

***HUGH
WALPOLE***

***THE BRIGHT
PAVILIONS***

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The Bright Pavilions

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AN ENEMY

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On the grey afternoon of December 22nd, 1569, Nicholas Herries sat his lovely mare Juno on the moor inland from Silloth in Cumberland, every nerve alert because of the event that any instant might bring.

Nicholas, at this critical moment of his history, was twenty-five years of age, the son of Sir Michael Herries of Court Mallory, near Lewes in Sussex. He was a large young man, six foot four inches in height, of vast breadth of shoulder, a mighty chest, great thighs and a round, rosy-cheeked, merry-eyed head and a thick neck. He was not as yet fat, although later he might be. He was an exceedingly cheerful young gentleman.

Save for his attendant servant, Jack Oates, who sat his horse, obediently, at a distance, there was no other human body to be seen in all the visible world.

Nicholas wore a hat of green leather that sat firm and close on his head, round his thick neck a falling band, a green doublet close to his body, his boots black, long and close to the leg and the boothose some two inches higher than his boots and tied with points. The hilt of his sword was handsomely gilded. His mare and himself seemed like one. Not an inch of him stirred, and his servant, a little man with a cynical eye, was as still as he.

The scene was, at first glance, peaceful enough. A thin line of sea like a long attenuated skein of smoke was barely to be distinguished from the grey of the monotonous sky. The Scottish hills were like vapours of breath. In the bend of

the moor close at hand could be seen the roofs of some hamlet. To the right like a mark of astonishment was a peel-tower raised many years ago against the Scots marauders.

Otherwise not a sound, not a sign, save a hawk quivering above them, then suddenly plunging to its prey. But Nicholas, who was no fool for so big a young man, knew that there was more in the scene than met the eye. He was doubly engaged, for while he was so passionately alert for what was happening at his side, his mind was also introspectively moving around his own private personal world. Although he did not know it he was pursuing two opposite activities at one and the same time.

He was thinking first and foremost of his young brother, Robin, whom he was that night to meet in the little town of Keswick. His young brother was his great duty to the world. Ever since that day when at the age of five he had been shown the white, thin face of that helpless infant in its froth of lace and silk, he had sworn that no harm should come to it. The contrast between his own five-year sturdy ruddiness and that fragility had struck deep to his heart. 'Robin shall know no harm.' *That* was his faith, and equal with it was his worship of his Queen. For a man so young he had already a clear view of her as she was—whimsical in personal fancy, parsimonious, often cruel, often coquetting from vanity, often jealous, often absurd in her love of flattery—but always with a passion for her country's greatness which, however it might be confused with a passion for herself, was nevertheless a grand inspiration to all young men who sought to do great deeds even as Nicholas did.

To these two faiths he added a third, and that was for his own immediate family. The small junior branch of Herries to which he belonged, although allied to the great family of Howard and, on another side, to the Herries of Lowland Scotland, was the subject of his simple and even spiritual worship. He would not be a Duke of Norfolk or Northumberland or Earl of Leicester. He would not be my Lord Herries although he followed what he could hear of that bold Earl's doings with interest—but only Nicholas Herries, elder son of Sir Michael Herries of Court Mallory, and faithful member of that little group: his father's brother, Sir Martin Herries, whom now he was going to visit; the Herries of Temple Guard near Salisbury; and a stray or two like his old cousin Penelope Herries of Dover; old Daniel Herries, a squire in Herefordshire; and his numerous cousinhood.

Here were his three faiths and they were all that he had, save only, the greatest of all, his faith in himself.

Now, at this present instant, all four faiths were concerned, for during the last few weeks there had been stirring deeds in Northern England.

Young Nicholas was no politician nor a religious man either. Anything his Queen might choose to do was right in his eyes. He was nevertheless young enough, full-blooded enough, adventurous enough, to be moved by the knowledge that Mary of Scotland was prisoner in England; lovely, helpless and, in spite of her forced resignation, a Queen. Some who had seen her said that she was not so lovely after all, others who knew her whispered that she was by no means so helpless—but there it was: she was a Queen and a prisoner. Nicholas cared nothing for the Roman

Catholic religion nor very much for the Protestant either. This present world with its glories was sufficient for him. But there were others who thought differently, who had gone so far as to plan to marry the Duke of Norfolk to Mary of Scotland. The Duke of Northumberland with old Richard Norton and his seven sons and a number more hotheads with them had risen in the North, and on November 14th of this very year had entered Durham Cathedral, thrown down the Communion Table, torn up the Bible, raised two altars and restored the Mass. There were some thousand foot, ill-armed yokels for the most part, and fifteen hundred horse. For a brief while the North was in their hand. They marched towards Mary at Tutbury, and she, poor thing, was at once hurried away to Coventry. The rebels turned north again, took Hartlepool and Barnard Castle. By this time levies had been raised against them from all over England, the whole country standing loyal, they broke and fled, and on December 20th, only two days before this present, their leaders, riding for their lives, crossed the Border into Scotland.

