

**KING'S
KNIGHT'S
PAWN**

JOHN
AND
PATRICIA
BEATTY

KING'S KNIGHT'S PAWN

BY JOHN AND PATRICIA BEATTY

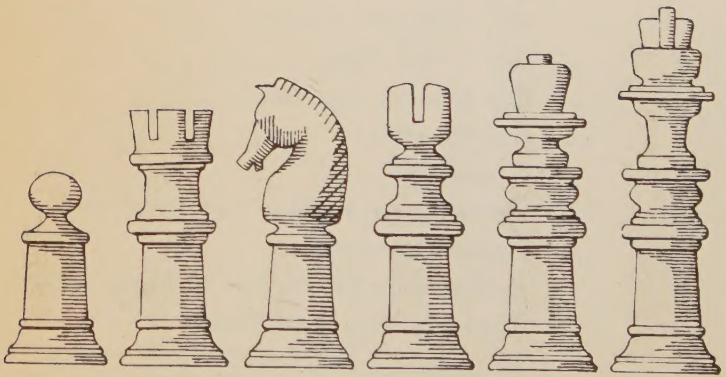
The years of Cromwell's rule are among the most turbulent in English history. Using them as background, John and Patricia Beatty have written a stirring novel that deals with a painful chapter in the antagonism between Ireland and England. Their hero is fourteen-year-old Christopher Barlow, who accidentally witnesses the beheading of Charles the First in 1649.

Like the moves in a chess game, the events in this well-constructed story inevitably lead to the Roundhead massacre of the Irish and their Cavalier defenders at Drogheda. The opening gambit is Christopher's flight to Ireland to serve under his godfather Sir Arthur Aston, who is known as the king's knight. Accordingly, Christopher is called the king's knight's pawn. Despite his relationship to Aston, however, Christopher is drawn more strongly toward Captain Peter Dell, who teaches him the arts of war.

With these elements, the Beattys have created a fast-moving tale of bravery, suspense, and treachery. The authors' research, which included an exploration of Drogheda itself, shows in the authentic re-creation of this savage conflict.

Jacket by Franz Altschuler

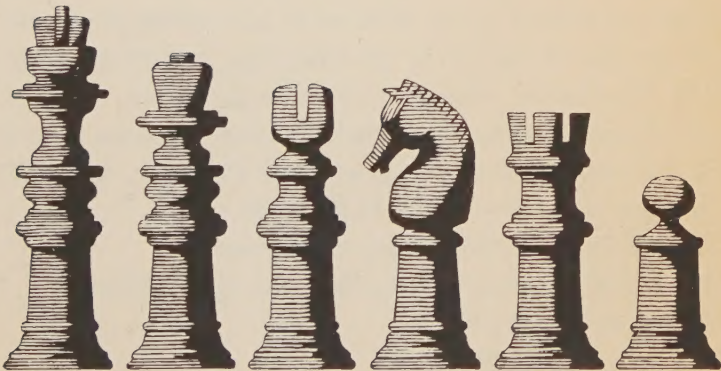
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I
WHITE
QUEEN'S
KNIGHT'S
PAWN
TO WHITE
QUEEN'S
KNIGHT THREE

Three blackbirds in a row—three dark, tall birds—his parents and older brother! Each time Christopher Barstow looked at them over the pots of ale he carried he thought how strange it was that they resembled their tavern's name—the Three Blackbirds. And it was not his thought alone, he knew. Half of Chester called Master and Mistress Barstow and Tom by the selfsame name.

And also half of Chester whispered “changeling” when Christopher, the second-born son, came into the course of idlers' gossip.

The other Barstow children were like unto their frowning, black-haired innkeeper parents—but not “changeling Christopher.” Where the Barstows

were gaunt and black-eyed, the second son was only of medium height and thick-set. Christopher's hair was chestnut brown and thick, his face broad and ruddy. "No true Barstow, this lad," the old wives of Chester told each other. "He is a changeling, taken from his cradle by the wicked fairies in exchange for the true swarthy Barstow babe who is now in fairyland. He does not even truly follow the faith of the Barstows and seldom attends the Presbyterian meetings. In spite of his father's anger, Christopher openly goes to the house of old John Fothergill, the Anglican priest. The lad is an ache to his mother's heart."

