

Roundhead and Cavalier

The Black Avons II

by Edgar Wallace, 1875-1932

Illustrations by Denis G. King

Published: 1925

George Gill & Sons, London



Table of Contents

Chapter I ...	The Fight for Parliament.
Chapter II ...	The Return of the Stuart.

Chapter III ...

The Fear of the Papist.

Chapter IV ...

The Plot Against James.

* * * * *

Illustrations

- I Frontispiece
- I Old London Bridge
- I Cromwell before the Battle of Marston Moor
- I King Charles on the Block
- II Bunyan in prison
- III The great London Fire
- III King James died
- IV Monmouth convicted
- IV Harry Avon in hiding
- IV Mistress Avon
- IV Women at court



Chapter I

The Fight for Parliament.

IF in this narrative pertaining to those appearances of the Black Avons between the coming in of James Stuart, the Scotsman, until the time I shall leave off, there appeareth a diversity of style and diction, note you that this earlier part of history was by the hand of my father, Sir Stephen Avon, Knight, sometime Alderman of Bedford, and that which comes after is, for a sorrowful reason by Giles Avon, Roundhead and Cavalier, his son. For my father, though a man of great parts, a player on the viol and a singer of sweetness, yet was no scribe such as the ages have produced from time to time in our family, and was in no wise minded to make his record in a clear and running way as my ancestors have done aforetime. So that we have found, in this old chest and that, scraps and screeds of writing which were no easy matter to join together. Yet (though it be a mighty poor thing for a man to praise himself) I have done this with no gaps to fret the reader. This must I say, having read and written nearly to the end of a strange and terrible time in the history of our land: that it were better if Mary Queen of Scots had never lived, though she gave us two good queens.

For myself, though it be treason to write it, having through my father's eyes seen the Stuarts in and out, I say that they came as a withering curse to England from the beginning of them to the end. Vain fool, arrogant fool, profligate and dolt, they succeeded one the other, and left in their train the bleeding bodies of Englishmen to litter the ground and the honour of England fouled in the mire of their pride and cloth. Indeed, though I liked not the man, it seemeth to me that the time of the so-called Protector, Mr. Cromwell, was like unto a place burnished on a rusty shield. War upon war these Scots kings brought us: so that brother fought brother and fathers slew their sons. The first of them tore from the books of Parliament the record of the Commons' vote, thinking thus to obliterate the liberties of England. Would that we could tear from history the pages of their reigns and cast their names and deeds into oblivion. For this you must learn, that the Stuarts were in reality, though some of them did not wish to be such, enemies of the people, high and low. From first to last they broke their own laws, were traitors to their own honour, gave pledges and broke them in the same breath.

—G. A.

Illustration:
Frontispiece

IN conformity with the rule and practice of our family, I, Stephen Avon, Knight, and Alderman of the City of London (I make these descriptions from a desire to be identified rather than from any sense of vanity, for it ill becomes a man to boast of the favours which Almighty God has bestowed upon him) take up my task to describe those events which accompany, as it were, the lives of those dark members of my family, who are called the Black Avons.

My great-grandfather, who died three years after the mighty Elizabeth, has left a record of those times, and it is for me to say that in my day I have seen one Black Avon pass across the scene, that Anthony Avon, son of Sir William of Elizabeth's day, who died for liberty in the reign of James; for, having offended the King, he, taking the side of Parliament, this brave man was set upon by ten villains near to Barnet, where his country home was, and left dead upon the road.

Illustration:
Old London Bridge

Now, as I examine all these years, the beginning and end of Charles, the rule of the Protector, and of our present King Charles II., it seems that I discern yet another great stage in the method by which England was ruled. In the olden times we were governed at the whim of the barons, mighty men of war, who had their strong castles and their retainers, who made war one upon the other, or, joining, went out conjoined with or leagued against the King. The baron rule remained until the days of the sixth Henry, that most saintly prince. Then, from the Welsh mountains came the Tudor, Henry VII., who destroyed the power of the barons and England was made a more lawful place, since one law ran for all. In these

days the Star Chamber might have before it, and judge, such nobles as were too powerful to be tried in the common court. And in this the Court of the Star Chamber, so called because of the patterns upon its ceiling, did good to England, though afterwards the court was debased to tyrannical usages.

And as the kings came to dominate the nobles, so came and grew a power which in turn dominated the kings. And this new menace to the power of kings was Parliament.

It is very well known that there have been Parliaments in England for these hundreds of years, and in the days of Elizabeth she spoke to them very fairly and they gave her loyalty and money; and there was harmony between Crown and Commons. Then came James I., Mary of Scots' son, and reputedly son of the Lord Darnley. James, being, as his most Christian Majesty of France once said, the wisest fool in Christendom, quarrelled with his Parliament being of opinion that kings were divine and could accept no guidance from the representatives of their people.

Yet Parliament was grown too lusty in strength, and dared call the King and his minister to account, chiding him for the exaction of Benevolences, which were 'money gifts' so called, though they were forced from the citizens by the King's officers: nor would Parliament have the monopolies which the King granted to certain companies of merchants, and that for a good round sum; nor the Impositions, as extra taxes were called, and contested them with such vigour that the King put many Members of Parliament into prison.

To the first Parliament of Charles I. was I, Sir Stephen Avon, Knight, called, there to find, to my joy and delight, for I had no forewarning of this, that my illustrious kinsman, Harry Avon, had been sent from Norfolk. He was the second Black Avon of our period, his hair being as jet as were his eyes. But though it is the legend of our family that the Black Avon is wedded to his sword, Sir Harry was a very gentle man, beloved by his tenants, respected by all Parliamentarians and praised for his moderation.

There was in Parliament at this time a Mr. Thomas Wentworth, a man of great parts and singular power, and friend of Laud, who was afterwards to become Archbishop of Canterbury. And often it would happen that we three (for Wentworth, who was in some ways an unfriendly man, was fond enough of Harry) would gather at a tavern in Westminster for dinner, where we would be joined by a certain Mr. Pym, a gentleman of great eloquence, and who by such gifts was afterwards to make a name for himself.

Now this was the position when Parliament assembled. We had King Charles I. on the throne, and with him the Duke of Buckingham for minister, a roysterous, lovable vagabond of a fellow, detested by Parliament. Charles had married Henrietta Maria, a Catholic of France, and this in the face of the growing feeling in our country of a Protestantism which went farther than even the great Elizabeth would have sanctioned. There was in truth a party that we called Puritans, which regarded even the simple services of the Established Church as idolatry. These had numerous representatives in the House of Commons. So that, when Charles asked for money to carry on a war with Spain, Parliament hummed with discontent.

"We'll not do it," said Mr. Pym when they met at dinner, the day after the King had made his demand "unless His Majesty dismisses Buckingham."

"That he will never do," said Harry Avon, shaking his head sadly. "I fear me Buckingham will be too strong for us."

"Then no money goes to Charles for that thief and perverter of public funds," said Wentworth grimly.

How well I remember the bitterness of this man! In truth he would out-Pym our Mr. Pym in his denunciation of Buckingham!

And such was the view of Parliament, which, making its will known to the King's Majesty, was angrily dissolved.

Yet it had so come about, through rights secured to us by our forefathers, that no king, however powerful, can carry on the government of the country without his Parliament, which alone has power to grant supplies; and a new Parliament was called. Harry came to my lodgings early in the morning and we broke fast together with a jug of ale and a broiled capon, such as my woman, Elizabeth Martingale, alone can cook, and he was gloomy indeed.

"To-day we go in, to-morrow we go out," quoth he. "For Parliament is set upon impeaching Buckingham, and will have no other matter before it."

I did not share this judgment, but when I went down to the House I met with Mr. Pym and with Mr. Cromwell, a most wearisome maker of speeches from Huntingdon, yet an honest and sensible man withal; and it seemed that it was only too true that the life of Parliament would be short. Again we went back to our homes, whilst my lord the King sent his officers throughout the land to raise a forced loan, imprisoning the gentry who denied him, and sending such common people as fell into his hands to the Army, there to starve, for Parliament had voted no money for their support; and truly they would have starved, but the King and his ministers, having no money to pay them, thrust them on to the people, billeting, as it was called, to the great scandal of England. And since there arose quarrels between the men and their unwilling hosts, Charles in his madness contrived that such disputes should be tried by courts-martial presided over by a military man. And thus we had two laws running in England, the military and the civil.

Some time after this Sir Harry came to my house in Bedford, arriving one Sunday morning after a hard ride. I could see that his face was troubled long before he came into my private cabinet.

"William," he said, "there's trouble afoot. The King calls another Parliament, and the writs of summons are out."

I told him that I had not received any such thing, but he predicted, and rightly, that this would come to me on the morrow.