Of this final issue Nicholas did not yet know. He had himself been staying for several weeks with Sir Timothy Curtis, a young man much of his own age, near Doncaster.

At the first news of the fighting his immediate impulse had been to go and have a cut at the rebels, for it was always his disposition to fight wherever fighting might be, but a certain sensible caution that was mixed oddly in his nature with his impetuous activity prompted him to remain where he was. Two days ago he had ridden to Carlisle to stay with a friend of his father's and now he was on his way

to join his brother and see, for the first time for ten years, his old uncle outside Keswick.

This had been, in a small fashion, a northern pilgrimage for him: he had never been north before. He had felt at once, riding through Penrith, towards Carlisle, the stir from the northern strain in his blood rise within him. This bare, smoke-grey country widely open to the sky, with the fresh, wildly running streams, the long horizons with only a lonely little tower here and there to break them, the strong smell of the turf, the sturdy ugly sheep, and, soon, the gently rising, unoccupied hills, all these things belonged to him and he to them.

He was always happy when he was not angry, and so he was happy now, singing something out of tune as he rode and calling on Jack Oates for a chorus. There had been no adventures save for his beating a drunken hostler and rescuing a rather blowzy servant-maid from rape in a country barn.

In Carlisle, however, all had at once been different. His father's friend, Thomas Berwick, had a small manor-house in the suburb of the town, where, being now over seventy, he raised bees and a handsome garden. Berwick was a Protestant and a servant of his Queen, and had as deep a hatred of the Scottish Mary as it was possible for so gentle a nature to cherish. The obvious failure of the ill-judged insurrection rejoiced his heart, but already, although the rebellion was scarcely over, hangings and burnings were on the way, villages outside Carlisle were flaming and a number of young, self-important officers of the Queen were

out to satisfy their own sadistic passions as a proof of their loyalty.

Nicholas was at once anxious for his brother, who was but twenty years of age and had travelled up by himself from Oxford. So, on the third day, he left old Thomas Berwick, who had been in perpetual astonishment at his size and vigour and appetite, and rode for Keswick.

Here he was, sitting his horse, motionless on the grey moor, listening for a certain sound to be repeated. His head was erect, his eyes searching, his hand on the hilt of his sword. Oates was as still as he, and Juno, the beautiful darling, as motionless as the little jet-black cloud that hung exactly above their heads.

The sound that he had heard was of a man frantically breathing. It seemed impossible in such a place, for nowhere at hand was there the smallest bush or tree. Nevertheless Nicholas said at length quietly:

‘Come out and show yourself, whoever you are.’

There was no answer, but Nicholas, straining his gaze, saw come from the distant tower two figures and stand there. They were wearing armour which shone and glittered even in that dim light.

Nicholas said again:

‘Come out and show yourself.’

There emerged then right from between Juno’s feet a head of tangled hair, naked shoulders, the lean ragged body of a man.

‘Stand up,’ Nicholas said.

The man stood up and it was clear that he had come from a hole in the ground, a hole covered with twigs and

fragments of dried bracken.

The man was indeed a wretched object. Hanging to one shoulder was a blood-stained torn shirt; his thin chest was covered with grey matted hair, dank with sweat, and his bony hands were about his middle, for he was naked there; long, stout hose still clung to his legs, but he had no shoes. His face with a week's growth of beard had charm beneath the terror, and Nicholas studying it (for he was even at his present age an excellent judge of men) caught the bright blue eye, the well-modelled nostril, the high intelligent forehead, under the dank hanging hair.

'Where are you from, and from whom are you hiding?'

The man pointed with a shaking hand to the two distant figures in armour by the peel-tower.

'They'll be moving. They'll be coming this way.'

'Well—what if they are?'

A shiver shook his body.

'They have dogs with them.'

Nicholas spoke contemptuously.

