

***RAFAEL
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***THE KING'S
MINION***

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CHAPTER I

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IN THE TILT-YARD

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King James, fully recovered from the terrible fright occasioned him by the Gunpowder Plot, had returned to his norm of pusillanimity. Guy Fawkes, unbroken in spirit, however broken in body by torture, had expiated on the gallows in Paul's Yard the attempt—in his own bold words—to blow the Scots beggars back to their mountains.

The beggars remained and profited by the distribution amongst them of the acres and possessions of the conspirators, most of whom were gentlemen of substance.

For the King, too, the matter had not been without ultimate profit, of a more spiritual kind. It had enabled him by an exercise of the arts of kingcraft—a term signifying little more than the shameless use of falsehood and dissimulation—to parade before the world the divine inspiration vouchsafed to monarchs. It was, he pretended, the acuteness with which kings are supernaturally endowed which had enabled him to enucleate from obscurest utterances the true aim and nature of the plot, and thus, almost miraculously, to avert a national catastrophe.

Some material profit, too, was to be extracted from it, in the course of a further display of the spiritual graces and accomplishments of this astounding prince. He was enabled to argue, cogently enough, that people themselves so intolerant as the Papists, on whose behalf it had been

sought to blow him and his Parliament into a better world, deserved no toleration; that the Scarlet Woman on her seven hills propounded, indeed, the mystery of iniquity. Hence he was justified in proceeding against Papists and at the same time against Puritans—so as to be perfectly consistent in his exclusive upholding of the Established Church—by means of heavy fines and confiscations. Thus he replenished his sadly depleted treasury and was enabled further to relieve the necessities of those Scots beggars—and some English ones, too—who clustered about him.

It did not trouble his elastic royal conscience that the plot of a few desperate men, for which he now punished an entire community, was directly sprung from his own bad faith in an earlier exercise of his art of kingcraft. Readily enough had he promised toleration alike to the co-religionaries of his mother and to the Puritans, when they had approached him on the subject in Scotland in the days of his own anxieties touching his succession to the throne of England. They were foolish to have trusted him. They should have perceived that a man who would not raise a finger to save his own mother from the block, lest by doing so he should jeopardise his inheritance of the English crown, would never scruple about a false promise or two that would help to ensure the unanimity of all classes of Englishmen in his favour. By breaking faith when he discovered that the Episcopalian religion, which made him head of the Church as well as of the State, was the only religion fit for kings, he provoked not only the Gunpowder Plot, but that earlier conspiracy in which Catholics and Puritans were united, the strangest bedfellows adversity ever made.

All this, however, was now happily overpast. The heel of authority was firmly planted on the neck of Papist and Puritan, and their recusancy was being sweated out of them in the gold that was so urgently required to maintain the prodigal splendours of the court of this new kingdom of Great Britain. For now, in the year 1607 of the coming of Our Lord and fourth of the coming of King James, his majesty was in dire straits for ready money.

Never before in the history of the country had there been, and never since has there been, such reckless extravagance as that which distinguished the descent of the Scots from their Northern fastnesses in the train of a king who was a veritable beggar on horseback.

Out of the stern and arid North he had come into the promised land of plenty, a land that flowed, and flowed richly, with milk and honey at his command. His commands, however, had been so free and frequent that at last the springs were showing signs of exhaustion. Fortunes lavished upon favourites by a prince who had never learnt and never did learn the value of money were draining the resources of the nation. Finding his hands, which hitherto had been ever empty, to be suddenly filled with gold, he had scattered it in almost childish recklessness, spending for the mere love of spending, who in thirty-seven years of life had never had anything to spend. Similarly, finding himself a free and uncontrolled fount of honour, who hitherto had been overborne and brow-beaten by rude nobles and ruder clerics, he spouted honours so freely that in the first three months of his reign, apart from the new earls and barons he created, he distributed no less than seven hundred

knighthoods, so that to be a knight became so common as to be almost disreputable. There was no lack of point in the announcement nailed by a satirist on the door of Saint Paul's, offering to train weak memories in the titles of nobility.

