitement reached its height when the Provost put spurs to his horse and courteously rode forward to greet the noble visitor and bid him welcome to the city with fair words of peace, and to place himself upon his right—a condescension at which the surlier burghers murmured under their beards; for the Provost of Edinburgh, when within its boundary, takes precedence of all nobles, and rides on the right hand of a crowned sovereign only.

When the Provost rode forward, Sir Patrick Gray touched his horse involuntarily with his spurs to follow him; but MacLellan, who was chief of a Galloway clan at variance with the Douglases, arrested the impulse by grasping his bridle and saying hurriedly,—"Stay, kinsman, be wary."

"Wherefore?" asked Gray, with an air of annoyance; "for many months I have not seen Murielle."

"Then the greater reason to stay and make no advance at present."

"The greater reason!" reiterated the other, with increased surprise.

"Bear with me—but women often change their minds."

"Thou art a libeller; she will never change, at all events, and I shall risk—"

"The Regent's displeasure—the Chancellor's suspicions?" interrupted MacLellan, with a smile.

"You are right," replied Gray, checking his horse, while his nether lip quivered with annoyance.

"Listen, kinsman," resumed MacLellan, "this Provost may leave his place, knight and baron though he be, to speak well and fairly this great lord, whose train of lances fill his burgess-wives with fear lest latches be lifted, booths broken, and goods and gear be harried in the night; but *you*, who bear the king's colours on your surcoat, must not make any such advance, especially at such a time as this, when Douglas, like his father before him, hath acted the bullyboy to all Scotland."

"The advice is good, MacLellan," said the captain with a sigh; "but still, will not Murielle expect that I—I should—"

"Approach her?"

"Yes—it is the merest courtesy."

"No; she must be aware that your place is beside the High Constable, who, after our politic Provost here, represents the King."

"Hush! here come the archers—some of your wild Scots of Galloway."

"Wild though you term us," said MacLellan, laughing, "we rough Galwegians lead the line of battle—our privilege long before the field of Northallerton became the grave of ten thousand Scotsmen."

The archers who headed the earl's train were now passing among the crowd, and a band of most picturesque looking desperadoes they were. In number about eighty, they had short bows in their hands, with swords and axes in their broad leather girdles. They were bare-kneed and bare-armed, with long bushy beards and thick matted hair (which had never known a comb) falling in shaggy volumes from under little helmets of steel. In some instances they wore caps of boiled leather, fashioned to the shape of the head, and crossed with a wicker work of iron bands for defence. They wore socks of untanned deerskin, and pourpoints of coarse grey stuffs, with kilts and mantles; and here and there might be seen one, who, by the eagle's wing in his cap, claimed to be of gentle blood; for these hardy and rudely clad warriors were the lineal descendants of those *wild* Celts of Galloway, who, since Corbred Galdus, king of Scotland, was slain by the Romans at Torhouse, had the privilege of leading the van of the Scottish hosts in battle.

After them came the earl's confessor, John Douglas, Abbot of Tongland (accompanied by his crossbearer, his chaunter, and three priests), a learned old churchman who had long favoured a very strange project for the especial behoof of his Satanic majesty; but of this more anon.

Next came James Douglas (by his habits surnamed *the Gross*), earl of Abercorn and Avondale, a powerfully formed but bulky and obese man, with eyes and mouth betokening cruelty, pride, and wickedness. He was in full armour, with his barred visor up. He was surrounded by esquires, pages, and lacqueys, and his horse was led, for in his hands he bore aloft a vast cross-handled sword, with a broad wavy blade.

This was the weapon whilome wielded in the wars of Bruce by the Black Knight of Liddesdale, "The Flower of Chivalry;"

and now it was borne as a palladium, or sword of state, before his more aspiring descendant.

Hugh Douglas, earl of Ormond, similarly accoutred, but in black armour engraved with gold, bore the banner of his chief, a wilderness of heraldic blazonry—azure, argent, or, and gules; but above all, over Galloway, Avondale, Longoville, and Touraine, shone the bloody heart of glorious memory—the symbol of that god-like heart which beat in victory at Bannockburn, and lay cold with the "Good Sir James," amid the Moorish host of Teba. It was topped with an imperial crown and the three stars; the paternal coat of Douglas, with the motto—"*Jamais arrière*."

By his side rode Sir Malcolm Fleming of Cumbernauld, and Sir Alan Lauder, of the Bass, who had borne the young earl's vain-glorious and unwise embassy to France.

Eight knights of the surname of Douglas, who had won their spurs where *then* spurs only could be won, in battle, to wit, the Lairds of Glendoning, Strabrock, Pompherston, Pittendreich, Douglasburn, Cairnglas, Braidwood, and Glenbervie, all horsed and armed alike, the sole difference being the heraldic cadence of descent on their splendidly embroidered jupons and horse-trappings, bore on the points of their lances a canopy of blue silk tasselled and fringed with silver.

Under this princely canopy, the earl and countess—so the people preferred to call them, rather than the duke and duchess of Touraine—rode side by side on white horses.

They were very youthful, for the husband was only seventeen, and his wife a year older; but they had a stature and a bearing far beyond their ages.

"The Fair Maid of Galloway," as she was still named, though a wedded wife, was a dark-haired, black-eyed, and beautiful girl of a proud and imperious aspect, nor could the grace of

her lovely head and neck be hidden by the grotesque horned head-gear which towered above her young brow and waved upon her shoulders, glittering with gold and spangles. She wore a long dark yellow riding robe, trimmed with black wolf's fur, and having hanging tabard sleeves, under which could be seen the sleeves of her inner dress, which was cloth of silver, for this was the age of profusion.