'You needn't fear.'

The man broke out passionately:

'By God I fear!'

'Where are you from?' Nicholas asked again.

'I was in the sack at Durham. After, I escaped as far as Penrith. Since then they've been hunting me and several more.'

Nicholas moved Juno a pace.

'Against the Queen. I can do nothing for you.'

The man cried out with a shrillness like a hare caught in a trap.

‘No—I swear not. I am a bookseller. I was travelling north to Edinburgh. I have no part in politics nor in religion neither. I’m for the Queen and her service whatever it may be. But the town was in an uproar, and like a fool I must see with the rest. I was with the mob in the Cathedral and a prayer-book fell into my hand marvellously illuminated. I kept it, and two days later was found with it at Barnard Castle. By good fortune and a friend’s aid I got away and thought I was safe, but in Penrith was sworn against by a soldier and with five others was hunted on to the moors. I have had nothing to eat or drink for two days. I had been searching for a mountain stream when I heard them out with the dogs. I found this hole and covered it. I have been lying here for twelve hours. I am almost perished with the cold.’

Nicholas looked into the man’s blue eyes and believed every word of this that had poured out in a breathless gasping torrent, the man’s head turning again and again towards the two motionless figures by the tower.

‘They are watching the moor,’ he said. ‘I know one of them. Philip Irvine. He is in charge here and is a devil.’

‘What is your name?’

‘Peter Gascoigne. Bookseller by St. Paul’s Churchyard.’ The fellow sank suddenly on his bare knees, clasping his bony hands together. ‘Save me from the dogs,’ he whispered. ‘Anything but that. Anything . . .’ Then, the words tumbling over one another: ‘I have a friend in the village there. I come north twice in the year by Keswick. Take me there under your protection and I can manage the rest.’

‘Get up behind me then,’ Nicholas said.

The naked, trembling creature caught at the stirrup and swung himself up, not without agility, and Juno moved forward. Nicholas could not tell whether the men at the tower had seen anything. They did not stir.

As they moved towards the hamlet, Nicholas cursed himself for a fool. His man's ironical eye had told him. Once again his impetuous temper had betrayed him. Although he could witness a bear-baiting, a burning, a hanging and disembowelling, without a twist of the heart, he was so made that he must help one in distress if that one were weaker than he. At least he must always take action and often enough his common-sense caution came after the deed. He had especially determined that he would not be mixed in this Northern business, and most certainly now he was about to meet his little brother Robin. And here he was, by one moment's ill-advised action, already mixed in it!

There was another thing. The name of Philip Irvine stirred something in his memory. He was in some fashion concerned with that name, and not pleasantly. He struggled to remember but caught only the idiotic scent of a carnation. A carnation. A room. A mirror. A monkey. These ill-assorted articles would not arrange themselves. Irvine. Irvine. There was a Sir Humphrey Irvine of Northumberland. A place near Alnwick. A carnation . . . a mirror . . .

Nevertheless, so uncomfortable an uneasiness stirred in him that he felt an impulse to turn in the saddle and tell the man to drop to ground, he could do no more for him. He must fend for himself. Even as he thought this, thin, slow flakes of snow began to fall, wetting his cheek, intermittent as though someone in the sky were letting them slide from

his hand, counting them as they fell. At the same time the armed figures by the tower moved. Horses had been brought. They mounted and slowly started towards the hamlet. There were three great dogs that ran before them. He heard the man's whisper: 'Oh, Christ! . . . Oh, Jesu Mary, save me!'

Juno mended her pace. Nicholas must be in the hamlet and rid of the man before those others reached it. The snow began to fall more swiftly.

The hamlet was quickly reached. Hamlet indeed it was. Some half-dozen cottages, made in the old style of wood posts and 'saddles' covered with clay, mere 'wattle and daub,' and one place, better in quality, with a chimney and one window of glass. This had in front of it a wall. No human being was in sight. A dog lay in the mud scratching at fleas, not minding the snow that already was masking his coat.

Nicholas reined his mare.

'Now down with you. You must fend for yourself.'

The man slipped to the ground and stood there, looking up at Nicholas. Once again young Herries realized that this scarecrow had about him an original charm: his gaze was pure, unclouded, and he stood there as though he had some message to deliver. But he did not speak.

'I should waste no time,' Nicholas said kindly.