This January night of 1649 as he went slowly about his customary work in the common room of the Three Blackbirds, Christopher paid little heed to anyone but his father, mother, and Tom. Apprenticed to a goldsmith in Chester, Tom had come home that night to celebrate his fifteenth birthday. The fact that the previous week Christopher's fourteenth had passed unnoticed by the Barstows rankled the "changeling." The family hopes were totally fixed on Tom, who was pious and clever enough to become someday a prosperous goldsmith and thereby bring much honor to the Barstow name.

Christopher eyed his favored brother angrily as he brought a cup of wine to a traveler from Wales, who was to spend a night at the inn.

“What is the news of the king from London Town?” the traveler asked the boy.

The man’s voice was loud. Christopher glanced over his shoulder at his parents. They did not like talk of King Charles. Although the Civil War was past and the king held prisoner by the victorious Parliament in London, the Barstows greeted Cavaliers at the Three Blackbirds with scant courtesy. A swaggering man with a plume to his hat, moustaches, and a sword meant to them but one thing—a king’s Cavalier, a man of evil who had fought in the defeated armies of King Charles. The boy marked the traveler well. He was no roistering fellow but a middle-aged man with well-clipped, gray-ing hair.

Christopher mumbled politely, “There is no news that I have heard of late, sir.”

“I had hoped there might be. I have long been—” he started and would have gone on, but at that moment the door of the Three Blackbirds opened. A man came in, wrapped against the winter chill in a dark hooded cloak.

Mistress Barstow, scenting another traveler with silver in his pockets, scurried forward, curtsayed, and smiled. “Welcome, sir,” she told the newcomer. Then she asked, “What is your pleasure?”

The moment the man had unfastened the strings of his cloak and pushed back the hood, her manner

changed. She gathered herself together in anger. "Master Fothergill, what brings you here?" she snapped at the little man, who wore his white hair shoulder-length.

Christopher set down the cup he carried so hard the red wine splashed bloodlike over the rim onto the table. Reverend Fothergill had never once come to the Three Blackbirds. No Anglican priest would be very welcome there, least of all John Fothergill. What had brought him here tonight?

Fothergill calmly removed his cloak and shook the snow out of it as if he had been welcomed. Christopher started forward, but his father waved him back. He said in his deep voice, "Reverend Fothergill, my wife and I will speak with you there," pointing to the darkest corner of the inn, where a small table and benches stood quite forlorn far from the hearth.

Fothergill nodded, smiled briefly at Christopher, and went there, the elder Barstows stalking behind him.

Christopher watched his priest friend seat himself, then hurried to the taproom. His brother Tom was there, drawing himself a jack of ale. "What does your old devil of a Papist want here?" asked Tom, giving Christopher one of his glowering looks.

"He is no Papist Roman Catholic and well you know that, Tom. The Church of England is not the Church of Rome."

“Ah, there is naught to tell one from the other,” grunted Tom, dipping his nose into the ale.

“Is there not?” flared Christopher, who had struck Tom more than once and been roundly beaten for it by his father. His brother’s words stung him so they made him rebellious. He’d thought to bring Fothergill ale, but instead he drew red wine from a small cask, the best wine from France in the tavern. The boy started off with his brother’s parting words still in his ears, “Beware. The old priest would make a Papist of you, too. And you are looby enough. My master the goldsmith asks why he does not see you more often at meetings?”

Christopher went the length of the common room to the obscure corner and set the wine before Fothergill, despite his father’s angry eyes. The night was cold and the priest was not a young man. The Barstows could have done Reverend Fothergill more courtesy by seating him closer to the hearth.

“I thank you, Christopher,” said the old man. He touched a small leather bag on the table after he took his first sip of the wine. “It was your birthday not long past. I knew it then, but this arrived only tonight, so I came at once to find you. It contains seven gold sovereigns. This could be your fees for apprenticing or whatever else you may choose to do with it. It comes from your godfather, Sir Arthur Aston.”

“Aston sent it?” Christopher asked, delighted.

"Aye." Fothergill took a little more wine, then arose. He did not look at Christopher's sullen parents or speak to them, but took up his cloak. Christopher went with him to the door.