When at last he began to feel himself hard-pressed for money, he had summoned Parliament so that it might provide, only to make the discovery, next in horror to the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, that the Commons, far from acknowledging his divinity, would scarcely acknowledge his majesty. His own views and Parliament's on the function of the Commons were found to be widely divergent. The session resolved itself into a battle between absolutism and constitutionalism; and it was in vain that, with the polemical skill in which he took such pride, he argued that kings are in the Word of God called gods, as being His lieutenants and vicegerents on earth and therefore adorned and furnished with some sparks of Divinity. The Commons, perceiving no spark of divinity in his majesty's very human if excessive need of money, were so impudent as to treat him as a man, and to vote him certain subsidies which would not even pay the monstrous debts he had piled up.

If this annoyed him, it nowise served to curtail his extravagance or the munificence in which he delighted, largely no doubt because in its indulgence he gratified his desire to feel a god. So he went his ways, junketing and banqueting in this land of milk and honey, with revels and maskings, tournaments and mummeries. He discovered that the exercise of hunting was not merely pleasant in itself, but

an absolute necessity to the preservation of his health, whilst cock-fighting was so important a relaxation to his mind, so that its vigour might subsequently be renewed, that he paid the master of the cocks as much as any two Secretaries of State. And for the rest, as Sir John Harrington wrote from court, 'Now that the gunpowder fight is got out of our heads, we are going on hereabouts as if the Devil was contriving that every man should blow himself up by wild riot, excess, and devastation of time and temperance.'

Being at heart a woman, his majesty loved to look upon fine men, and he saw to it that those immediately about him were fine, not only in person, but also in apparel and equipment, and he showered upon them honours and riches at the expense of his new kingdom. There was Philip Herbert, whom he had made Earl of Montgomery, the handsome, oafish, rowdy, and unworthy brother of the splendid Pembroke; there was Sir John Ramsay, whom he had created Viscount Haddington, between whom and himself lay perhaps the truth of the dark Gowrie business; there was the magnificent Sir James Hay, who eventually became Earl of Carlisle, a courtier trained in France, where he had served in the Scots Guards; and there was a host of lesser handsome satellites, mostly Scots, who sunned themselves in the royal favour, had their will of the weak prodigal king, and preyed upon him much as light wanton women will prey upon a man who delights in feminine companionship. His want of dignity in his relations with his minions was as ludicrous as his excess of it in his relations with the Commons.

Surrounded by a cloud of these lively, gorgeous fritillaries, you behold him on a fair September morning in his pavilion in the tilt-yard at Whitehall. There was to be riding at the ring and there were to be other joustings of a mild order, in the nature of pageants rather than of tourneys, so as to display fine horsemanship and athletic beauty without danger to life or limb, for his majesty did not relish shows that were too warlike.

Dazzling as Phœbus himself rode forth the magnificent James Hay in a doublet of cloth of gold, a short cloak of white beaver trailing from his shoulders, a white-plumed white beaver hat above his golden curls. He was attended, as became so magnificent a paladin, by close upon a score of esquires, who again were followed by as many pages in his cerulean livery, with his arms embroidered on each breast. To be his shield-bearer Sir James had chosen the handsomest of his esquires, a youth of twenty, who for beauty of face and straight shapeliness of limb must draw the eye in any assembly. He drew now the eyes of all in the ladies' gallery as he rode forward alone in advance of the others, mounted on a mettlesome white horse, to do his appointed office and present his lord's escutcheon to the King.

The King rolled his big liquid eyes, and under the veil of his thin sandy beard, the heavy lips of his loose mouth smiled approval. His majesty loved good horses and admired good horsemanship, an art he was never to master for himself, although more than half his days were spent in the saddle. He was lost now in admiring wonder of the superb mastery of the advancing rider.

'Like a centaur. Ay, and a bonnie,' he muttered thickly in his singsong Scots voice.