At that moment the two armoured horsemen were upon them. They must have ridden with great swiftness, Nicholas thought, from the tower. They must have seen this fellow from the first. The man stood there, without moving. He seemed to be crumpled with terror. The three dogs strayed behind the horses.

The foremost of the two riders and Nicholas then considered one another—their first survey and, by all the designs of heaven, not the last. And yet *not* the first survey, for Nicholas recognized him at once. In the preceding year he had stayed for a night, with his brother, at Sir Henry Sidney's, and, on his arrival, there had been several visitors departing. As they had passed out of the great hall a girl had thrown a dark carnation to a young man who had been teasing a monkey on a gilded pole. He had caught the flower, fastened it in his velvet hat, but not looked at her, only with his head up as though he were king of the world, strode out to the courtyard. He had not even seen Nicholas, but he, alone afterwards with his brother Robin, had asked whether he had noticed him.

'I know him,' Robin had said. 'His name is Philip Irvine.'

Why did I notice him? Nicholas thought. The dark carnation. The monkey chattering with rage. The girl in a heavy crimson dress. As he caught that flower I hated him. He did not even see me.

But he saw him now. He was a young man of great beauty. His jack or steel coat was, in its small overlying plates, of gilded metal; his cuirass also of gilded metal, and his burgonet. His body was of perfect slimness and he sat his horse nobly. His complexion was dark and on his upper lip was a thin black moustache. His eyes were young, ardent, scornful. He was a very proper youth, as Nicholas at once acknowledged to himself.

He seemed at first glance surprised that Nicholas should be there and that he did not move his horse. Their mutual concentration had, indeed, something especial about it.

About Irvine's mouth there was a scornful curve as he regarded Nicholas' great body, contrasting undoubtedly his own slim proportions. But Nicholas was accustomed to jeers at his size. Irvine's voice, however, was gently courteous.

'Sir,' he said, 'this is my prisoner. I am acting under the command of Her Majesty.'

Nicholas raised his hat.

'Mr. Irvine,' he said, 'although we are not acquainted we have almost met. I have seen you at Sir Henry Sidney's.'

Young Irvine bowed.

'My name,' Nicholas said, 'is Nicholas Herries.'

Irvine bowed again.

'This is a pleasant meeting, Mr. Herries,' he said. 'I fancy I know your brother.' Then, quite cheerfully, he went on: 'But I fear time presses. I have reason to be in Carlisle before dark.'

'I apologize for detaining you,' Nicholas said. 'But I am certain that you would not wish an injustice to be done.'

'Most assuredly not.'

'I have had some talk with this fellow and he assures me that he is an innocent bookseller from London who, travelling north on business, found himself in Durham at the time of the present rising, was involved there by no fault of his own, has been driven by fear——'

Irvine interrupted.

'It is certain he does not look an innocent man,' he said, smiling politely.

It was now intensely cold. The moor behind them lay under a skin of snow. The dark was coming on, but the snowfall gave a moonshine effect to land and sky. But what

Nicholas felt and was afterwards to remember, was the peculiar silence. In the hamlet not a soul was visible. The buildings were like dead buildings. Their two voices rose and fell as in a dead world. The two servants, the three dogs, were without movement. Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, Irvine's servant struck a flint and threw, with a careless gesture, some lighted fragment on to the straw-covered floor of a mean barn that was just beyond the wall of the house. The flame ran along the floor and very quickly caught the bare rafters. A great light sprang upon the scene, and the crackling of the flames, as of peevish, quarrelling voices, broke the silence. Irvine made no motion. It was as though he had neither seen nor heard.

'I must have that man,' he said.

Nicholas, whose anger was steadily rising, answered:

'I assure you that he is innocent. He had been in no way concerned against Her Majesty.'

'You have his bare word for it,' Irvine replied. Then, more impatiently, he went on: 'Come, sir, as I have said, time presses. I have much to do. Harrison, show Mr. Herries the warrant.'

The man was feeling in his breast, but Nicholas broke out:

'I assure you I would do nothing against the Queen. Her Majesty has no more faithful servant anywhere. This man shall be examined at Carlisle if you will, and perhaps you will permit me to accompany you there. I had only feared some injustice out of hand.' Then he smiled his boyish, confiding grin. 'The cold is perishing and the fellow will die before our eyes, for as you see he is naked. You are right in

this too, for this is certainly no business of mine and I am due to meet my young brother in Keswick—but somewhere the fellow's case has touched me. If I seem to interfere it is the last thing, I assure you, that I would wish.'