"Now this is the way of it," said Harry, "and all the Parliamentarians with whom I have spoken are agreed upon it: that the King calls us together that we may vote him money. But we have prepared, and to this you must set your name, a great petition of right."

Parliament demanded that no free man should be kept in prison without a charge and a trial; that the courts of military law should be abolished in time of peace, and that no person should be so tried; that the King should not ask for a

loan from his people save with the approval of Parliament; and that there should be no more billeting in private houses.

All this time war was in progress, either with Spain or with France, and some of the money to be voted was for this purpose. With an ill grace the King accepted the petition and agreed to its provisions, though there was no more in his oath than in a pothouse promise; and when, on top of this, we asked that Buckingham should be dismissed, Parliament it was that was sent packing. Nor did it meet again for eleven years. And sad years they were for England, for Sir Thomas Wentworth, that champion of liberty, had gone over to the King's side (afterwards he was made Earl of Strafford). And he, with William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, ruled England with a rod of iron. Their system they called the *Thorough System*, and thorough enough it was; for whilst Wentworth kept the freewill of the people under his heel, and the representatives of the shires scattered, Laud set himself to crush Puritanism, so that thousands of people left their country, some going to the far Americas, whither in an earlier reign the Pilgrim Fathers (as they were called) had preceded them.

Many were the ingenious ways by which the King obtained supplies; for now that Parliament was dismissed, and no money voted, there was urgent need of revenue. But of all the methods so used, none was more fatal to the King's cause than what he called ship money,' which was a levy made in days gone past for the building of ships. At first the demand was made upon the seaports, and the reply was, to the King's mind, generous enough. Then he began levying upon the inland towns, and again the people paid, under protest. But a third levy brought us to a crisis. John Hampden, a gentleman of Buckinghamshire, refused to pay and was tried before the King's Bench, seven of the judges saying that he must pay, though five were against this decision.

Yet Charles might have ruled England but for the folly of the Archbishop. Mr. Pym, who came frequently to my lodgings in London, whither I often repaired, having a warehouse in the City, was the first to give me a hint of the coming storm. He came to me one day in great glee, rubbing his hands.

"Now I think the Stuart hath cut his throat," he said. "The Covenanters of Scotland are up in arms against Laud's prayer-book, and there is talk of a war."

What had happened, as I knew, was that Laud had endeavoured to force upon the Scottish people the prayer-book of England, and the Scots, who hated bishops and prayer-books, had refused it; and had not only refused, but had joined themselves in a national covenant to resist any interference with their religion.

"But surely, Mr. Pym," said I, in amaze, "the King will not take arms to force this prayer-book down the throats of the Scots?"

"Will he not?" said Pym. "With a Catholic woman at his elbow and Laud at his ear! Have ye forgotten, Sir Stephen," he said, with that irony for which he was famous, "that the King is divine!"

"What follows?" I asked.

"Parliament!" said Mr. Pym. "For the ship money which has come into his coffers is well nigh spent, and he is in debt for the expenses of the Court. How then can he wage war with Scotland, unless he calls the Commons together? And that day"—he rose to his feet and looked down upon me, his eyes darkening—"and that day he brings Parliament together," he said slowly, "Charles is doomed!"

It was in 1640, fifteen years after he had begun his reign, with Scotland in a fury, Ireland crushed by my lord Wentworth and yet rebellious, that the King brought us together for the Short Parliament, so called because we sat only for three weeks. If he thought that we came to give him money, he was soon to be undeceived. We had grievances to discuss. We sapped under his feet when we protested against the Scottish war, for which we were supposed to find money, and again we went into exile, with the rumblings of the storm becoming loud in our ears.

The King brought Wentworth back from Ireland, raised money by this expedient and that, taking peaceable citizens from their homes and turning them into the Army to meet the Scottish horde, which was advancing southward under General Leslie. What men Charles scraped together were untried and untrained, many secretly in sympathy with the Scots, for a large number of these pressed soldiers were Puritans; and it is small wonder that the King's force was defeated at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Our family was known to the King, and because of the influence which he exercised in Parliament by his very moderation, the King sent for Harry Avon late one night. At first my kinsman thought, by the mysterious nature of the summons and the armed men who came with the messenger, that his lodgings that night would be the Tower. For he had spoken vehemently against the injustices that the people suffered. Instead, to his relief, Harry Avon was taken to Whitehall, and found the King alone in his great chamber of state. News had just arrived of the Battle of Newcastle, and the King was so agitated that when he put up his hand to smooth his beard, my cousin saw his fingers tremble.

"How now, Master Avon, what says London to this news?" he asked, forgetting that the news of the battle of Newcastle was not yet known. And before Harry could answer, he went on: "I have done all that Parliament has asked me, but they will not be content unless they be my master. And that shall never be," he said, swearing a great oath. "Now tell me, Master Avon, in what spirit will Parliament come together, think you?"

"Your Majesty," said Harry respectfully, "it will come together in a desire to help England."

The King made an impatient gesture.

"There is talk of an impeachment of the Queen, and that for treason."

Harry had heard of this report, and knew that the threat was serious enough, for Marie Henrietta was looked upon by the Puritans as the evil genius of the King.

"Your Majesty, it will not come to that," said Harry. "Yet I fear Parliament will have much to say to his grace of Canterbury for his persecution, and they will have Lord Strafford on trial."

The King pulled at his beard thoughtfully.

"So be it," he said, and I believe at that moment he thought he was strong enough to resist Parliament in this respect; for he was the kind of man who, without any scruple, would as lief perjure himself to Parliament as he would drink a mug of ale.

He asked several questions of my kinsman and then dismissed him, with a number of gentlemen to escort him through the streets, for in these days the town was very lawless.

So it came about that we were called to the fifth Parliament of Charles, in the same year that the Short Parliament had met, and it was fated that we should not scatter again for thirteen years. From the moment we met and the Speaker was put in the chair, Strafford's hours were numbered: Pym it was who procured his impeachment, for in this Parliament our friend came to be exalted in the eyes of the people for his fearlessness and his eloquence, so that he was saluted in the streets as "King Pym."

The impeachment went to the Lords, and at the same time Archbishop Laud was arrested and put into the Tower. I was at Strafford's trial, which was in Westminster Hall, with the Commons as accusers and the Lords as judges; and his defence was delivered with great eloquence, and so easy was it to see that behind all his acts was the King, and he might not be condemned save the King were condemned also, that a Bill of Attainder was proposed in Parliament, though both Mr. Hampden and Mr. Pym urged against it. So Lord Strafford was ordered for execution; and though the King might have saved him, the fear that Parliament would impeach his consort, Marie Henrietta, led him to sign the warrant.

So passed Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, who died for the faults of the King. They say that, as he walked to the scaffold, he enjoined those about him to put not their faith in princes.

Strafford was hardly out of Ireland before a great rebellion arose, and the wild Irish indulged in such horrid practices of murder and torture that the King asked Parliament for money to raise a new army. This Parliament did, though it was not for Ireland that they needed the arms and the soldiers. On top of that, Pym and his friends prepared a Grand Remonstrance against the King's conduct during his reign, which passed the House by a majority of eleven votes, I myself voting on the King's side, as did Harry Avon. Yet I think the matter might have ended in the King's favour, despite the vote, but the madness which proverbially comes to those who are marked for destruction fell upon the King. He called for the impeachment of five of his opponents, Pym and Hampden amongst the number, and went down himself in person and invaded the House to arrest them. So great a breach of privilege was this that war alone could follow. The five had disappeared before the King strode into the chamber amidst the protests of the members.

War was inevitable now, for Parliament had command of certain strong forces, and London was against the King, so that he and his Court fled to the north. Hull would not have him, and at Nottingham the King put up his great banner and called all men loyal to his house to take up arms in his defence. And here, in sorrow I confess, came the great parting of the ways which broke my heart to see. Harry Avon came to my lodgings the night after the King had left London, and told me where he felt his duty lay.

"I follow the King," he said, "though my heart is with Parliament and the people. Where does your duty lie, Sir Stephen?"

"With Parliament and with the rights of all free men," I said sadly.

He gave me his hand and said no other word, and so we parted, and I never saw him again. He was with the King at the battle of Edgehill, and led the cavalry at Chalgrove Field, where John Hampden was slain. Two years later, at the great battle of Marston Moor, he fell with the King's banner in his hand and a ring of dead about him.

So much history there is of this period that I will not give the full particulars of it, for I am no warrior and distrust my military knowledge.

Edgehill was favourable for the King, and indeed in the following year the King was everywhere successful: in Cornwall, in Bradford, and Roundaway Down near Devizes. It was during this period of indecision and anxiety that Mr. Cromwell came into notice, commanding a body of troops which were called Cromwell's Ironsides. This gentleman, with no military knowledge, became the greatest cavalry leader of his time.