"I thank you for coming," Christopher told the man. "Will you write my thanks to my godfather for me?"

"When I can, I shall," promised the priest, as he threw his cloak over his shoulders, lifted the latch, and went out.

Christopher turned back to his parents and saw his father standing, stuffing the little bag into the cuff of his coat. "The gift is mine!" he cried out.

"It will mend the tile floor of the kitchen and buy two new settles from the carpenter," said Barstow.

"But the gold was brought to *me!*" Christopher shouted, and patrons swerved their heads to stare at him.

"Do not shout so. Men listen to our private matters," cautioned Mistress Barstow in a whispered hiss. "Christopher, the money has a taint upon it. Sir Arthur Aston is a notorious, wicked man, who served in the armies of King Charles."

"He is your great-uncle, Mother," Christopher accused. "Your mother was an Aston. You asked Aston to stand godfather for me."

"And we have rued it bitterly. Aston was a kinsman of whom to be proud when you were born,"

said Master Barstow in a low voice. "He is now an enemy to Parliament and General Cromwell. They rule England today. King Charles does not—as a prisoner. You know Aston only as a shadow, who sends trinkets and baubles and now, at last, money to a near-grown godson. You have not seen him since you were a babe, and you have no cause at all to love this Fothergill, who acts as Aston's messenger." Barstow took Christopher's arm. "You have no need to apprentice yourself here in Chester, so you have no need of the fee. This inn will someday come to you and your sisters and small brother."

Christopher shook off his father's hand. "Tom is apprenticed! Why not me? I do not want the inn!"

"Tom is clever. You are not," Mistress Barstow explained. "Tom will rise in the world. Perhaps he may someday even go to London. Chester is for you, Christopher."

The boy said bitterly, "And so I am not clever! I am to draw ale and wine and be agreeable to all men and admire the kitchen tiles and settles for the rest of my days!"

Master Barstow shrugged. "Think as you will. You were ever the most stubborn and troublous of our brood. We have good uses for Aston's money. Money knows no master, Christopher."

Christopher saw Tom's smirking face looming up beside him. He brushed past him, knocking the jack

of ale from his hands, and hurtled across the common room. At the door he whirled about, and cried, "Father, Mother, the ball and hoop. The trinkets my godfather sent me you let me have. Then I say the purse, too, is mine!" Lifting the latch, Christopher fled out into the black lane.

He struck away from the city wall in which the tavern nestled, toward the center of the old town. Fothergill's house lay hard by his church. Shivering and cloakless, Christopher passed up and down several flights of stone steps and hurried under the overhanging, wooden upper stories of the old houses. The blackness bothered him little. He knew his Chester well. In five minutes' time he was at the door of a black-and-white, half-timbered house, little different from many others in the town.

He lifted the knocker and let it fall with a hollow thud. Fothergill's serving woman, who was near as old as her master, opened the door a cautious crack and peered out to ask, "Who comes here so late?"

"Christopher Barstow to see your master."

Muttering about the cold and snow and the hour, the serving woman admitted the boy and led him to the small chamber he knew from previous visits. He liked it well. The fire burned brightly in the hearth and flung warm scarlet shadows onto the priest's books and heavy carved furniture.

Fothergill looked up from his chair beside the blaze and gestured toward Christopher. As the boy sat down, the priest ordered the maidservant, "Fetch us a posset." When she had shuffled away, he asked gravely, "Well, Christopher, am I to guess what brings you here to me tonight, or will you tell me? I do not think you came at this hour to play chess with me."

Christopher cracked his knuckles in anger as he stared at the leaping flames. "They have stolen my godfather's purse from me. They are going to buy tiles for the kitchen floor and new settles with it."

Fothergill nodded. "I should not have brought the purse to the tavern. Forgive me, Christopher. I should have given it to you alone when I saw you in the street, but it is winter and I go out little these days."

The boy shook his head. "It would have made no difference, sir. They would have taken it from me in any course. My Father says I am to have the Three Blackbirds when he dies, but I do not want it. He says I have no need of the money."

"What do you want?"

Christopher shook his head. "I do not know." He shot the man an angry glance. "I do not wish to be an innkeeper. I know that full well."