The boy-earl, her husband, wore a suit of light-tilting armour, which, though polished as bright as new silver, was almost concealed by his jupon, which was cloth of gold. His helmet was borne by the page who led his horse; and his dark curls and swarthy visage glowing with youth, pride, and satisfaction, his dark sparkling eyes and haughty bearing evinced, how, like his cousin and wife, he inherited the blood of the Black Lord of Liddesdale.

When the people saw this handsome young noble and his lovely countess riding thus side by side in all the flush of youth, the pride of rank, and feudal splendour, under that gorgeous canopy upborne by those eight gold-belted and gold-spurred knights of high degree, they forgot and forgave all the wrongs and oppressions they had committed, and prayed aloud "that God and St. Mary might sain them and bless them;" but when young Lord David came, riding beside Lady Murielle, and holding the bridle of her pretty bay palfrey, the hushed applause broke forth, for, as a younger sister and unwedded maid she had no canopy over her charming head, so the sunshine of heaven fell freely on her fair young brow, which had no horned head-dress to conceal it, but only a little blue silken hood and a golden caul to confine her beautiful hair.

Gray and MacLellan bowed low and kissed their ungloved hands to the sisters as they passed.

Both ladies changed colour for a moment, but the youngest most deeply and painfully, for she at first grew very pale.

Those who were acute in noting such indications of inward emotion might have discovered nothing save vexation or annoyance in the eyes of the countess, and the flush of tremulous pleasure in the returning blush of Murielle, on suddenly meeting a lover whom she had not seen for many months. But the pallor of one and the flush of the other were keys to greater secrets. "Thank heaven, her companion is only that simpleton, little Lord David," said Gray, as his eyes followed hers; "when I saw by her side a gallant so bravely apparelled, I thought your croak about fickleness was about to prove prophetic, MacLellan."

# CHAPTER IV.
# THE SISTERS.

Her lips were a cloven honey cherrie,
  So tempting to the sight;
Her locks owre alabaster brows
  Fell like the morning light.
And, oh! the breeze it lifted her locks,
  As through the dance she flew;
While love laugh'd in her bonny blue ee,
And dwell'd in her comely mou'.

THE LORDS' MARIE.

A long train of nearly two thousand mounted spearmen, drawn from the Douglas estates in Lanarkshire and Galloway made up this splendid "following," as such a retinue was then termed; and as they wound up the long vista of the crowded street, Gray contrived to place his horse close to the bay palfrey of Murielle, and in a moment they exchanged a deep glance and a pressure of the hand, which explained what—in that age of little writing and no post offices—they had hitherto been unable to tell, that both were steadfast and true to the troth they had plighted at the three thorn trees of the Carlinwark on a moonlit St. John's Eve, when the countess thought her little sister was asleep in her lofty turret at Thrave.

"Do you pass forward to the castle to-night?" he asked Lord David, while fixing his glance on Murielle, for the question related to her.

"No!" replied the little lord, with haughty reserve.

"Whither then?" asked Gray, while a shade of annoyance crossed his handsome face.

"To the house of our kinsman, the abbot of Tongland; does that please you?"

"Good, my lord, I shall there pay my respects to the earl—and make all speed."

"Oh pray Sir Patrick, do not hurry yourself," was the jibing reply.

"Till then, God be wi' you," said Sir Patrick, checking his horse.

"Adieu," added Murielle, with another of her quiet glances; but the lord, her cousin, turned bluntly away, as the king's soldier wheeled his horse round, and with mingled love and anger in his heart remained aloof till the brilliant train passed on.

A group of handsome girls, nearly all of the surname of Douglas, Maud of Pompherston, Mariota of Glendoning, and others, accompanied Margaret and Murielle, as *dames d'honneur*, or ladies of the tabourette, to be educated and accomplished for the positions they were destined to fill in the world: "To be reared to gifts and graces, to silk embroidery, to ritual observances," and the courtly art of winning high-born husbands, in the household of the duchess of Touraine.

These girls managed their horses with grace, they were all beautiful and gay, but the two sisters of Thrave far exceeded them, though their loveliness differed like the tints of spring and summer.

Murielle's beauty was in some respects inferior to that of her proud and imperious sister, but it was of a more winning and delicate character. Though there were scarcely two years between them, Margaret seemed quite a woman,

while Murielle was still girl-like, and in her merrier moods at times almost childish.

The abbot of Tongland relates in his writings, that when Lady Murielle was born at Thrave, she was so lovely a child that lest the fairies might steal her away, and leave in her cradle a bunch of reeds in her likeness, her mother secretly consecrated her to God; but convents were already on the decline, and old Earl Archibald of Douglas and Touraine, as her tutor, could not brook the idea with patience.

"And what news had Sir Patrick Gray?" asked the countess, coldly, as her horse came close to Murielle's during a stoppage caused by the pressure of the crowd.

"No news; nothing," replied Murielle, timidly, for her sister, from infancy, had insidiously usurped an authority over her, which habit had confirmed.

"Did he not speak?" asked Margaret imperiously.

"He merely made cousin David and me a reverence; little more, and passed on."

"After assuring himself, however, where he might be able to see *you* to-night," added cousin David.

"Are you not happy, Margaret, to find these citizens of the king receive us so well?" said Murielle, to change the subject.

"Dare they receive us otherwise?" asked the countess, while the eight bearded knights who bore her canopy exchanged approving smiles under their uplifted visors.

"Sister!"

"Well, sister! These baillies and deacons in their holiday gaberdines and worsted hosen—these websters and makers of bonnets and daggers—these grimy fourbissers, lorimers, and dalmaskers of iron, with their carlins in curchies and