I think that it was the battle of Newbury which largely determined the King's cause. In this battle fell my lord Falkland, who had been on the side of Parliament until the Grand Remonstrance was presented. He was a most beautiful and learned character; some say the sweetest creature of his time; and there was bitter sorrow, even in the ranks of his enemies, when it was learned that his noble spirit had passed away.

It was said that at the battle of Marston Moor never were so many soldiers employed, and it was here that Colonel Oliver Cromwell made his decisive charge against the horse soldiers of the King (led by Prince Rupert, the King's nephew) and won the day.

Illustration:

Cromwell before the Battle of Marston Moor

Parliament had begun the raising of the new model Army, a great force which was both well paid and well commanded; and since there is some idea in these days that Parliament had to rely upon people of lowly birth, I would say that of the thirty-seven colonels in that Army, thirty were nobly born. When Cromwell came down to report to Parliament, he described the action at Marston Moor in a few words.

"We never charged but we routed the enemy. The left wing, which I commanded, being our own force, save a few Scots in our rear, beat all Prince Rupert's horse, and God made them stumble to our swords. We charged their regiments of foot and routed all we charged."

Yet Cromwell was not satisfied, for he saw that in his army were many men who had too kindly a thought toward the King for the safety of Parliament; and since many of these were Members of Parliament, he went back to Westminster, passed a Self-Denying Ordinance, which called upon all Parliamentarians who were in the Army to resign their commissions and return to Parliament. It was at this period that the new model army came to perfection. Then Oxford, one of the last refuges of the King, fell, and Charles made his way in disguise to the Scottish Army, who eventually handed him to Parliament, receiving in exchange four hundred thousand pounds. I think different from those who say that the Scotsmen sold him like Judas, for those monies were due to them for their expenses, and there was no place to which they could take him, since Scotland was in the hands of the Covenanters, who had joined with Parliament in a Solemn League and Covenant that, in exchange for their help, the Presbyterian religion should be introduced throughout England—a prospect not too pleasing to Parliament, which, by

payment of monies and Jesuitical evasions, rid themselves of that part of the bargain.

My heart was too full of sorrow at the unhappy death of Harry Avon, who, if he had not been as great as others of his black tribe, had played no small part in the government of the country and had died most valiantly, sword in hand. In these days we spoke of the gentlemen who were on the King's side as "Cavaliers," because so many came to his standard on horse; and the Parliamentary Army were called by the King's supporters "Roundheads," because their hair was cut very short, unlike the fashion of the day, which was to wear our hair in ringlets over the collar of our doublets.

Following the King's arrival near to London in the hands of the Parliamentarians, there was no great feeling against him, though correspondence had been found after the Battle of Naseby which showed that he had sought foreign help to crush his subjects. Yet he who spoke of the King's death would indeed have been regarded as a madman, for it seemed to many of us a most impious idea that a King should suffer on the scaffold as an ordinary malefactor. Indeed, Charles in some respects might well have been restored to the favour of Parliament, which was now short in number to the extent of a hundred and seventy-five Royalists who had gone over on to the King's side at the beginning of war.

The conditions which were in existence then were utterly changed at the end of the Great Revolution, which came, as I judge, in the year 1647. For the Rebellion saw in being the new model army, which had grown in strength as it had grown in quality, having no great religious leanings to the one side or the other, but being determined to exercise its might and its power in securing a development which would be to its own satisfaction. At the head of this army we had General Cromwell, holding certain resolute views.

From the tyranny of absolute monarchism we have England come to the tyranny of the Army. For tyranny it was, though it did not ill-treat the common people, behaving itself on all occasions with the greatest decorum. It nevertheless became at a later time, a most potent factor. We grew fearful of its power, and would have reduced it to one-third of its size and sent the rest to Ireland. Indeed, we recognized the danger so poignantly that we would have disbanded it altogether, but the army was in existence, and, suspecting our inclinations, seized up the King's person and, transporting Charles to Newmarket, demanded that the members of Parliament hostile to the Army should withdraw. And this they did, I being one of these.

In the years that followed the King might have been established firmly on his throne, but he bickered and quarrelled and argued, made secret pacts with this man, sent covert letters to that, and, fleeing from his lenient gaolers, was again captured in the Isle of Wight and kept prisoner in Carisbroke Castle. Yet, so held, did he intrigue with the Scots, signing a treaty with them called the Agreement, which availed him nothing.

Parliament was all for offering him terms and splitting the hairs of his perfidy. Some members would have made peace with him, though he had roused the Scots to arms against us. Cromwell, fighting the Scots, heard of this, and, his task ended, came in haste to London. He made a violent end to the wavering policy of

members. Colonel Pride was sent to the House of Commons to exclude a hundred and forty-three of its members known to be favourable to the King (this being called Pride's Purge), and with the others Cromwell brought it about that the King should be tried for treason. And so it was, and on a certain snowy morning I saw King Charles step out upon a black platform in Whitehall, and the cruel axe cut off the head which had harboured so many foolish thoughts.

Illustration:

King Charles on the Block

So Parliament was left master of the destinies of England. They say that Charles wore two shirts that morning, lest the extreme cold should make him to shiver and men would think it fear. Never a man died more bravely, and when his head fell there came such a groan from the multitude as made me shudder to hear.

It was General Cromwell's desire that I should make one of the ninety members—the handful, as he called them—which were now left in the House of Commons, and I think, if I had agreed, I might have joined the great Council of State and been one of the forty-one Councillors who ruled the country. But I had other matters in mind, and both my business and my estate having suffered by reason of the war, I had need to repair my own fortune and leave that of England to more ready hands.

Of Cromwell I will say that he was a large-hearted man. He was no friend of the extremists, nor was he prepared to adopt for the country the dour religion of the Scots, though in the solemn league and covenant this had been agreed to. He was, too, a great general, with an eye to crisis and opportunity, and in the five and a half years of his rule he made England feared, defeating the Dutch and the Irish, and restoring the fame of the Navy to the height it had held in Elizabeth's time.

Such was the power of his name that in far-off Savoy, the Duke of that province was prevented from torturing Protestant prisoners by the threat that was hurled at him by Cromwell as to what would follow.

Chapter II

The Return of the Stuart.

It was during the period of the Protectorate, as it was called, that I went down to my estate in Bedfordshire, drawing myself away from the turmoil of politics, well content to farm my land, to govern my estate and watch the development of Cromwell's power from a distance. Pym was dead. The old warriors of speech had passed away, and Parliament was dominated by the Army, and the Army was under the leadership of Cromwell. I was not surprised when news was brought that Mr. Ireton, who was Cromwell's son-in-law and a great soldier, had invented an act which he called the Instrument of Government, whereby Cromwell was made Protector of the realm.

No easy task was his, for the first Parliament were all for reducing the Army and abolishing toleration. Then he sought, by dividing the Country into eleven districts, each under a major-general, to form a new kind of government, but this failing—and in my own county the arrogance of the militia caused bitter resentment—he brought his second Parliament into being, excluding such members as he thought were hostile to the measures he proposed.

This Parliament would have made him King, but the Army would have none of it. It created a second chamber, for until now only the Commons had sat, and to this Cromwell agreed. Yet, when his new Parliament met, so many of his supporters were in the Upper House, so many strangers in the Lower, and these so critical of him, that life was indeed a turmoil for the poor man, and I doubt not that his troubles hastened his end, for on the 3rd of September in the year 1658 Cromwell died, and his son Richard ruled in his place.

There had been established about this time certain coffee houses where men foregathered to talk and gossip. At Garraways in Exchange Alley you might also drink a dish of tea, a new Chinese herb that had come to be the fashion. I found it a refreshing beverage when mixed with milk and slightly sweetened. To Garraways, and at the Rainbow (another coffee house) rumours came of quarrels between Army and Parliament. Again Parliament was dissolved. Richard resigned; the Army, under Honest John Lambert, closed Parliament. But now new troubles were abroad. The Commander-in-Chief in Scotland, George Monk, grew restless under the stories that came to him of a dominant Army overaweing Parliament, he marched his forces south, and Lambert could not oppose him.

I think that Monk, with his Coldstreamers, had a shrewd notion of what would come after he had established a free Parliament. I was amongst those members who were restored to our places in the House, and one of those who voted for the restoration of the Stuarts, and on May 29th, 1660, I was a member of the deputation that met him at the entrance of the City and walked in a procession, when, with the road strewn with flowers, the bells ringing and the streets hung with tapestries, Charles II. came home to the throne of his father.

It was a fair inheritance he had received from the dead hands of Cromwell. England's name was high in Europe. Cromwell had brought in a Navigation Act which compelled all trade for England to be carried on English ships. He had sent Blake to the Mediterranean; he had gathered us a prestige which, alas! the third Stuart was to fling away with both hands.