Young Irvine had listened to all this with that same intentness he had observed from the beginning. The lighted barn was now flaming to the dun sky, scornful of the snow, and all the scene was illuminated. Irvine's face, armour, body, horse, were gilded with fire.

He stayed for a moment as though to see whether Nicholas had more to say, then sharply and now with no courtesy answered:

'Mr. Herries, I cannot see that this is any business of yours. This man is a rebel and must be peremptorily dealt with.'

The man, who had not stirred, although his skin was purple with cold, gave a cry, turned, and for an instant Nicholas thought that he would leap into the fiery barn. He must have seen, in that illumined relentless face, no sign of hope. Bent, his head down, his rags fluttering, he sped past the barn, on to the moor.

Irvine called: 'Castor! Caesar!'

Nicholas shouted: 'No. No. . . . By Christ's body, no!'

He thought that he had never seen a man run so fast. The flames showed an expanse of moor like a dirty cotton sheet. The dogs, baying, their heads down, were in pursuit. There was nothing for Nicholas to do, but he, who had already seen and even shared in so much cruelty, now sickened at the heart; must stare because he must, and yet

would have put his horse to the run and galloped from the place.

It seemed for a moment as though the man would outdistance the dogs. But indeed he had no chance. Suddenly he turned, curved in his step and then ran back towards the hamlet. Maybe his notion was that he would leap the wall of the house and beat on the door there for safety, or it might be that he was so desperately maddened by fear that he thought no longer clearly about anything.

Nicholas, almost as though it were himself that was being pursued, cried out:

‘Not back, man. . . . Not back! Out, out to the moor!’

As the wretch came into the full illumination of the fire again, the frantic stare of his eyes could be seen, his head thrust forward as though that would carry him the faster. Then, almost as he reached the flaming barn, the foremost dog was on him, leaping at his back. The man let out a great screech, then fell, the dog on his back. All the dogs were on him, as they would on a fox. They growled, they gobbled. Pieces of bleeding flesh were flung into the air.

Irvine called them off and they obeyed with reluctance. His man climbed down from his horse and bent to look.

‘He’s dead,’ he reported nonchalantly. Then he picked up the remains and threw them into the blazing barn. Irvine dismounted from his horse and went over to the barn as though to make sure that his duty was completed.

Nicholas also dismounted.

‘Before you go I must have a word with you,’ he said.

They approached one another. They were of no great age and it may be that Irvine was truly astonished at the rage

that Nicholas Herries showed. For he had, after all, but done his duty, and who cared for the proper punishment of some wretched nothing? A nothing moreover that had been in undoubted rebellion against the Queen. Now that the insignificant nothing was disposed of, Irvine wished to be on his way, back to Carlisle, for it was already dark and fiercely cold. So he was surprised at this huge irate young man facing him, and it was more surprise than irritation that he felt at first. He half turned towards his horse.

‘I wish you good evening, Mr. Herries,’ he said. ‘It is very cold. I assure you that I have but obeyed my orders—although why,’ he added, smiling, ‘I should have to defend myself to you I cannot imagine.’

‘Perhaps I can explain that,’ Nicholas answered gravely. ‘That poor fellow had placed himself under my protection. You offend me in your disregard of that.’

‘I fail to see the offence,’ Irvine replied. ‘It was in execution of my duty.’

‘Every man has a right to trial.’

‘By God, man,’ Irvine broke out. ‘Where have you been? Do you know in what days we live, when the whole of the North is out against Her Majesty?’

‘I am perfectly aware of it,’ Nicholas said, coming a little closer. ‘Nevertheless, it was the man’s right to have trial.’

Irvine’s temper was now up. This silly, clumsy, interfering fool!

‘I could arrest you, Mr. Herries, for interfering with the Queen’s justice.’

‘Try it and see,’ said Nicholas.

Irvine's hand moved to his short dagger beside his sword. But he spoke suavely.

'Now, Mr. Herries, I want no quarrel although it appears that you want to force one on to me. I have told you a number of times that I am out on my proper duty. The rebellion is not yet ended, and even now the whole of the North may be up. You say that you are a faithful servant of Her Majesty and I have no reason to doubt it. I will wish you a good night and we will both go about our several duties.'

'I am afraid, Mr. Irvine,' Nicholas answered, drawing yet closer, 'that it cannot be so easily settled. The man was in my care. I asked that I might go with you and him to Carlisle, much, I may say, to my own inconvenience. You refused me that courtesy. I request an apology.'