A final curvet at the very steps of the royal gallery, and the horse was pulled up, so sharply that it almost sat down on its haunches like a cat. Yet all would have been well with the horseman if he had not already disengaged one foot from the stirrup intending to complete his display by a leap to the ground which should bring horse and man to a simultaneous standstill. The result was that he lost his balance at the very moment of gathering himself for his leap, and, cumbered as he was by the shield, he came heavily to the ground.

Philip Herbert at the King's elbow advertised his inherent boorishness by a loud guffaw.

'Your centaur's come in pieces, Sire.'

But the King never heard him, which was perhaps as well for him. The royal eyes were upon the young man, who sprawled in a curiously helpless attitude upon the dusty ground after an instant's aborted effort to rise.

'God's sake!' the King muttered. 'The lad's hurt.' And he heaved himself out of his crimson chair and stood forth, a man a little above the middle height, whose thick ungainly body was carried upon thin rachitic shanks. He had been suckled by a drunkard, and to this it was attributed that he had not been able to stand until his seventh year; nor did his legs thereafter ever grow to normal strength.

Already esquires and pages were on foot and hastening to the fallen young man's assistance, Sir James Hay, on horseback close at hand, directing them. There was silence in the assembly of spectators, all of whom had risen. In the

ladies' gallery, the Countess of Essex, a fair-headed child of fifteen of an extraordinary loveliness, leaning forward, clutching the wooden rail before her with a slim gloved hand, drew attention to herself by the anxious note of her outcry and the insistence with which she demanded to know the extent of the young man's hurt, which none yet could tell her. Her mother, the Countess of Suffolk, that ample-bosomed, sneering-mouthed, pock-marked woman, restrained her, whilst smiling upon the tenderness of her solicitude for an unknown youth.

Then the King became the centre of interest. Leaning heavily upon Herbert's shoulder, he shambled down the steps. He bent over the young man, who lay supine and helpless, his right leg at an odd angle. This leg, they informed his majesty, was broken. A page had already gone to summon bearers and a hand-litter.

'Poor lad! Poor lad!' mumbled the King on an almost maudlin note. Small ills observed could singularly move this man to tenderness, who could yet perpetrate great and bloody cruelties which he was not called upon to witness.

The youth shifted his head upon the pillow it had found on the knee of another esquire, and his fine eyes looked up in awe at compassionate majesty. Though livid and drawn by pain, the beauty of his face remained singularly arresting. Not more than twenty years of age, he was still beardless, and only a little auburn moustache shaded the shapely mouth, at once firm and sensuous. He pushed back the tumbled red-gold hair from his moist brow and made as if to speak, then checked, not knowing what might be required of him by etiquette in such a case.

But the King had little thought for etiquette. Goggle-eyed he considered this long slim lad, and he was so overcome at the thought of so much physical perfection being perhaps permanently marred that a tear rolled down his prematurely furrowed yet florid cheek.

'Who is he? How's he called?' he gruffly questioned.

Sir James, who had dismounted, pushed forward, hat in hand, to answer him.

'His name is Carr, may it please your majesty; Robert Carr of Ferniehurst.'

'Carr o' Ferniehurst!' The King seemed taken aback. 'The son of Tom Carr! God's sake!'

He bent lower to scan more closely the handsome man grown out of one who some years ago had served him as a page in Edinburgh, but who had been dismissed for his persistent bad Latin at grace, which to the King had smacked of irreverence.

Young Carr's white mask of pain was irradiated by a smile to behold himself remembered.

'God save your majesty,' he said in an accent even more broadly Scots than the King's own.

'It's thyself needs saving now, lad,' the King mumbled. He stood upright again and became brisk in the issuing of orders, and more indistinct in speech than usual in this briskness.

Mr. Carr was to be conveyed no farther than Mr. Rider's house in King Street, near at hand. Let word be sent ahead at once that a room be prepared for him. At the royal nod one of his gentlemen sped upon the errand, whilst another departed in quest of his majesty's own physician. The

repairs to the lad's leg were to be carried out by the most skilful hands available, so as to ensure that so lovely a body should suffer no permanent impairment.

Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, holding premier place among the favourites, looked down his handsome nose in disdain. Why did his old dad and gossip, as he familiarly called his sovereign, make all this bother about a raw Scots esquire of no account?

Dull fellow that Herbert was, he lacked the wit to perceive that another of Guy Fawkes's beggars was come to court.



CHAPTER II

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THE RISING SUN

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Very soon it became apparent that the fall in which Mr. Robert Carr had broken his leg had flung him headlong into the lap of fortune.

The King had outstayed the show in the tilt-yard. So much he owed to the gentlemen who were providing this entertainment. At its conclusion, however, he had postponed his return to the palace, to turn aside and visit Mr. Rider's house in King Street, so that he might personally ascertain the exact extent of Mr. Carr's injuries. He went attended by a group of gentlemen, among whom was Herbert, very sulky now at what he accounted a fresh and excessive manifestation of royal caprice.

At Mr. Rider's they found his majesty's physician, who relieved anxieties which could hardly have been greater had the patient been an old and valued friend.

Mr. Carr, his leg set, and now out of pain and moderately comfortable, lay in a pleasant room whose latticed windows stood open to the September sunshine and Mr. Rider's pleasant garden behind the house. As the door opened, he turned his head with its tumbled mane of red-gold hair, and from his pillow looked to see who came.

It startled him to behold under the lintel the figure of the King, loutish and ungainly despite rich saffron-coloured velvet and gleam of jewels. The corpulence to which his

majesty's body already tended was aggravated in appearance by thickly bombasted breeches and a doublet stuffed and quilted so as to render it dagger-proof and thus quiet his congenital timorousness and abiding dread of cold steel. This affliction of physical fear under which he was to labour all his days was perhaps to be traced back to that night in Holyrood, two months before his birth, when Rizzio was brutally stabbed to death at his mother's feet.

He stood now upon that threshold, rolling his big wistful eyes in a face whose lines bore the imprint of an age considerably beyond his forty years. In repose his countenance ever wore that vacant quality of melancholy that is to be seen in the brute creation. And it reflected, no doubt accurately, a soul which was not to be beguiled from its fundamental sadness and loneliness either by the free indulgence of the man's egregious vanity or the liberal pursuit of sensuous satisfactions.

Closely followed by the physician, who had met him in the outer room, he shambled forward to the trundle-bed, leaving his gentlemen on the threshold. He came, he announced, no more than to inquire of Mr. Carr, himself, how he did.

Mr. Carr, flushing deeply, between awe and gratification of an honour so far in excess of his poor deserts, answered in his broad Northern accent that he did very well, which immediately opened the door to the King's ever-ready and usually trivial facetiousness.

'Ud's death!' He spoke thickly and indistinctly, his tongue being too thick for his mouth. In theory he condemned all blasphemy, and, indeed, had written a treatise upon the

evils of it; in practice he seldom sought vehemence of expression without having recourse to its emphatic aid. 'If you account yourself very well with a broken leg what'll ye deem yourself when it's whole again?'

The courtiers in the background offered the murmur of laughter that was expected. But Mr. Carr did not even smile.

'Your majesty's gracious concern had been cheaply bought at the price of both legs broken.'

If his accent was uncouth to English ears, his matter at least left little to be desired in courtliness. The King pulled at his thin tuft of sandy beard and smiled, nodding his head in approval.

'Say you so? Faith, it's a graceful enough answer. Ye'll have been in France, I doubt, with Sir James.'

Mr. Carr confessed it. He had spent two years at court there.

'And ye'll have learnt among those leeching loons to cast French capriolles of speech. Nay, never look downcast. I bear no rancour for civilities even when they're but clavering.'

The handsome young face flushed again, and the bright eyes slid away abashed under the benevolent gaze of royalty.