In 1661 I was called to Parliament, which some people call the Cavalier Parliament because there were so many Royalists in it, and my name will be found amongst the minority who voted against the Acts of those intolerant men. First came the Corporation Act, which made it unlawful for any man to hold municipal office unless he took an oath denying the right to take up arms against the King, and promising to receive communion according to the rites of the Church. That was aimed at many of the bodies in various towns of England, which I knew were controlled by men of Puritanical leanings. The second of these Acts was the Act of Uniformity, by which all teachers of schools and priests assented to everything contained in the Book of Prayer. Such as would not take this oath were debarred by the Five Mile Act from coming within five miles of their former livings or any corporate town.

The fourth of these tyrannies was the Conventicle Act, which forbade religious meetings under penalty of imprisonment and transportation. All these Acts were called the Clarendon Code; my lord Clarendon, who had sat with me in the Long Parliament as Edward Hyde, being responsible for their invention, for he was at this time the most powerful minister in the State.

In the years of the Restoration there was born my third son, whom I had already resolved to call Harry, after my illustrious kinsman who had fallen at Marston Moor; and great was the excitement when the good wife who attended my lady came to us with the news that a Black Avon had been born to my branch of the family, which has never happened in all its history.

And, as though the day should not be ordinary in any sense, there arrived that evening from Plymouth a distant relative of mine, who, being of the Puritan faith, had been driven, as thousands of others were driven, by the persecutions of Laud, to the new world. He had a farm near to the town called Boston in the country outlandishly called Massachusetts, this being an American or Red Indian name. He told me that there were thousands of English in America, as I well knew, for I had endeavoured in the early days of Charles I. to procure the release of four Englishmen who, because of certain offences, had been sold as slaves to the planters of Virginia.

My kinsman told me of his travels, and how he had lived for two years in the village of New Amsterdam (which, after the Duke of York had defeated the Dutch and their colonies, passed to our possession, and being called after His Royal Highness, became New York). On his way home the ship which carried my relative had put into Jamaica, and he told me that this island, which had been captured by Cromwell, was a place of great potential riches, though it was the home of many of the pirates which preyed upon the Spanish ships in the Caribbean Sea.

It pleased me well to take him to London when next I set forth, which was after the christening of my Harry, and there bring him to the notice of my lord Clarendon, and he was, I am happy to say, vastly entertained by the story which my relative, whose name was George Aven, being a corruption of our family name, told to him.

"You do not come to Court often, Sir Stephen," he said.

I made my excuses. The Court was no place for me, for the King was too free of his friends for my liking, and the influence of certain favourites too great for his good name. Under Lord Clarendon the new model army was dispersed, with the exception of the Coldstream Guards that had been raised by Lord Monk at the village of that name. Hardly as the King had been treated, he was not vengeful, and, save for those who had signed the death warrant of Charles I., none was executed for his part in the revolution. I thought it unkingly that Cromwell's body should be dug up and hanged at Tyburn, as it was, afterwards being buried under the gallows; but these were savage times and men's thoughts ran bitterly.

Illustration:

Bunyan in prison

I had my own duties to attend to, for I was a magistrate of the city of Bedford, and there were constant quarrels and bickerings to be settled; for the Royalist and

the Parliamentary spirits still lived. And here I fell under the displeasure of my brother magistrates for refusing to commit to Bedford Goal a half-witted fellow named Bunyan, who was a seer of visions and a loud-mouthed preacher to his kind. Because I would have none of it, he was brought before the chief magistrate and by him committed to prison, where he languished for many years, and where I saw him, for it was my duty to visit these prisons—foul dens they were.

Although he was offered his liberty if he promised not to preach, yet this stout fellow Bunyan refused to take his liberty at the price, and I will not blame him, for these were the days of freedom in matters of religion. Being the son of a tinker, many despised him. He was a great maker of thread laces; many of these I bought myself, and I found him possessed of a deep knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Afterwards it was told me that he had written a wondrous book about the tribulations of a Christian, which was called *Pilgrim's Progress*, but this I have never seen; indeed, I do not think it has been published up to this day (1665).

One other matter there comes to my mind, and I set it down, though it may not be of interest to the world. It was reported to the magistrates that there were, in the library of a scholar at Bedford, certain books and pamphlets written by Mr. Milton, who was secretary in the Cabinet of Cromwell. It was ordered by the chief authorities of Bedford that such books and pamphlets be burned by the common hangman, as they were in my presence. That Mr. Milton, who was a great poet and a beautiful writer by all accounts, should have escaped from the scaffold when Charles returned, is indeed strange to me, for though Lord Anglesea interceded for him, yet it would be Clarendon who alone could save him, loving, as he must, the beautiful writings of the poet, for Clarendon himself was a writer of sublime merit.

I still think of him as an upright man, without great toleration, and it was a great unfairness that he should be, as he became, hated by all classes; for the King thought him too prudent, and the courtiers hated him for his decency. In the Church they mistrusted him because of the Act of Amnesty, for there were men who looked forward to the Restoration as an excuse for the slaughtering of old enemies. As for the Puritans, they hated him worst of all because of his code.

For all calamities he was blamed, and when there came upon London the terrible scourge of the Plague, as it came also upon Bedford and upon every city of England, those hateful enemies of his, who fled to a distance, would have had him hanged for that.

Chapter III

The Fear of the Papist.

(The last word was written by my poor father when the plague was on him, and he died that same night. Now do I, Giles Avon, his son, carry forward the story as it was written.)

My father died on the 17th day of November in the year of Our Lord 1665.

Illustration:
The great London Fire

It is well known that in the year following the Plague came the Great Fire, which destroyed two-thirds of London's houses, a hundred of its churches, and the great cathedral of St. Paul's. Yet, though Clarendon was held in some way—which does more credit to the invention than to the intelligence of those who thought it—to be responsible for both calamities, he held office until the weakness of Charles, the folly of his administration and the wicked slackness of his commanders, brought the Dutch fleet up the Thames. Standing on Shooters Hill, as I did, on that amazing day, I heard the boom of the Dutchmen's cannon in the Medway!

Thereafter Clarendon went into exile, being impeached by Parliament, his place being taken by the Cabal Ministry, Clifford and Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley and Lauderdale, great lords with great opportunities, though little they made of them, for they moved favourably towards Roman Catholics, and it was said that the King himself was a Catholic at heart and bided his time (as he had promised the French King) to declare himself openly so.

Yet Parliament would have none of this toleration, and passed a Test Act which forbade any to hold office of State who refused to take the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England.

A bitter pill for a king to swallow, but Charles was a Stuart and an accommodating one. Moreover, he had the grace of humour and was desperately anxious, as he said, referring to his years of exile on the Continent, "not to go on my travels again."

By this time I had inherited not only my father's estate, but the estate of an uncle who had died childless, and with it his great business house near to London Bridge which had been burnt down in the fire and was half rebuilt when my uncle Philip died.

And here I must say something of my younger brother, who in a few years had grown into a straight, strong lad, with the clear intelligence and the wit that seems to come, by some strange decree of Providence, to the swarthy of our race. I loved him well, for though his age was but seventeen, he had the brain of a man; his tongue was as straight as his back, and I had an admiration for him which may seem out of place when given to one who in years was a child. He enjoyed a small fortune of his own, which my mother left to him and I administered, and he might have set himself up as a young gentleman of the town, but instead of this, he lodged with me near by the Duke of Dorset's house, which is near the Carmelites' Monastery.

"Nay," he said, when I spoke to him of finding a place at Court, "there are too many fine ladies there for me; and if I need the society of orange-women, I can find them in Drury Lane myself."

He spoke of the King's favourite friend, Mistress Nell Gwynn, who had indeed been an orange girl at His Majesty's playhouse in Drury Lane, and, by her wit and prettiness, had come to be chief lady in the King's Court.

"Harry," I chided him, "it ill becomes a boy to speak slightly of the King's Majesty."

Harry laughed.

"But I do not so speak," said he audaciously, "for I like the man. He is lazy, and would rather feed the ducks in Green Park than play paille malle or the game of golf as his father played, but he is most likeable. James I., they say, fainted at the sight of a drawn sword, but our Charles would find a witticism at the block. Yet more is requisite in a king, it seems, than the ability to make the Court laugh or titillate the loungers at the coffee houses."

I told him that for good reasons a young man should be pleased with the Restoration. Cromwell had forbidden stage plays and many amusements, so that London was a sad place in his days.

"I'd as lief have psalm-singing as drunkenness," said my brother, and when I told him he was hardly loyal to his sovereign, he smiled again.

"Loyal I am indeed," my brother said, "but to me the King is the banner of his people, standing for all that is noble in them, and I find our Charles not very worshipful!"

I was horrified to hear him say these things, which might well have brought him to the Tower. But I had too full a respect for this stripling's views to hush him, being content to go outside of the room and see that the outer door was shut, lest any of my clerks overheard him.

