

The King Dines. By Robert Barr.

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WHEN kings crown, courtiers tremble," said Sir Donald Sinclair to the archbishop of St. Andrews, "but in Stirling the case seems reversed. The courtiers frown and the king looks anxiously toward them."

"Indeed," replied the prelate, "that may well be. When a man invites a company to dine with him, and then makes the discovery that his larder is empty, there is cause for anxiety, be he king or churl. In truth my wame's beginning to think my throat's cut. And the learned churchman sympathetically smoothed down that portion of his person first named whose rounded contour gave evidence that its owner

near the door laughed, and there was a ripple of suppressed merriment over the whole company. At first the frown on the king's brow deepened, and then as suddenly it cleared away as a puff of wind scatters the mist from the heights of Stirling. When the king spoke again it was in a calm, even voice. "As I understand you, there was no difficulty in capturing the deer, but you encountered some obstacle between the forest and Stirling, which caused you to return empty-handed. I hope you have not added the occupation of itinerant fletcher to the noble calling of forest huntsman."

"Indeed, your majesty," replied the unabashed hunter, "the profession of fletcher was forced upon me. The deer we had slaughtered found it impos-

sible to win by the gates of Arnprior."

"Ah! John Buchanan then happened to need venison as you passed?"

"Your majesty has hit the gold there. Buchanan not only needed it, but took it from us."

"Did you inform him that your cargo was intended for the larder of the king?"

"I told him that in so many words, your majesty; and he replied that if James was king in Stirling, John was king in Kippen, and having the shorter name, he took the shorter method of supplying his kitchen."

"Made you any effort to defend your gear?"

"Truth to say, your majesty, that were a useless trial. The huntsman who will face the deer thinks no shame to turn his back on the wild boar, Buchanan, when he demanded your majesty's venison, was well supported by a number of mad caterans with drawn swords in their hands, who had made up for a lack of good meat with a plenitude of strong drink. Resistance was futile and we were fain to take the bannock that was handed to us, even though the ashes were upon it. Donald of the Hills, a daft Hielan' man, who knew no better, drew an arrow to his ear and would have plucked Buchanan to his own gate, resulting in the destruction of us all, had I not, with my stave, smote the weapon from his hand. Then the mad youth made such a do that we had just to tie him up and bring him to Stirling on the horse's back like a sack of fodder."

"Your caution does credit to your lowland breeding, master huntsman, and the conduct of Ronald cannot be too severely condemned. Bring him here, I beg of you, that he may receive the king's censure."

Ronald was brought in, a wild, unkempt figure, his scanty dress disordered, bearing witness to the struggle in which he had but lately been engaged. His elbows were pinioned behind him, and his shock of red hair stood out like a heather broom. He scowled fiercely at the huntsman, and that cautious individual edged away from him, bound as he was.

"By my beard! as the men of the heather erst swear," said the king, "his hair somewhat matches my own in hue. Ronald, what is the first duty of a huntsman?"

"He speaks only the Gaelic, your majesty," explained the royal ranger.

"You have the Gaelic, MacNeish," continued the king, addressing one of his train. "Explain to him, I beg of you, my question: What is the first duty of a huntsman?"

MacNeish, stepping forward, put the question in Gaelic and received Ronald's reply.

"He says, your majesty, that a huntsman's first duty is to kill the game he is sent for."

"Quite right," and the king nodded approval. "Ask him if he knows as well the second duty of a huntsman."

Ronald's eyes flashed as he gave his answer with a vehemence that caused the chief huntsman to move still further away from him.

"He says, your majesty," translated MacNeish, "that the second duty of a huntsman is to cut the throat of any cateran who presumes to interfere with the progress of the provender from the forest to his master's kitchen."

"Right again," cried the king, smiting his thigh, "and an answer worthy of all commendation. Tell him this, chief huntsman to the castle of Stirling. We will place this cowardly hielion in the kitchen, where he will be safe from the hungry frenzy of a Buchanan, drunk or sober."

raised his brawny arms above his head and gave startling vent to the warcy of his clan, "LOCH SLOY! LOCK SLOY!" unmindful of the presence in which he stood. Then he knelt swiftly and brought his lips to the buckle of the king's shoe.

"Gratitude in a MacFarlane!" sneered MacNeish.

"Aye," said the king, "and bravely, too, for he never winked an eyelash when the sword swung above him; an admirable combination of qualities whether in a MacFarlane or a MacNeish. And now, gentlemen, continued his majesty, "although the affair of the huntsman is settled, it brings us no nearer to the king, then must the king to the cook. Gentlemen, to your arms and your horses. They say a Scotsman fights well when he is hungry; let us put the proverb to the test. We ride and dine with his majesty of Kippen."