Not until the King had left him, which followed presently, did the possible significance of that visit begin to break upon the dazzled wits of Mr. Carr. Not until the visit was repeated on the following morning, and again on the morning after that, did Mr. Carr permit himself to believe that which until then appeared almost too daring a suspicion. When three mornings later he was waited upon

by a Gentleman of the Household accompanied by a page bearing a basket of such rare exotic fruits as peaches and musk melons, sent by the King from the royal table, certainty was piled on certainty. Moreover, the bearer of these gifts, a very splendid Scots gentleman who named himself to Mr. Carr as Sir Alan Ochiltree, was very civil, very solicitous on the score of Mr. Carr's hurt and health, and very ready to profess himself at Mr. Carr's orders and eager to serve him.

The sudden change of fortune which all this seemed to presage for the penniless young Scot bewildered him. It had happened so abruptly, had been so utterly the fruit of chance, and was so far beyond any calculation he would have dared embark upon, that, despite the abundance of the confirmation and whilst already believing, he yet hesitated to believe. It lent truth to the courtly speech he had used to the King, for it was true enough that to penetrate so far into the royal esteem he would willingly have suffered both his legs to have been broken.

The King's visits continued daily, and daily became more protracted. Soon there was scarcely an hour of the day but some great gentleman or other, eager to follow his majesty's example, came to wait upon Mr. Carr to inquire into his state of health. By the end of the week, the outer room of the house in King Street might have been mistaken from the quality of its tenants for one of the antechambers of the Palace of Whitehall.

Sir James Hay, who whilst Mr. Carr was in his service had paid but indifferent attention to him, was now a daily visitor, and of such assiduity that the erstwhile patron seemed

almost to have become the suitor. Even my Lord of Montgomery did not disdain to court the favour of the young Scot, and then one day, as if to set a climax upon all, the Lord Chamberlain, the great Earl of Suffolk, came in person to wait upon Mr. Carr and to overwhelm him with civilities.

He had heard of Mr. Carr, he announced, and of Mr. Carr's unfortunate accident from his daughter, Lady Essex, who had been a distressed witness of the event and had spoken of it daily since. Mr. Carr, although he had never heard of the lady, was deeply flattered to have drawn upon himself the eyes and thoughts of such exalted nobility. Her ladyship, my lord continued, had, in common with his own countess, been moved to deep concern on Mr. Carr's behalf, and it was in the hope of being able to allay their anxieties that his lordship now sought news of the invalid in person.

Mr. Carr thanked him becomingly. After all, the young Scot was well bred, he had profited by his courtly experience in France, and gathering now confidence and self-assurance rapidly from the consequence with which he found himself treated, he put forth an easy charm of manner of the kind that rarely fails to win friends for a man.

My Lord of Suffolk was relieved. At least this youth, of whom men spoke already as the new favourite, was no rowdy overbearing oaf like so many of the royal pets, like, for instance, Montgomery, with whom his lordship almost collided as he issued from Mr. Carr's chamber.

Montgomery came in boisterously. 'What brings the old sea-fox to your bedside?' For all that his lordship was not yet out of the house, young Herbert made no attempt to subdue

his vibrant voice. That was the rude way of him: reckless ever of what offence he gave.

The demureness of Mr. Carr's reply seemed almost a reproof. 'No more than the desire to be civil.'

'Which is when most he is to be mistrusted, like all the Howards: a greedy, self-seeking pack made up of wolves and foxes; and he the worst of them. Beware of Howards! Avoid their embraces as ye would the Devil's. There's as much profit to a man in the one as in the other.'

Mr. Carr made no answer beyond a pensive smile. A book was closed upon his forefinger to mark the place where he had been reading before the coming of the Lord Chamberlain had interrupted him. He smiled to think how fully he was already accounted of the court that his choice of a party was being guided for him, if, indeed, his suffrages were not being sought.

Anon came the King in a blue velvet doublet which he had buttoned awry, thereby increasing the ungainliness of his appearance. It was stained, too, with gravy like all his suits, for clumsy and untidy in all things, he was in nothing more so than in his eating, unless it was in his drinking. To behold him at table was to understand why the impudent Buckingham at a much later date entitled him 'his sowship.'