Fothergill smiled. "That much is a beginning at least. Have you told your father this?"

“He will not hear me. He thinks the tavern is enough for me.”

The priest's voice was quiet. “Perhaps, Christopher, if you knew what you would be and what you want and told him, he would be more gentle to you.”

The boy sighed. “No, I am the changeling in my house. I think my father means to bind me to the inn so I will not disgrace him in the trade to which I apprentice myself.”

The serving woman came back with pewter cups of steaming posset. Christopher drank deep of his, then said, “I believe, too, my mother thinks there is much Aston in me.” He looked at the old man across from him. “Am I greatly like unto my godfather?”

Reverend Fothergill laughed. “As a lad I knew Sir Arthur well. We were both of Fulham in Middlesex and were schooled together. I loved books well. He loved horses best—and hunting. I judge you are little like him. I saw him last when you were but a babe and he stood godfather for you here in Chester. Your mother thought well of him then, and why not? It was rumored the king would knight him soon, and some years later King Charles did. When your father wrote Aston not to send you gifts during the recent troubles, Aston recalled our old friendship and sent to me what he would you have from him as a godfather. He is a man of duty.”

Christopher nodded. He could remember as a small boy being stopped in the street by the priest, Fothergill, and given the baubles his godfather had sent. They had not come every year and oftentimes not on his birthday or christening day at all.

Hunched over his spicy posset, Christopher asked the question he loved best of all, "Tell me again what kings my godfather has served as a soldier."

The old priest put down his cup. "First, as a young man, the tsar of Russia, then the king of the Poles and the king of Sweden and lastly King Charles. But I've told you this before." Suddenly Fothergill asked, "Christopher, do you remember King Charles? You once told me you saw his face well."

The boy stuck his wet boots out to the fire. "I saw the king atop the city wall four years past. Though he hated the king well, my father sent Tom and me to catch a glimpse of him and his fine gentlemen of the court. The Cavaliers and king stood together in the Phoenix Tower and watched the battle on Rowton Heath. I saw it, too, from a rooftop with Tom." Christopher frowned. "I saw the wild running about of the king's men and heard the shouts and curses of their officers as they readied all for a sally out of Chester to attack the army Parliament had sent to besiege us. After a long wait the East Gate was thrown open and the king's horsemen came out."

The boy drew a deep breath and spoke falteringly. "I saw many of those Cavaliers fall, killed by the musket fire of the Parliament men. I did not know who was for Parliament or for the king. Then even more Cavalier troopers came riding up behind the Parliament men, who were caught like a new-hatched bird between my hands if I would crush it. I could not believe it, but a new force of Parliamentary soldiers came up and fell onto the rear of the king's second force."

Christopher shuddered. "The second group of Cavaliers tried to fight its way through the first group to the city walls. It was terrible to see. Friend fired on friend as well as on an enemy. Tom and I heard the king's officer atop the wall shout to his musketeers ready with their pieces. 'Fire as you will and at any man below. There are more of Parliament's devils than there are of our own men.' Some of his musketeers cried 'No' at first, but all obeyed in time. They fired on any man they saw below no matter whom he served, King Charles or Parliament."

"It was a victory for Parliament," prompted Fothergill.

"Aye, sir, it was. The Cavaliers took to their heels—those who could not get back inside Chester's walls to safety. I watched the troopers of Parliament ride after the king's men and shoot them down

in the lanes of Hoole Heath, as if they had been woodcock, not men.”

“But you looked well that day upon the king’s face, Christopher?” asked the old man.

“I would not have stared at him, but Tom said I must see how he was when we both knew the battle was lost. I saw King Charles clearly when he put down his spyglass. His face was bread-dough gray and his lips moved silently. I thought perhaps he prayed. I do not believe he cursed.” Christopher bit his lip, remembering. “Sir, the king wept. I saw his tears. Tom said it was because he had lost a battle. I do not think that was the true cause.”

“What do you think it was then?”

“He wept because he saw his subjects, whether they were Parliament men who hated him or his own Cavaliers, killed and maimed that day.”

“That was very likely the truth of it.”

Christopher sighed. “I have not forgotten the king, but I do not speak of him to Tom and my parents, who are well pleased the war is ended and he is a prisoner of Parliament in London Town.”