"I heard yesternight," said my brother, sitting on the edge of my table and swinging his legs with great rapidity, a boyish habit of his that he never got out of, "that some madman, if he be not villain, hath found a new Popish plot against the King."

"What name man is this?" I asked.

My brother racked his memory.

"Titus Oates—that is he!" he said. "He has a story that the Catholics have met in secret, and are for killing the King and putting his Catholic brother, the Duke of York, on the throne; also to make another fire in London."

In Court they believed this, the incredulous and ignorant people!

"What is the truth of it?" I asked, knowing that Harry had all the news of town; for though he was no bibber of wine, yet he frequented the taverns and coffee-houses where the best gentlemen foregather.

Harry did but shrug his shoulders.

"Who knows?" he said. "The man may require a pension as like as not. Some say that his invention aims not so much at the Duke of York as at Mr. Samuel Pepys, who stands well with the Duke and has, so they say, a crucifix and altar in his own room, though he professes to be of the Protestant Church."

I knew well this Mr. Pepys, though I had only met him twice. He had a place in the Navy Office for many years. The first I remember of him was that, when the plague came to London, he was of the few who remained at his post, refusing to run away, as so many had done. Also he had appeared in my father's time at the bar of the House and had delivered a great apologia for the Duke of York, his conduct of the Navy. Also he was peculiar, I remember, that he wrote in a strange way of his own, using a certain tachygraphy. Harry nodded when I told him this.

"I do not know the man: he is too wise for me," he said. "And as to this Papist plot of Oates, what will the King do, who is a Papist at heart, but pretend to be in horror, yet knowing that Oates is lying! He will put to death his best friend, so it

please him, that the nation should be calmed, even as his father murdered Strafford."

"Hush, hush, Harry!" I said in alarm. "These are treasonable words."

Harry laughed and leapt down from the table.

"The Lord knows I mean no treason," he said gaily, and buckled on his sword.

"To whom did this man Oates tell his story?"

"To a magistrate. We should have laughed at it, but this very morning that magistrate was found murdered outside the City."

This was grave news indeed, and I understood now what meant those little knots of people that I had seen as I had walked across London Bridge that afternoon.

"There will be a new feast of St. Bartholomew, and woe betide the Papist who falls into the hands of these fools!" said Harry at parting.

It was late when he left me, going, as he said, to sup with a gentleman who had a house near Leicester Fields. Already the City was astir with a great panic. Men carried arms and cudgels, expecting at all moments that the great rising of the Catholics would begin. For did not the French Queen's mother design such a horrid massacre in the days of Elizabeth; the same which is called the Massacre of St. Bartholomew?

Harry kept with his friend until late, and might have stayed till early morning, but for the screams and howls in the street outside the house. Descending, he found a crowd of men, and women too, mishandling a lady who, it seemed, had offended them by carrying at her girdle a small gold cross. Her footmen had run away in terror, or else had been ill-treated, and it was her screams which had brought Harry to the street. In the light of the flaming torches which some of the fellows held, he saw the pale, beautiful face, and its wild appeal went out to him. In a moment he was by her side, had flung back the men that held her, and lifted her bodily behind him.

"How now, sir!" said the leader of the party, angrily. "Do you favour Papists who would murder us in our beds?"

"No more than I favour Protestants who mishandle women in the street," said my brother sternly.

"Cudgel him!" said a gruff voice, but before they could move, the white of his sword flickered in the torchlight, and they had no stomach for steel.

She said her name was Mary Pessevant, and that her father was a Councillor at the Embassy of the French King—this she told him as he escorted her to Westminster, where a pair of oars was found to row them on the falling tide to the City, where the minister was lodging.

Whatever happiness my brother had in his company with this beautiful lady, there was trouble in store for him; for somebody had recognized him, and denounced him as Papist, and next morning the captain of the City watch carried him before the Lord Mayor, where he gave such a good account of his Protestantism, and his name being so well known by reason of our father, and, if I be not immodest, through my own name, he was released, though he was an object of suspicion for many months, and was constantly denounced as being guilty of Roman Catholic practices.

Alas! others escaped not so well. Men went to the block and to the rope on the perjured word of malice. As for Titus Oates, he had a hundred pounds a year out of the invention.

It was Harry's opinion that the lie was designed by the supporters of the Duke of Monmouth, the natural son of the King, who desired his succession, though his father said he would hang him first. And all was directed against James, Duke of York, who was the King's brother, and might in course of time be successor. Lord Stafford, an aged man of seventy, was amongst those who went to the block, innocent as I.

"Thou foolish man," apostrophised my brother, standing in the crowd about the scaffold and seeing the end of him, "thou shouldst have been born an orange-girl and earned the King's adoration!"

Yet though the people were mad, they were sane in their own queer English way; for amidst all this injustice, amidst the ranting and raving of Parliament and its solemn denunciation of hellish plots, our talking men of Westminster brought out a good and proper Act, though they may well have thought of their own skins when the time came that fortune frowned on them. It was called the Habeas Corpus Act, and this was to compel the judges to bring to trial all men within the shortest possible time. My father has told of one John Bunyan (who wrote a most marvellous and comforting piece called *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a copy of which I have with the author's name writ in his own hand upon it), who was thrown into prison for twelve years and not brought to trial. Such things could no longer be after Parliament had brought the Act into force.

This mad outbreak against the Papists had one good result: the King's party became stronger, and though his ministry was made up of young men—indeed they called them the *Chits*—he ruled without Parliament, and to my way of thinking it is better to have no Parliament than a bad one.

Amongst those who had favoured the excesses of the Popish plot were Lord Russell and Lord Sidney. When a real plot did come up, this being called the Rye House plot, they lost their heads for it—the plot being to murder the King on his way home from Newmarket, whither he went for the horse-racing.

I must tell you that at this time the opposition to the King's party in Parliament was called by the name of Whigs, though I know not the right meaning of the word. Harry says that it comes from the motto of the Scottish Covenanters, "We hope in God"; just as Tory, as applied to the King's party, comes from the Irish words "Tar a Ri," meaning "Come, O King." So that the Court Party was called the Tarri Party, and afterwards Tory; and since all opposition to the King was felt to come from the stern Covenanters of Scotland, those who opposed him were called Whigs. This was Harry's story, and as he is somewhat learned in such things I will not gainsay him, though some say that the word comes from "whey" and the eaters thereof.

For myself I was concerned by one act of the King, which was the Act *quo Warranto*, remodelling the charters of London and certain provincial towns, the King believing that these were the strongholds of Whigdom.

Illustration:

King James died

One cold February day in the year 1685, I was riding through the City, and saw the messenger in the King's livery galloping towards the Guildhall, and wondered what great events were happening that a message should come to the Lord Mayor. Soon after I saw my brother, who had been to dinner in St. Paul's Churchyard, and he told me that the gossip was that the King was dead of an apoplexy; and this was true, we found. He passed with a jest on his lips and an apology for the long time he took to die. And at the end a Catholic priest named Huddleston had been smuggled into the Palace and had given the King absolution, the Duke of York standing by, but all the courtiers excluded from the room.

Such was this genial rascal of a man, tainted with all the vices of the Stuarts, who had sworn to be Protestant and had died a Catholic, breaking his greatest oath at the very moment of his death. There came after him his brother, James II., who had been Duke of York.

It was about this time that the Black Avon accepted a commission of the King, and was appointed to his guard. He was then twenty-five years of age.

Chapter IV

The Plot Against James.

Harry told me once that they said of Charles that he could think if he would, and, of his brother James, that he would think if he could. James was a Catholic, pretended to no else; and a poor day was it for Master Titus Oates, living on his annuity of a hundred pounds, when the Catholic King came to the throne of England. It would have been better, I think, to have stretched the neck of the man at Tyburn than to flog him, as they did, at the tail of a cart, giving him no less than three thousand four hundred lashes in three days.

The King's natural son, Monmouth, had been expelled from the kingdom when it was found that he was behind the Whigs who had agitated against the Catholics; and now this ill-fated man was to disturb our peace, for, landing in Dorset, he gathered a large number of Dorset and Somerset men and marched against the King, his force being destroyed at Sedgemoor, where Colonel John Churchill commanded, and Monmouth was captured. This man was no great hero, according to Harry, who brought him from the Tower to the King's presence after he had been condemned as a traitor. Monmouth had said he had some secret that he could tell only to his uncle, and so he was brought, bound with silken thongs, and grovelled at the King's feet. In the end he died bravely enough, feeling the headman's axe and asking him to make no blunder in the striking, which so upset Jack Ketch that his axe struck wildly.