The King drove out Montgomery and took the chair at the head of the bed, as was now his daily custom. He mumbled inquiries as to how his dear lad fared and what the physician had to report upon his progress, then asked him what he read. Mr. Carr held up the book, and smiled. The King smiled too; he put back his head a little with a certain jauntiness and his eyes gleamed pride. For the volume was a copy of

the 'Basilicon Doron,' that monument of pedantry which his majesty, like a new Machiavel, had produced some years ago for the instruction of the Prince his son. Mr. Rider, an experienced courtier, had, in Mr. Carr's own interest, procured him the copy.

The King grunted approvingly. 'So, so! Ye take the trouble to become acquainted with the best parts of me.'

He desired to have Mr. Carr's opinion of the book. Mr. Carr considered that it would be a presumption for one so rudely tutored as himself to utter an opinion of a work so scholarly and profound.

'Ye're none so rudely tutored after all, since ye perceive the scholarliness and profundity.' Squirring with satisfaction he pressed Mr. Carr to tell him what part he had liked best.

Mr. Carr, who had found the work of an intolerable, soporific tedium, and could remember of it only that which he had last read, spoke of necessity to this. In all this monument of erudition, said he, written it was clear by one who was at once a philosopher and a theologian, he would venture to select for his preference the part that dealt with marriage.

The King's satisfaction seemed diminished. He knew how far in this matter his own performance had fallen short of his precepts. In public he could be almost uxorious. But in private there was little in common nowadays between himself and Danish Anne, for all that she had borne him seven children. At Denmark House in the Strand she kept not only her own establishment apart from him, but was assembling a court of her own; and it began to look as if she would make of that court the foundations of a party in the

State that might yet come into conflict with the King's desires and policies. Yet, since this troubled him less than the Queen's constant company might have done, he was well content.

His majesty changed the subject. He talked of horses and horsemanship, of dogs and hunting and falconry, matters these of a gentleman's education in which Mr. Carr showed intelligent knowledge. Then the talk shifted to Scotland and to the days when young Robert Carr, by favour of Esmé, Duke of Lennox, who had been his father's close friend, had entered the royal household as a page. Laughing now, the King alluded to his annoyance at the lad's incurable blundering over the Latin grace when it was his duty to say it before meat, which had ultimately led to his dismissal.

'No doubt ye'll have mended that lack of learning since?'

Mr. Carr in confusion confessed that he had neglected to do so. His majesty was shocked into sudden incredulous gravity.

'A gentleman without Latin! Ud's death! It's worse than a woman without chastity. For whereas to the latter Nature herself may at times oppose obstacles, as it becomes us to remember lest we judge too harshly of their frailty, to the former there is no natural obstacle at all.'

Taking that for his text, he descanted at great length with a wealth of recondite verbiage and classical allusion in one of those vain displays of erudition in which this royal pedant delighted. The end of it all was a declaration that he could not have Mr. Carr about his person as he intended unless the shortcomings of the young man's education were repaired. He loved to have about him, he vowed, gentlemen

of taste and learning, which did not explain the favour he showed to Philip Herbert and some others whose taste and learning did not go beyond the matter of dogs and horses.

Mr. Carr abased himself in regrets for the neglect he had practised. It should be repaired without delay.

'I mean it so to be,' the King assured him. Himself he would be the lad's preceptor. 'I care not,' he vowed, 'if I fling away as much time as shall teach you. It might be less profitably wasted, Robin.' He stroked the young man's cheek with a finger, which, if thick, soft, and jewelled, was none too scrupulously clean.

Thereafter, daily, during the mending of his limb, Mr. Carr struggled bravely with a Latin grammar, whose intricacies were expounded to him by the royal pedagogue. It was a form of torture to which he submitted with great fortitude, for the sake of all that he now supposed to hang upon it. If he was conscious of his own dullness, at least he was relieved from anxiety by the patience of this King, who was born to play the schoolmaster, a patience founded upon the satisfaction which his vanity derived from the free display of his own learning.