A spontaneous cheer burst from every man in the great hall to the accompaniment of a rattle of swords. Most of those present were more anxious to follow the king to a contest than into a council chamber. When silence ensued, the mild voice of the archbishop, perhaps because it was due to his profession, put in a reasonable word, and the nobles scowled, for they knew he had great influence with the king.

"Your majesty, if the Buchanans are drunk—"

"If they are drunk, my lord archbishop," interrupted James, "we will sober them. 'Tis a duty even the church owes to the inebriate." And with that he led the way out of the hall, his reply clearing the brows of his followers.

A few minutes later a clattering cavalcade rode forth from the castle of Stirling, through the town and down the path of Ballengeich, a score of soldiers bringing up the tail of the procession; and in due time the company came to the entrance to Arnprior castle. There seemed like to be opposition at the gate, but Sir Donald, spurring his horse forward among the guard, scattered the members of the right and left, and raising both voice and sword, shouted:

"The king! The king! Make way for the king of Scotland!"

The defenders seeing themselves outnumbered, as the huntsmen had been in that locality a short time before, gave up their axes to the invaders as meekly as the royal rangers had given up their venison.

The king placed his own guard at the gate. Springing from his horse he entered the castle door, and mounted the stone steps, sword in hand, his retinue close at his heels. The great hall to which they ascended was no monk's chapel of silence, waiting to be wafted to them, or rather blown down upon them like a fierce hurricane, the martial strains of "Buchanan Forever," played by pipers anything but scant of wind; yet even this tornado was not sufficient to drown the roar of human voices, some singing, others apparently in the heat of altercation, and during the height of this deafening clamor the king and his followers entered the dining hall practically unobserved.

On the long oaken table servants were busily placing smoking viands soon to be consumed; others were filling the drinking horns, while some of the guests were engaged in emptying them, although the meal had not yet begun. Buchanan, his back toward the incomers, his brawny hands on the table, leaning forward, was shouting to the company, commanding his guests to seat themselves and fall to while the venison was hot. There seemed to be several loud-voiced disputes going on

regarding precedence. The first intimation that the following laid had of the intruders' presence was the cold touch of steel on his bare neck. He sprang round as if a wasp had stung him, his right hand swinging instinctively to the hilt of his sword, but the point of another was within an inch of his throat, and his hand fell away from his weapon.

"The fame of your hospitality has spread abroad, Buchanan," spoke the clear voice of the king, "so we have come to test its quality."

"The pipers have stopped in their march, and with the ceasing of the music the wind from the bags escaped to the outer air with a long wailing groan. The tumult of discussion subsided, and all eyes turned toward the speaker, some of the guests hastily grasping swords but returning them again to the scabbards when they saw themselves confronted by the king. Buchanan staid himself with his back against the table, and in the sudden silence he gazed long and steadily at his tongue. At last he said:

"Does the king come as a guest with a drawn sword in his hand, Buchanan," replied James with a smile, "it is customary to bring the knife with you when you go out to dine. But I am quite in agreement with the laird of Arnprior in thinking the sword an ill ornament in a banquet hall, therefore bestow your weapons on Sir Donald here and command your clan now present to disarm."

With visible reluctance Buchanan divested himself of sword and dirk, and his comrades, now stricken dumb, followed his example. The weapons were thrown together in a corner of the hall where some of the king's soldiers stood guard over the Buchanans. His prediction regarding the sobering effect of his advent was amply fulfilled. The disarmed men looked with dismay on one another, for they knew that such a prelude might well have its grand finale at the block or the gibbet. The king, although seemingly in high spirits, was an unknown quantity, and before now there had been those in power who, with a smile on their lips, had sent doomed men to a scaffold.

"As you get north of Stirling, Buchanan," continued the king, "with the utmost politeness, 'you were actuated by one of two motives. Your intervention was either an insult to the king or it was an intimation that you desired to become his cook. In which light am I to view your action, Buchanan?"

"It has ever been my ambition to see your majesty grace with his presence my humble board."

"I was sure of it," cried James, with a hearty laugh, which brought relief to the anxious hearts of many standing before him. The king thrust his sword into a scabbard and, with a clangor of hilt on iron, those behind him followed his example.

"And now," cried James, "let the king's men eat while the laird's men wait upon them. And as for you, John Buchanan, it is today my pleasure that you have the honor of being my cup-bearer."

Whether the honor thus thrust upon the laird of Arnprior was as much to his liking as an invitation to sit down with his guest would have been, is questionable, but he served his majesty with good grace, and the king was loud in his praise of the venison, although his compliments fell vainly on

the ears of the hungry men who watched its disappear so rapidly. At the end of the feast James rose with his flagon in his hand.

"I give you, the king," he cried, "the King of Kippen. When I left Stirling I had made up my mind that there could be but one king in a country, but glorious Scotland shall have no such restriction, and I bestow upon Buchanan, whose ample cheer we have done justice to, the title of King of Kippen, so long as he does not fall into the error of supposing that Kippen includes all Scotland, instead of Scotland including Kippen. And so, Laird of Arnprior, King of Kippen, we drink your good health, and when next my venison passes your door take only that portion of it which bears the same relation to the whole as the district of Kippen does to broad Scotland."