Illustration:

Monmouth convicted

As for the poor people who followed Monmouth in his mad attempt on the throne, their lot was bitter. James sent a commission to try them under Judge Jeffries, a wicked and a murderous judge, who had the people hanged by the hundred, so that his courts were called the "bloody assizes." No greater scoundrel ever lived than this man, who slew innocent and guilty alike: to be charged was to be condemned. Jeffries laughed in the faces of his victims, and such as were not hanged were shipped to Barbadoes as slaves.

I saw little enough of Harry for the first few months of his service, when one day, to my surprise, he came to me, no longer wearing his lace coat. The King had recently increased the size of the Army to forty thousand men, and though we disliked this, yet we thought the King's army was England's army. For myself I had hoped that Harry might be able to get a company, and now to see him out of uniform was astounding.

"I am no longer in the army of the King," said Harry, sitting on his favourite seat, my table. "The King has no use for Protestants," he said, "and is taking away those he can and replacing them with Catholics. The madness of it! That men could make war for a genuflexion!"

He told me his colonel had gone, and named other gentlemen I knew, and that the King had appointed Tyrconnel, a bigoted Catholic, Viceroy of Ireland.

"Worse than that, if all I hear is true," said Harry. "There goes a Catholic to be Dean of Christchurch at Oxford, and Catholics replace the Protestant Fellows of Magdalen."

It was easy to see how immense was the blunder of this foolish but well-meaning man. He was setting against himself, not the Puritans, who hated him already, but the country gentlemen and the clergy who had supported his father.

For the moment my thoughts were less centred upon political happenings than upon the misfortune of my brother. And, having some little influence in the City, I was able to procure an audience of Baron Churchill, that general who had defeated the Duke of Monmouth at Sedgmoor, and I was the better able to urge my brother's claim because my father had rendered some service to Mr. Winston Churchill, a gentleman of Dorset, who was my lord's father. This time Lord Churchill was with his wife in attendance upon the Princess Anne, the daughter of the King. But although he was a major-general, so he told me very civilly, he had little influence with the Army. Nevertheless, he was very emphatic against this supplanting of Protestant officers. And I believed him to be sincere in this matter; also I think he was attracted to me for another reason, namely, that we had both had our education at St. Paul's School. Yet he did nothing to advance my brother's cause, and for this Harry told me later he was thankful that nothing came of it, for he would never go back into the King's service.

"James in his dull way is clever enough," he said, and told me that morning he had read a declaration of indulgence, suspending all penal laws against Roman Catholics and Dissenters, though he had no more use for a Dissenter than he had for a venomous snake. "It is the thin end of the wedge," said brother Harry quietly. And so it was, for the King issued another declaration, ordering it to be read in the churches; and when the Archbishop of Canterbury and six other bishops protested, he had them tried for libel, committing them to the Tower, amidst the tears and protestations of all the people.

Never shall I forget that night when the seven bishops were acquitted. London and the hills about blazed with bonfires, and there was a warning here for James could he but sense it. Yet there was no danger to him, till there came the announcement that a son had been born and people whispered of changelings, and wondered what manner of king he would be, with James for a father.

That there was something dark and secret afoot, and that it had to do with treason, I was well aware; great was my unhappiness when I perceived that Harry was privy to these machinations, whatever they were.

"Brother," he said, when I taxed him with it, "there are indeed matters going forward which will call for our best courage. But better we suffer now than wait for what is coming. The King has no health and will last not much longer than five or six years, according to the sayings of the doctors. What will be our portion, John? A child king, with a Catholic Council of Regency—a new and a Catholic Somerset! Nay, the Stuart line is run out. I think if we trust one, it will be a woman of the race and not a man."

At first I thought that there was a plot to put Anne, the King's daughter, upon the throne. She was a Protestant, unlike her father, and approved little of his faith and friends. She was a good friend of John Churchill and his wife. Churchill was that kind of man to whom intrigue and double-dealing were as the breath of his nostrils. But I was to learn whom my young friend had in his mind, though he did not tell me then. One night, after I had retired to rest, came a knocking at my door, and, looking through the casement window, I saw six men of the watch, one of them carrying a cresset that threw a dull light upon them.

"What seek ye?" said I.

"'Tis your brother, Mr. Avon," said the captain in command.

"Is aught wrong with him?"

"Aye," he said, and I thought I detected a sarcastic note in his voice.

Dressing hurriedly, I went downstairs and opened the door, and the captain came into my room.

"I will not deceive ye, Mr. Avon. I have a warrant signed by my lord's hand to throw your brother into Newgate for treasonable conspiracy."

My heart quaked within me.

"These are strange words, captain," said I.

"Stranger indeed you will hear, Mr. Avon," he said gruffly, "for it is informed against him that he is plotting against the King's throne."

Illustration:

Harry Avon in hiding

I told him that I had not seen my brother for a week, and that it was unlikely, as the captain had stated, that Harry had been seen in this neighbourhood, for he favoured rather the gayer end of the town. With this assurance the watch withdrew, and, locking and bolting my door, I went sadly upstairs. As I reached the landing, I saw, to my amazement and horror, the figure of Harry slip from a cupboard. He was laughing softly to himself.

"I came in half-an-hour ago through a certain pantry window that your cook left unchained for me. I need your assistance this night, brother."

"For heaven's sake, Harry, what does it mean?" I asked.

I saw that he was dressed for a journey. He told me he had a horse stabled at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, and that he was bound for Holland with dispatches for the Prince of Orange. A ketch was waiting for him at Ramsgate to carry him across to the Dutch coast; and it was then, though he did not tell me, that I realized where the plotters' hopes lay—not in Anne, but in Mary, the daughter of James, who had married the young Dutchman.

He had need of money, and I was able to give him a purse of gold before leading him by the back way through my workrooms, into a dark passage called Pie Lane, and, bidding him Godspeed, I, with a quaking heart, watched him disappear into the darkness. The next morning it was all over town that a warrant was given under the King's hand for his arrest, and that dragoons were on the road to intercept him. But as to this, my good friend, Sir William Grey, was scornful.

"You'll find no troops that will arrest the true friends of England," he said.

And there was a whisper that the Army was in revolt against the King and his Catholic tendencies, and it is said that a regiment of Guards, as they were marching past St. James' Palace, and had whistled *Lillibulero*, a song derisive to the King.

It is true that feeling was bitter against James by reason of his newest act. For this was always the peculiarity of the Stuarts, that at the right moment they did the wrong thing; and the King must have been mad to have sent to Ireland for Irish soldiers to guard him in London. For the Irish are well known barbarians, and all England was still horror-stricken at the recollection of the atrocities outside the pale, which is an imaginary Irish boundary separating the King's authority from the lawless Irish. And it was said in my hearing that John Churchill was all in favour of William, although he had sworn before the King that he would rather die than let William leave Holland. Yet this John Churchill was ever a trimmer, being most wishful to preserve his own office and retain his authority with the Princess Anne, who would, he knew, be Queen, and it is as likely as not that he turned traitor to James because of the son reputedly born to the Queen.

Shock came on shock for me, for Harry had been gone two days when I had a letter from him, and the news it brought left me breathless and for a moment angry. I have said that I saw little of my brother in these years, but I have not told that it had been my father's desire that he should marry a cousin of his, Amelia, daughter of Sir John Avon of Norwich, and often had I reminded him of this desire of the family, not knowing then that the girl's heart was given to another and that Harry had plans of his own. I had thought that one of the causes why I had seen so little of him was his desire to avoid discussing what was, to him, an unhappy subject. But in truth the matter was more serious. The lad had married secretly, and to the daughter of the sometime French Councillor, Mademoiselle Pessevant! That was the beginning and end of it.

"...if ill-fortune comes to me through this adventure, dear brother, I beg that, for the sake of our house and our love, you do guard my wife and little son, who was born to me a year ago and whom I have called Harry Giles, after you."

Illustration:
Mistress Avon

I lost no time in seeking out Mistress Avon, whom I found living in St. James Street, and in as comfortable a manner as one could desire. And when I had saluted her and my nephew and had given her the forgiveness for which she so prettily pleaded, I told her that her husband was safe (though 'twere the merest guesswork on my part to say this). Despite his terrible danger, she was very calm and full of faith in Harry's enterprise.

In appearance she was very beautiful, with her long ringlets hanging over her shoulders. She was wearing a plain dress of blue silk, cut low at the neck, in a way that would have shocked the Puritans, and her shapely shoulders were draped with a collar of fine lace, so deep that it hung over her sleeve.

"Dear Giles," she said, "I have no fear for my husband, for he is in a good cause. The King is so harsh a man in the matter of religion that, even were I a Catholic, I would oppose him."

By this speech my doubts were relieved, for I had remembered how my brother told me of the cross she carried at her girdle. This proved to be a gift from her mother, who was born in the Roman faith, though her father was a Huguenot.