Mr. Carr was still at declensions and conjugations when towards the end of October the doctors at last permitted him to set foot to the ground again, his leg now mended, and so soundly that its shapely symmetry was nowise impaired.

King James was there to witness those first steps in convalescence as gleefully as a fond father observing the first steps of his own offspring, and he sharply commanded Philip Herbert to lend the lad an arm for his support. My Lord

of Montgomery complied, however deeply it may have galled him to play the valet to this young upstart. If he was rancorous, he did not suffer it to be perceived, and this not even when, from being courted by those who sought the royal favour, he found it prudent to do some courting in his turn and join the ever-growing stream of those who wooed Mr. Robert Carr.

The throng of gentlemen of birth and quality to be met in the outer room of Mr. Rider's house in King Street, during the last two or three weeks of Mr. Carr's confinement there, was but an earnest of the crowds that were to assemble in Mr. Carr's own antechamber at Whitehall when presently he was translated thither by the infatuated monarch. Had the young Scot been acquainted with the Arabian Nights he must have conceived that he lived in one of them, befriended by some benevolent djin whose fiat had transmogrified his world. Sumptuous quarters were allotted to him, indeed the best that Whitehall, now fallen into a ramshackle state, could provide. His lodging overlooked the privy gardens. It was a lodging that for some years had been tenanted by Sir James Elphinstone, a gentleman of great lineage and greater pride who had enjoyed the esteem of the late Queen. Sir James, when ordered to vacate the premises, went vehemently protesting to the Lord Chamberlain, who conveyed the protest in more temperate terms to his majesty. His majesty would listen to no pleas, enter into no discussions.

'I maun ha' it for Carr,' was all he said, and this with such grim finality that my Lord of Suffolk went out backwards at once, to inform Sir James that he must pack and quit.

By the King's orders these new quarters were extravagantly refurnished to receive their new tenant. Rich hangings and rare carpets were procured to adorn them, and when installed there Mr. Carr found a regiment of grooms and pages to minister to him, who hitherto had been his own body-servant and whose highest consequence had been reached as another man's esquire. There were tailors to provide a sumptuous wardrobe to replace the few threadbare garments that he owned, pronounced by the King as fit only for a peasebogle; and there were tiremen to array him in these glories under the supervision of the King himself, who did not disdain to display himself as much an arbiter of elegancies as he was proud to boast himself a theologian and a poet. Jewellers from Goldsmith's Row spread gaudy, glittering toys before young Robin, of which the paternal monarch commanded him to make choice. Barbers and hair-dressers combed and curled and scented his red-gold locks and trimmed to a dagger-point the little auburn beard which he had allowed to grow since his accident.

If the lad was allotted no preceptors, this was because the King himself desired to continue in that office. He could trust no tutor in England to give the boy's Latin that genuine Roman pronunciation practised in Scotland, upon which his majesty prided himself not a little. The wits accounted it a pity that his majesty was not attracted by the same purity of diction where English was concerned, both in his own case and that of his pupil.

In those wintry days, if Mr. Carr was not closeted with the King at his studies, he was at table with him, or riding with

him, or lending him his arm when he went to give audience; for such a hold had the young Scot's beauty of person and charm of manner taken upon King James that he could no longer bear him out of his sight.

By Christmas the name of the new favourite, who had outstripped all rivals and perched himself on a pinnacle of eminence such as none had ever yet scaled, was on the lips of every man and woman in London. At Denmark House, where the Queen held her court under the virtual leadership of the elegant accomplished Pembroke, much frequented by the austere young Prince Henry, and where it was the fashion to contemn the minions by whom King James surrounded himself, lampoons were being freely written with Mr. Robert Carr for their butt. Whilst naturally enough there were many to sneer at the sudden exaltation of this penniless Scots nobody, and many envious ones at court who hopefully predicted that the upstart's fall would follow soon and prove sharper even than his rise, yet all who came in contact with him succumbed to the charm of his engaging personality. Even amongst those who came jaundiced by jealousy, there were some whom he converted at the first meeting by his frank boyishness and the modesty with which he bore himself in circumstances which must soon have begotten arrogance in a nature less finely tempered. His breeding saved him there. For let men sneer at him as they would for an upstart, the fact remained that, if poor, he was gently born and of courtly rearing, to which his graceful easy carriage bore constant witness, despite the uncouthness of his Northern speech. His good looks, youthful eagerness, and the bright joyousness that flowed

from him, making him a creature of warmth and sunshine, brought men easily to understand and even to approve the royal infatuation.