The toast was drunk with cheers, and when silence came the king of Kippen, casting a rueful glance along the empty board, said:

"I thank your majesty for your good wishes, but in truth the advice you give will be hard to follow, for I see I should have stolen twice the quantity of venison I did, because as I have not done so I and my men are like to go hungry."

And thus Buchanan came into his title of king of Kippen, although he had to wait some time for his dinner on the day he acquired the distinction.

BOOKS FOR THE LIBRARY.

Twenty-five volumes will be added to the public library Monday morning, Nov. 17, 1902, as follows:

- Miscellaneous. Allen—"History of the Expedition of Captains Lewis and Clark." Two volumes. Bonney and Others—"The Mediterranean: Its Scenic Cities and Venerable Ruins." Caffin—"American Masters of Painting." Earle—"Child Life in Colonial Days." Eastman—"Indian Boyhood." Giles—"China and the Chinese." Gray—"Over the Black Coffee." Keyser—"Birds of the Rockies." McCarthy—"The Reign of Queen Anne." Two volumes. Paul—"Matthew Arnold." Wood—"Quotations for Occasions." (Reference.)

Fiction.

- Connolly—"Out of Gloucester." Ellis—"The Holland Wolves." Forslund—"The Ship of Dreams." Horton—"The Long, Straight Road." Hughes—"The Whirlwind." London—"Children of the Frost." Luther—"The Henchman." Martin—"Emmy Lou." Sayre—"Tom Moore." Sheard—"A Maid of Many Moods."

Silberrad—"The Success of Mark Wyngate."

Ticknor—"Miss Belladonna." Big 4 Adv. Co., Tel. 1501 K. Signs, all sorts, 64 W. 2nd South.

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THE FREED HIGHLANDER GAVE STARTLING VENT TO THE WARCRY OF HIS CLAN, "LOCH SLOY! LOCK SLOY!"

was accustomed to ample rations regularly served.

"Ah, well," continued Sir Donald, "his youthful majesty's foot is hardly in the stirrup yet, and I'm much mistaken in the glint of his eye and the tint of his beard, if once he is firmly in the saddle the horse will not feel the prick of the spur, should it try any tricks with him."

"Scotland would be none the worse of a firm king," admitted the archbishop, glancing furtively at the person they were discussing, "but James has been so long under the control of others that it will need some force of character to establish a will of his own. I doubt he is but a nought posing as a nine," concluded his reverence in a lower tone of voice.

"I know little mathematics," said Sir Donald, "but yet enough to tell me that a nought needs merely a flourish to become a nine, and those nines among us who think him a nought, may become noughts should he prove a nine. There's a problem in figures for you, archbishop."

The young man to whom they referred—James, the fifth of that name—had been pacing the floor a little distance from the large group of hungry men who were awaiting their dinner with some impatience. Now and then the king paused in his perambulation, and gazed out of a window overlooking the courtyard, again resting his disturbed march when his brief scrutiny was completed. The members of the group talked in whispers, one with another, none too loudly, as if at being kept waiting for so important a function as a meal.

Suddenly there was a clatter of horses' hoofs in the courtyard. The king turned care more to the window, glanced a moment at the commotion below, then gave utterance to an exclamation of surprise, his right hand clenched angrily. Wheeling quickly to the guards at the door he cried:

"Bring the chief huntsman here at once, and a prod in the back with a pike may make up for his kiltering in the courtyard."

Then men, who stood like statues with long axes at the doorway, made no move; but two soldiers, sitting on a bench outside, sprang to their feet and ran clattering down the stair.

They returned presently with the chief huntsman, whom they projected suddenly into the room with a violence little to the woodman's taste, for he neglected to remove his bonnet in the royal presence, and so far forgot himself as to turn his head when he recovered his equilibrium, roundly cursing those who had made a projectile of him.

"Well, woodlander!" cried the king, his stern voice ringing down again from the lofty rafters of the great hall. "Are there no deer in my forests of the north?"

"Deer in plenty, your majesty," answered the fellow with a mixture of deference and disrespect, which in truth seemed to tinge the manners of all present. "There are deer in the King's forest, and yet a lack of venison in the king's larder!"

"What mean you by that, you scoundrel!" exclaimed the king, a flush overspreading his face, ruddy as his beard.

"Have your marksmen lost their skill with bow and arrow, that you return destitute to the castle?"

"The marksmen are as expert as ever, your majesty, and their arrows fly as unerringly to their billet, but in these rude times, your majesty, the sting of an arrow may not be followed by the whetting of the butcher's knife."

The king took an impatient step forward, then checked himself. One or two among the group of noblemen

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