“And you? Are you pleased, Christopher?”

The boy rubbed his hand across his chin, wiping off a dribble of sticky posset. “No, I was not pleased then. I struck Tom on the ear and was beaten for it that day. Now I do not know how I feel toward the king. Kings do not come to Chester every day. I

know little of them. They do not concern me much. I know it is said that Oliver Cromwell is the greatest man in England today. All men look to him to lead them."

"Not all men, Christopher. There are brave Englishmen loyal to King Charles still, though they cannot serve him openly in England. But they serve him elsewhere in the open."

"Where are they?" asked the boy.

"In Ireland." Fothergill leaned forward slightly. "Your godfather is there. Your gold pieces came in secret to me from Ireland. A ship captain brought the purse to me."

Christopher was surprised. "What does Aston do in Ireland?" The tavern talk at the Three Blackbirds was that most Cavaliers had fled England for France or for The Netherlands, and good riddance to them.

"He serves the king as he served him before—with his sword. Englishmen and Irishmen loyal to the king gather an army in Ireland. What their devises are I cannot guess. More than likely they hope to attack England, conquer it, and return King Charles to his throne." Abruptly the priest changed the subject. "No more of that. I should not speak of it at all, but I trust you, Christopher. This is Chester—not Ireland. What are you to do about your gift from Aston?"

“I do not know,” the boy said, sounding as wretched as he felt.

“You are not of age and the gift was sent by an enemy to the Parliament, which seems to have conquered all. The magistrates of Chester would award the purse to your parents or would confiscate it.”

Christopher said, “My father and mother say in one breath the gold has a taint upon it and in another that money knows no master.”

For the first time Christopher heard the priest snort. “The gift is well meant. Sir Arthur is an honorable king’s knight, although at times a harsh man. He does not ask you to change your faith or your loyalties to please him and keep his gold. He but does his duty as a godfather as he does his duty as a soldier. You have never once seen his hand, have you?”

“No,” admitted Christopher. “He has never written me. Perhaps my father has kept his letters from me.”

Fothergill sighed. “No, Aston seldom writes at all. The gifts came to me for the most part with a spoken message. As I said, he loves best the sword and horses, not the pen. He was ever the bold soldier.”

For an hour Christopher sat talking with the priest of Sir Arthur and the Barstows and the bleakness of his own prospects at the Three Black-

birds. Then he got up, bowed, and left before Fothergill could yawn sleepily one more time or the serving woman could pop her head into the chamber, frowning at the boy.

~ Walking home in the damp cold night, Christopher made up his mind what he would do—what he thought a bold soldier like his godfather would do.

His mother met him just inside the tavern door, a candle in one hand, as he lifted the latch. Her other hand cracked hard across his mouth. The patrons were gone home or gone to bed in the inn, so she gave her sharp tongue full rein. "Tell me no lies. You've been to the priest's house a-whining for his help to get your gold pieces. Rest easy, you've seen the last of them and the last of the old Papist too." The woman hit him again. "And you drew our finest wine for him. You'll go no more to him, or we'll turn you out. Now take yourself off to bed and we'll speak no more of the gold or of your godfather, who has shamed us all and makes Chester folk to say behind my back that I am kinswoman to a traitor to Parliament."

Wordlessly Christopher plunged past his mother up the steps. In the inn's gallery he looked down at her and whispered, unheard by her, "Aye, Mother, we will not speak again of any of these things!" He hurried up another flight of steps to the small chamber under the roof, which he shared with his younger

brother. Striking flint to tinder, he lit his candle and shook his brother awake.

The small boy came up whimpering from deep sleep, then asked, "Wh-what is it, Kit? There's blood on your mouth."

Holding him by the shoulders, Christopher told him fiercely, "This time Mother—not Tom or Father—struck me. Tell her in the morning that I'm away. The gold that's mine will be away, too, and there's no hope to look for either of us."

The little boy's dark eyes widened. "Where do ye go?"

Christopher laughed. "To my father say, to Bristol to take ship for the New World. To my brother Tom say, to York to apprentice myself to a stonemason who builds the great minster. And to my mother, to Dublin to take service with her well-beloved kinsman, Sir Arthur Aston. As for yourself, truly I do not know where I shall go."