Irvine laughed.

'When you are more russet-pated, Mr. Herries, we will consider it.'

'It is sad,' Nicholas answered, 'for your excellent father to have had such a coward for a son.'

On that word both daggers were out. Irvine had his breast armoured, but his neck and arms were bare.

Both men stepped back and an instant later had sword in one hand and dagger in the other. Both servants had dismounted and were standing ready.

Nicholas, heavy although he was of body, was already an excellent swordsman and loved any kind of sword-play as well as anything in life. The movement alone, in this bitter weather, was a hearty pleasure, but also he had, unanalysed, a deep sense of shame that he had allowed so helplessly the poor man to go to so wretched a death.

Beyond this again he felt a hatred for Irvine that he must watch lest it blind and confuse him.

He discovered at once that Irvine was no mean swordsman. As they felt their way, keeping sedulously their ward, their swords rasping and quivering, but still distant from one another, their personalities betrayed themselves. They had the eagerness of the young men they were and the wisdom of the long training they had received. The snow had made the ground slippery; the fire was dying in the barn; after a minute or two it seemed to Nicholas as though he were in a dream, as though he had been in this place and situation before. He wanted to finish it. He tried the thrust, the charging blow, with the right and reverse, with the edge, the back, the flat. Both men used the Italian play, forcing their weapons, as they had been instructed, 'with two edges and one point.' They moved round in a circle, advancing and retreating, both keeping their ward or guard with all proper elegance.

Then Irvine slipped and Nicholas pierced his arm. Irvine's sword dropped. Nicholas with a bow handed it to him.

'Mr. Irvine,' he said, 'I am quite satisfied.'

Blood dripped from the arm on to the snow, Irvine stared into Herries' face as though committing his features to memory for ever.

'This is a private quarrel, Mr. Herries. No question of my public duty.'

He turned on the snow as though he would fall. His man's hand was on his shoulder. He shook it off.

'Our next meeting'—he bit his lip—'shall be more fortunate.'

'As you will,' Nicholas said.
He mounted Juno and rode slowly away.

THE BRIGHT PAVILIONS

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Chilled to the spleen, mired with the filth of the uneven track under Skiddaw, Nicholas and his cynical man arrived late at the Keswick inn. The hour, the dark, the dripping melancholic snow made no difference to the welcome. The host was out in the yard, servants were running; one took Juno, was for rubbing her, giving her her feed. But Nicholas, even before he saw his brother, must be sure that Juno was well suited, and so there he was in the stables, rubbing his stout snub nose on Juno's coat, murmuring in her ear, and she, in the sharp light of the held-high stable lantern, flashing her imperious, brilliant eye, her ears raised for a sound, her nostrils distended, then quietening as she knew that her friend and master was caring for her and would see that she came to no ill.

And so, back in the inn again, Nicholas was calling: 'My brother, Mr. Herries? He has arrived?'

'Four hours ago, sir. The room is ready, a fire burning, supper prepared.'

He ran up the wide oak stair, the host and a bundle of servants looking up after him in open-mouthed admiration of his size and vigour.

He flung back the door.

'Robin! Robin! Where are you? Come from your pent-house. Where are you hiding?'

Then, inside the door, he stood a moment lost childishly in the pleasure and delight of seeing his little brother again.

Robin Herries was there, warming himself in front of the fire. He was dressed entirely in black, with a diamond at his neck and diamond buckles to his shoes. He wore white cuffs of delicate lace turned back on the sleeve, his white ruff reaching up against his deep dark-brown hair. He bore no resemblance to his brother save for the Herries sharp bone formation that gave a kind of horse-strength to all Herries faces.

His features were almost delicate, saved from femininity by the strength of the eye and the strong broadness of the forehead. His face had much beauty of seriousness and grace of breeding, the eyes dark and lambent, the carriage of the head on the neck full of unconscious dignity, the cheeks delicately smooth. It was the face of a boy in a certain ingenuousness and purity, but the face of a man in its thoughtfulness and intelligence. His body was perfectly formed, slight and elegant but of a strong carriage and dignity. The 'Portrait of a Gentleman' by Nicholas Hilliard has been supposed by some to be a likeness of Robin Herries.