She knew something of Harry's mission, for I think he had told her the nature of his dispatch. I marvelled that he had done this, but he told me after that he feared that they might arrest her and put her to the question, and he would have her tell rather than that she should be tortured.

Harry's adventures, as I afterwards learned, were many. He reached the coast, but the ketch which was to have taken him across with his dispatch (which was a duplicate of that which had been sent to the Prince of Orange by another hand) was not waiting to receive him. No time was to be lost, for already he guessed the King's men were looking for him. He went amongst the fishermen, striving to hire a fishing-boat, and at last he was successful, and put out from the shore at four o'clock one morning, just as the troop of the King's cavalry, dispatched from Dover, came over the hill to arrest him. Happily for him, none of the King's ships had been warned, and, running before a strong south-westerly breeze, land was soon out of sight.

It seemed as though the voyage would be a propitious one, but the grey line of the Flanders coast had hardly come into view before the wind freshened to a great gale, and for a day and a night my brother stood perilously near to destruction. The wind changed and blew with such violence that they were driven back again to within sight of the King's ships lying at the Nore; but a second fortunate change of direction brought them, at the end of thirty-six hours' buffeting, to the low-lying shores of Flanders between Dunkirk and Ostend, where he landed, half dead with exhaustion, for he had eaten nothing for a whole day and a night.

Hiring horses, my brother rode to Amsterdam, arriving simultaneously with the other messenger. The King received them with great courtesy, and, having read the dispatch, which was, as one may guess, an invitation to His Majesty to come over and take the throne of his uncle and help all Protestants, he questioned my brother as to the condition of feeling in England.

"They say 'Come' to me, but how may I go?" he said, with a shrug of his thin shoulders. "With the army of Louis on my frontiers? That would indeed invite disaster for my people."

Harry was able to tell him the Court gossip, which was that Louis XIV. had warned King James that an invasion was imminent, and that the King had sent back a curt answer to the King of France, telling him in so many words that he could rule England without the assistance of the French.

"If that be true," said William thoughtfully, in his queer broken English, "then surely we shall see the French army move; for Louis is not the kind to take a rebuff from your king."

Whilst Harry waited in Amsterdam, he enjoyed the hospitality of a famous merchant, Mr. Vandermere, and learned that Holland was favourable to William's going.

"Now I warn you, Mr. Avon," said Mr. Vandermere, with great frankness, "that if the King goes to England, it will not be because he loves you, but because he will gain for himself a new ally, that will help him battle against his old enemy, Louis 'of France. England, to the Prince of Orange, will be a new leaping-board from which he can spring at the throat of the French."

Harry said that he cared not what were His Highness's intentions, so long as he relieved England from the appalling tyranny of the Stuarts. At this Mr. Vandermere was thoughtful.

"William is no tyrant," he confessed, "and though you will not have a warm lover of your country, you will have a most just man. And mark this: William is a man of honour, and his word is worth a round dozen of bonds."

Whilst my brother was waiting at Amsterdam, William's soldiers brought the news that the French army was on the move towards Germany; and it needed but that news to bring Holland to a state of the highest excitement. Soldiers were gathered, ships were brought to the coast, and William, at the head of a large army, embarked for England on October 19th in the year 1688, this being within a few days of Harry's twenty-eighth birthday.

From the first ill-luck seemed to be against the enterprise. A great storm rose and shattered the fleet, sending them back to the shelter of the Dutch harbours. But undaunted, William gathered his ships together and set forth again, and on November 3rd, Harry, standing on the poop of the Prince's own ship, saw the white cliffs of Dover on his starboard, and a few days later, after many alarms and heart-searchings, the ships came safely to anchor in Torbay.

The West Country was ripe for the revolution. But for a long time the principal men of the counties, remembering the terrible vengeance which the Lord Chief Justice Jeffries, who was now Lord Chancellor, had exacted from the rebels, kept their horses in their stables and came nowhere near the Prince, until he began to fear that he had been deceived. But before he had reached Exeter, a landslide, as it was called, began. Too late James must have realized how mad it was in him to refuse the help which the King of France had offered. Too late he learned that the French King's army had been withdrawn from the Dutch frontier. And when at last, as happened, the Duke of Grafton and Lord Churchill went over to William, James knew that his case was hopeless, and fled back to London from his army, there to learn that Anne, his own daughter, had fled from the Court. "My own

children are against me," he said bitterly and thereafter seemed to resign himself to whatever fate fortune sent to him.

Before William landed there was a great deal of talk about bringing him to England, and I well remember that, coming away from a meeting of the Royal Society with certain of its members, the matter came up for discussion. This Royal Society had been formed by Charles II., who was addicted to the study of natural science and had a private laboratory of his own, and, since I found myself curious on the matter of natural phenomena, I often attended the discussions in the last days of King James, though I was not a member.

With me were Mr. Isaac Newton and Sir Christopher Wren, who was building the great church of St. Paul's after the Fire of London had destroyed it. Mr. Newton was troubled by the talk of London, but was no politician. Nor was Sir Christopher, but he had in his heart a great resentment that the many churches he had already built should be used for the Roman form of worship.

"What has come to the King that nobody warns him?" he asked bluntly. "And did he not have warning enough when he heard his soldiers at Hounslow cheering because the seven bishops were set free?"

When at the first opportunity John Churchill, who had been privy to the designs of the Prince of Orange, went over to his side with such men as would follow him, the cause of James was lost.

And so ended, with great ingloriousness, the reign of the last of the men Stuarts, though Stuart women reigned after him. William, who scorned the axe for so ignoble an opponent, sent him to prison at Rochester, but with so unvigilant a guard that James might escape when and as he liked. And so it happened: James went over to France, wailing his misfortunes to the French king, who treated him most royally, by all accounts.

The year of the glorious revolution was a great year for me, for I received the offer of the seat which had been my father's, and went into Parliament on what is called the Tory side, feeling that there I might best exercise my influence for the good of my family; though Harry had no need of patronage, for he received a colonelcy in one of the King's regiments as a reward for his services. So that I may say that I had the honour of being one who voted "aye" to the Bill of Rights, that famous Act which laid down the succession to William and excluded from the throne all who were Roman Catholics. And I will say this, that posterity may know, that many good Catholic gentlemen voted heartily in favour of the clause, having seen with their own eyes how political a thing religion may be. ("In effect, my friend," said my brother, with a cynicism ill becoming to his years, "we will have no king in England who takes his soul too seriously.")

Also this Bill of Rights made illegal the power of the Crown to suspend laws, or to dispense them "as it hath been exercised of late."

Also was passed a Bill called the Mutiny Bill, providing for a standing army, and this, it was ordained, must be repassed every year if it were to have effect. This Bill dealt with other matters, such as the freedom of speech. But we were nearest concerned with the question of the succession, for we desired to exclude both James and his reputed son. Therefore it was ordained that the Crown should go, first to Anne, who was without children, she having married a Prince of Denmark

who was so foolish that she could not live with him; and then to the wife of the Elector of Hanover, being the grand-daughter of James I.

Other matters of great importance were settled: one, for which I personally and two other gentlemen were responsible, being that the judges should not hold office at the King's pleasure, but so long as they acted in conformity with the law. Nor could the Crown pardon him whom the House of Commons had impeached.

Now this Bill of Rights must stand for all time as a second Magna Carta. Though tyrants arise, yet shall it be a flaming beacon of freedom which shall beckon men to gather and overthrow their evil masters.

Harry went over to Ireland, where James, leaving France, had settled himself, and he was present at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, which led to the flight of James to France and the submission of Ireland. He came back wounded and ill from this war, and often I went to his lodgings in St. James Street and listened to his stories of the Irish and their misery. His wife was now a comely matron, and his son had grown at a great rate. He was a Red Avon, and my sister-in-law often said gaily that he would wear a coronet, for it is the legend of our family, "Red Avon a lord; Black Avon a sword," and red he was, with his auburn hair and his blue eyes.

Black Avon a sword! It seemed that Harry's sword was never to rest in its sheath. He had formed a friendship with two great literary men of the period, Mr. Addison and Mr. Dryden, the latter of whom was a great poet, and I had hoped that these friendships would turn his mind to a project of his, which was to rewrite the history of the House of Avon, for he was skilful with his pen. Alas! the call of the trumpet was ever too much for my brother, and I hardly remember a year in which he was not engaged in some foray or other.

It was no more than natural that his son's mind should be kindled with the oft-told tale of his father's valour, for he too showed a liking for the sword and was well trained in military exercises even as a boy. Thanks be to Providence, Harry was spared to direct his son's education, and so quickly did the time pass that when he came to me one day and told me that the boy was to be married I scarcely believed it.