His success remained still in his own eyes an unreal dream-business from which he might at any moment awaken to his former precarious estate. It continued so even when one day he found Sir James Hay, his former patron, actually inviting his suffrages.

Sir James, whose ambitions were preëminently ambassadorial, desired to be appointed envoy to the court of France. He had taken advantage of the fact that the King used him intimately to solicit the office, and he now begged of Carr that he would endorse the request for him. Mr. Carr almost gasped. If anything could make him realise to the full the change in his fortunes which a few months had wrought, this should do it.

He bowed very gravely, almost pale as he answered: 'Sir James, it is not for you to beg anything of me; but to command me. You may count upon me in this. I will speak to his majesty to-day, since you require it; though if you are granted the office, you will owe it rather to your own deserts and influence than to any poor word of mine.'

Sir James had stared a moment; indeed, he had looked hard to see if he was not perhaps being mocked, so unusual was such a tone as this in a favourite. But perceiving the lad's earnest sincerity, he had bowed in his turn.

'Sir,' he said, smiling, 'you make me proud to have been your friend.'

As in this, so in all. Mr. Carr's purse, which the doting monarch kept well supplied, was ever in those days at the

disposal of the needy whom he could not succour otherwise, and that he was free from the venality which others in his place have seldom failed to manifest, he gave early proof. Wooed by a place-seeker for a post in the customs, who came to him recommended by no less a person than the Attorney-General, he lent the usual ready ear to the man's representations of his worth and fitness for the office. He promised readily to lay the petition before his majesty. Thereupon the man, instructed perhaps by Mr. Attorney himself in the place-seeker's sure way to a favourable patronage, made it plain that he did not ask to be served for worth alone and that upon his receiving the appointment there would be three hundred pounds for Mr. Carr.

The young man stiffened and changed colour. A moment he paused, his clear eyes hard as they measured this presumptuous trafficker.

'Wait upon me again to-morrow, and you shall ken his majesty's pleasure in the matter.' Coldly he inclined his head, and passed on to the next suitor.

But there was no coldness in his manner when anon he came to tell the King of this insult. The King's cackling laugh cropped his indignation in full flow.

'God's sake! If my faithful Commons would but insult me in such like manner I'd greet for joy.'

Mr. Carr looked askance at him, which increased his mirth.

'Did ye discern,' quoth the King, 'if the carle had qualities to fit him for the office?'

'He boasted of them; and there was a letter from Mr. Attorney to assert it. But ...'

'Why, then he'll serve as well as another, and it's not every suitor for the place will be as ready to part with so much silver. A God's name, take his three hundred, give him the office, and bid him go to the devil. Customs, is it? Tell him his own customs commend him finely.'

His majesty laughed over the matter at the moment. But anon, when once more alone, he became serious on a belated thought that suddenly assailed him. Robert Carr was honest! It was a startling quality to discover in a courtier. The fellow was a prodigy. To have singled him out for trust and favour was an instance of the acuteness of his royal wits in selecting servants. It confirmed him in the belief that he could read a man's worth at a glance. King James was pleased with himself, and therefore the more pleased with Carr who had made him so. At last amongst all these self-seeking flatterers, these leeching carles, who fawned upon him for their own profit and who were ready to sell him whenever occasion offered, he had found an honest man; one who had desired nothing of him and was so little disposed to take advantage of his favour that he denounced the first suitor who had sought to bribe him.

This was a man to grapple to him with hoops of steel, to lean upon and to trust.

Decidedly Robin must make better progress in Latinity.

The highest destinies awaited him.