Now his face was illuminated with pleasure at the sight of his big, joyful, bustling brother. The love that there had always been between them was indeed 'passing the love of woman.' They were the exact complement the one of the other, Robin's gentleness, passion for the arts, mystical spirit, love of all beauty, mingling perfectly with Nicholas' animality, out-of-doors eagerness, excitement in worldly adventure. Robin, like any other young gentleman, could ride, fence, play tennis, dance, be a proper courtier, but his heart and mind were already preoccupied with other matters. He gave himself with great difficulty to others

whereas Nicholas was anyone's friend or enemy. He had not as yet fallen in love and Nicholas had been in love a thousand times. They shared a devotion to their home, their father and mother, but even here Robin kept something in reserve. Nicholas' patriotism was simple: whatever the Queen did was right. Robin, as Nicholas had of late, with concern, noticed, was moving towards the Catholic religion. At home there had been a priest, Stephen Rodney, frequently in his company. His father and mother were of the Queen's religion, Lutheran. Sir Michael detested extremes whether of Puritan, Calvinist or Catholic. Nicholas' own spiritual business was with this present enchanting world than which he wanted none better. There were many elements in his brother's nature that he did not at all understand. These were the very things therefore that he must protect. He felt often that Robin was his child, ignorant of the world although so brilliant, weak physically (but Robin wasn't weak).

Now he moved forward, caught him in his arms, held him to his great chest, kissed him, hugged him, stood him back with his hands that he might look at him, hugged him again.

'Robin! Robin! . . . I'm all of a muck, and you as elegant as though you were going to Court.'

'I've been here since afternoon waiting for you,' Robin said.

Nicholas threw himself on to a stool, stretching out his legs. Then he jumped up, opened the door, roared out into the passage for someone to come, then threw himself down again.

'We'll have supper here.'

He got up again, bent in front of the fire, rubbing his hands.

'It's been a bitter ride. And there's been another thing. On the moor I found a man, a fugitive. He said he was a London bookseller, wrongly suspected of a part in the rising. He was in Durham when they sacked the Cathedral. Poor devil, he was naked and eaten with fear. And he had reason, for, after I'd taken him on my horse, one Philip Irvine—you remember him at Henry Sidney's—came up and demanded me to deliver him. I tried what I could do, but the poor devil ran and the dogs had him. Then Irvine and I had a word or two and I ran him through the arm. Then I came on here.'

This was like Nicholas, who always must pour out all his own doings before he enquired of anyone else's. Directly after two servants came in, pulled off his boots, brought in a wooden tub of hot water. Jack Oates appeared with luggage. Nicholas stripped, bathed, dressed in an elegant silver-grey doublet and hose, had all cleared away and supper things laid before the fire. Through all of this he was talking, asking questions and not waiting for an answer, swinging his arms, slapping his chest, then scenting himself, combing his hair, fastening his points as delicately as a woman.

The candles were lighted on the table, food and drink appeared, Oates, with a friendly kick, was speeded down to the servants' quarters, and the two brothers sat down to their meal, under a delicate painting of Venus and Adonis. The snow had turned to sleet and now beat against the windows, which were of horn and so gave a smart but not unc cosy rattling response to the weather.

Robin's questions were all of the Rebellion. How far had it gone? There were stories in Keswick that the Northern Lords were defeated and fled to Scotland. Most of the better class in the North were Catholic. Moreover, in everyone's mind lay the thought of Mary of Scotland, who, however wicked she may have been, was a prisoner in England against Elizabeth's given word. Moreover for these young men the whole matter had an especial interest, for their own distant cousin, Lord Herries, had crossed the border with Mary and was intermediary between her and Elizabeth. They felt almost as though it were a family concern.

'I tell you what it is, Robin,' Nicholas said, taking a chicken bone in his hands and eagerly gnawing it. 'Mary will be no light trouble for our Queen. What's to be done? They can't send her back to Scotland to the tender mercies of her brother. France has no wish for her. To keep her here in England as prisoner is to break the Queen's word and to rouse every Catholic in the country. To execute her is to repeat the murder that she herself committed on Darnley.'

'It is no certain thing,' Robin said, 'that she was privy to her husband's death.'

'She not privy!' Nicholas exploded. 'Was she to forget the Italian falling at her very feet, sixty daggers in his body. Was not Darnley doomed from that very instant? Did she not marry Darnley's murderer some bare months after his putting away? Has she ever wished to bring him to any justice? She may be a queen and fair, but she is no lady for my bedding.'

He laughed and, stretching out, took Robin's slight hand in his.