And married this stripling was to a beautiful cousin of ours, daughter of the very Amelia whom Harry should have wed! And young Giles, as we called him, was joined in holy matrimony to his dear lady. He wore a suit of plum-coloured velvet (the same I got from a merchant of Utrecht) full-skirted, as was the fashion of the day, and he had golden buckles to his shoes and a petticoat, or, as they called it, waistcoat of silver brocade. The ceremony was performed in the presence of many important persons, including Sir Robert Walpole. Though he was at this time in disfavour, yet I liked him well.

On the very day of my nephew's marriage, the first day of May, 1707, there came into operation the new Union between Scotland and England. This union had been brought about because of the fear that new wars would arise over the question of the Scottish succession. The old Pretender was by law King of Scotland, being the eldest living son of James II.

Some of the most influential persons in Scotland aided the carrying through of the arrangement under which England and Scotland should be one kingdom, and much corruption and bribery there was to get the Scottish estates to agree to it.

Even when it was all accomplished, the discontent in Scotland was bitter, but some of the wisest of Scots saw how great would be the advantage in joining so powerful a neighbour, and I think the day will dawn when both nations will be grateful that the Union was made.

Being the first of May, all the country was celebrating this famous holiday, and there were maypoles set up in Islington and various other parts of the town, and all windows and doors of the houses were garnished with pink hawthorn, which is called 'May'—a pretty English custom that went out in the days of the Protector Cromwell (who forbade it) but now in practice again. And as our coaches drove us out to Islington—the distance being too far to be carried in sedan chairs, as the new-fangled fashion is—we passed at Clerkenwell a great pole wellnigh a hundred feet high, around which the young people were footing it merrily.

Harry was forty-seven years old and had the rank of Colonel in the Duke's army. He had fought ten duels, though he had never killed a man in these so-called affairs of honour (myself I would call them acts of murderous folly) being, as he was, so wonderful a swordsman that he could disarm his opponent at the third pass. And at last he was, to my relief, a "King's man," for I had been troubled in my mind whether his rebellion towards James was not rather evidence of an adventurous spirit than any considerable conviction on one side or the other.

I myself saw King William soon after Parliament decided upon him. He was a little man, very thin and insignificant, looking like one who was very sick. His manner was repellent, for he had a cold way of staring at you and returning no reply to whatsoever you said to him. It was my duty to go, on behalf of the City of London, with other gentlemen, to present him with an address. He listened in silence, and at the end said, in broken English:

"That is goot."

He had no pleasure in life but his hunting, and that he preferred in solitude. He was a Calvinist, allied in faith to the Scottish religion; favoured neither Whig nor Tory, but took his ministers from both sides and earned the unpopularity of both. As for his wife, "She talks as much as William thinks, or her sister, the Princess Anne, eats," was Harry's comment on her.

And yet I am sure of William that he was a great man. When they brought him a list of the nobles and others who had conspired against him, and were in correspondence with King James II. (amongst these I think was my lord Churchill), he did not so much as look at a name, but folded the paper and threw it into the fire. There, indeed, was a great spirit and a very high magnanimity, and to this view Harry agreed.

When his wife Mary died, in the year 1694, he seemed to shrink within himself and grow more silent and more bitter when he spoke, as he seldom did, about Parliament, which was jealous of the lands he had given to his Dutchmen in Ireland. I had it from Lord Churchill himself, that the King, sick at heart, spent one whole night in his palace at Kensington, drawing up a proclamation whereby he resigned the Crown of England.

Yet he was to obtain a great popularity before his distressing illness—for he suffered from asthma—brought about his death. And this popularity came in a curious way. The King of France and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire drew up a treaty whereby Spain, on the death of its imbecile king, was to be redivided

between them. But on his deathbed the King of Spain was induced to leave his crown to the French King's grandson, and Louis tore up the treaty he had made with the Emperor, moved his troops towards Holland, which was the Spanish Netherlands, and did more than this: he proclaimed the son of James II. the rightful king of England. It needed but this to stir England to its depths. At the threat of a new Stuart king, England discovered in William all the virtues she desired in a monarch. From being a cipher, the King became the greatest factor of the hour and the apathetic London crowds greeted him with a new fervency. Harry and his newly married son left his wife and his daughters to my care and joined my lord Churchill. This war was called the War of the Spanish Succession, and broke out in the year 1702, lasting for ten years. The first shot had hardly been fired in the campaign before William sank under his illness and died. I had a letter, written from the Netherlands, from Harry, a month after Anne was proclaimed Queen.

"Rejoice with us, brother," it ran, being written on the day the news reached the Army of the King's death. "John Churchill is now Queen of England!"

And in his quizzical way he spoke the truth, for the word of Churchill and his wife was law to Anne for many years.

From time to time, thereafter, I had long letters from Harry, telling me all that was going forward. In these days Austria, Holland and the German States were on one side, and with them Savoy; whilst on the other were France and Spain. John Churchill had been made Duke of Marlborough; and though I think my brother did not like him over much as a man, yet he was most flattering of him as a general. And this, it seems, was the view of the whole Army, who hated the individual for his cupidity, his scheming and his treachery, yet had such faith in him that, when he appeared at the head of his troops, they knew the battle was already won.

"We are here," wrote Harry, "to put the French out of the Spanish Netherlands, and from all we learn we are in a bad case, for Vienna is besieged by the French and barbarians. There was this difficulty, that the Dutch, whom we are to protect, are fearful of our leaving the country, yet it was necessary that my lord Marlborough should go to the relief of Vienna. By his great scheming, for which he is famous, my lord did this and joined with Prince Eugene, marching right across the French front to do it. And so in these few months we have come through Germany and are across the Danube. A week ago this day we found the enemy in a strong position behind a river, and I was sent with Lord Cutts, that most famous soldier, to storm the village of Blenheim; but, alas! the village was too strongly held and we were thrown back with terrible losses. We might well have been defeated, but Marlborough saw the weakness of the French centre, and pushed through, whilst Prince Eugene enveloped the left flank of the enemy. And so this famous victory has come about, that we have one of the French generals, nearly twelve thousand prisoners and a hundred guns in our hands."

About this time I was brought more into contact with the Court, and had the honour of meeting both Godolphin, the Queen's chief minister, and Mr. Harley, who was to succeed him. His late Majesty, King Charles, used to say: "Little Tommy Godolphin is never in the way and never out of the way," and I do think that this describes him well.

Mr. Harley was a gentleman of another calibre, extremely ingenious and very clever in his manner of using the press. He had the whole-hearted support of a Dr. Swift, an Irish ecclesiastic, a vain, blustering, noisy rascal of a man, who wrote well enough against Mr. Harley's enemies. A second of these hireling writers of his was a man who was born with the name of Foe, but who called himself Defoe: a middle-aged, spare man, with hooked nose and sharp, piercing eyes. I frequently met this Daniel Defoe, and indeed on one occasion I saw him in the pillory, where he had been put for writing a violent lampoon against the Commons. I have kept his acquaintance all my life; I have been privileged even to see the startling romance which he wrote, called *Robinson Crusoe*, long before he gave this book to the world.

We were seeing the growth of what are called 'parties.' In the days of the first Charles there were only those who favoured the King and those who were for Parliament. But now the Tories and the Whigs were definitely separated, indeed sat on opposite sides of the House of Commons. And there were manoeuvrings for power such as always has been the case since the beginning of time. Now, as in the earlier reigns, great men fawned for the favour of the Queen, which meant also the favour of those who were in her confidence.

Of the intrigues of the Court I heard over much. Of how the Duke of Marlborough's wife was so dear to the Queen that they called one another by pet names, and of how it was believed that a relative of Sarah Jennings (which was the name of the Duchess before her marriage) was working to take her place. Indeed it has come about that Mrs. Masham (the relative's name) did finally replace the Duchess, who, because of her haughty spirit, quarrelled with the Queen's Majesty.

Illustration:
Women at court

Our Queen was a good woman, of a happy nature, and had a kindly way with her. More is the pity, of the seventeen children she had, none lived to be older than eleven years. As great a sorrow fell to the Duchess of Marlborough, whose son, the Lord Blandford, died also at a tender age.

Harry and his son served under the Duke of Marlborough for five years, during which time they made only brief visits to England. In the year 1709 the Duke fell from favour, being accused of taking bribes from the baker who supplied the Army with bread, and was deprived of his command, and four years later the war with Louis was ended by the Peace of Utrecht, Anne dying in the following year, 1714. After his return in '09 Harry told me that he had been sent for to the Cabinet of the Earl of Oxford (as Mr. Harley had become) and had been greeted very kindly by his lordship.

"They would have given me a barony if I told all I know about the Duke," he said; "but the man is down and I'll not dance upon the greatest general and most dishonest gentleman of our time."

"So they gave you nothing, Harry?" said I.

Harry laughed in his old boyish way.

"His lordship gave me a general's sword," he said. "What better gift for a Black Avon?"