Christopher pulled off his bewildered brother's nightcap, ruffled his hair, kissed his cheek, and left the chamber. The inn was full dark now. His mother had gone to bed. He went soft down the steps, along the gallery and down the second, wider flight of stairs, and across the common room into the kitchen, which smelled of mice. There once more he lit a candle. In a corner he lifted a cracked tile, looked under it, and grinned. Reaching down, he took up the

little leather purse and pocketed it. Not bothering to replace the tile, he put a loaf of bread, a slab of beef, and a wedge of cheese into a napkin and stuffed them into the other large pocket of his brown wool coat. Last of all he took down the heavy cloak hanging on a peg near the kitchen door and flung it over his shoulders. He jammed the black steeple hat, belonging to his father, onto his head, unbolted the kitchen door, and went out into the snow for the second time that night. It fell hard now, covering his footsteps.

This time Christopher Barstow did not follow the streets winding into the center of town. He marched away boldly toward the East Gate. As far as he was concerned, he was done for all time with Chester and the Three Blackbirds!



II

BLACK
KING'S
PAWN

TO BLACK
KING FOUR

Christopher went through the gate, unchallenged, and entered a stable nestled up against the ancient, red-brick walls of Chester. The building faced the road. He lay down near a horse for warmth and fell asleep. At dawn the horse moved and Christopher awakened, sat up, and yawned. He ate some of the food in his pocket, then arose and stretched. Swaddled in his cloak nearly to his hat brim against the January cold, and to keep his face from being seen, he left the stable and leaned against the building, his eyes fixed on the snowy road.

He'd made up his mind. He would go where the first hospitable traveler went. Christopher did not wait long, blowing on his nails to warm his hands.

A man came driving a wagon through the gate. The boy eyed him closely. Aye, he was a stranger. He ran to the wagon to ask the red-faced man, "Where do you travel, master?"

"To Shrewsbury."

"I go to Shrewsbury too. May I travel with you?"

The stranger pursed his lips, eyed Christopher dubiously, then said, "There's no look of a thief or vagabond about ye. But why do ye go to Shrewsbury in winter?"

Christopher said, "I'm on my way to Bristol to wait for a ship bound for the New World."

The man shook his head, smiling. "The New World, eh? When I was a lad, I thought I would go to Virginia." Then he asked warily, "Does the constable search for you?"

Christopher pulled himself up onto the seat, shaking his head. As the horses started on their way again, he looked back over his shoulder at the walls of Chester, then, smiling, turned his face south along the road to Shrewsbury. "Why do you travel in midwinter, master?"

"My kinsman lies a-dying in Shrewsbury. I pray I come in time."

At old Shrewsbury, looped by the River Severn, Christopher found another traveler two days later. This man was a wealthy glover, who had a coach-and-four. He was bound for London Town. For a

moment Christopher debated with himself over going with him, because his destination was not Bristol, but then he told himself it might be wise to see London now that the opportunity presented itself. The glover was traveling to Westminster, nigh unto London's city walls, to settle a case at court. And he went very unwillingly in January. Crippled with arthritis, he needed more assistance into the coach than his old wife and coachman could give him. The harried woman urged Christopher to accompany them to help her with her husband in the inns along the way as well. The prospect of the fine coach and inn beds at night persuaded the boy even more.

For days Christopher rode like a lordling seated across from the glover and his wife, willing to lend his strength to the man who grumbled constantly of the corrupt judges of Shrewsbury and scoundrel lawyers of London, the cost of the journey, and the deep ruts in the frozen road. Christopher listened to the glovemaking's complaints and said little, though now and then he wished he could see something of the passing countryside. To keep out the cold as much as possible, the merchant insisted the coach's leather curtains be shut. The village inns and those of Coventry and Banbury he saw only at wintry dusk and dawn, and at that found them little different from the Three Blackbirds.

Christopher had told a new tale the first day out

of Shrewsbury to the glover and his wife. He said he went to London to claim an inheritance from his aunt, and then perhaps to apprentice himself. When the merchant suggested an acquaintance of his, a member of the Glovers' Guild, who lived in Pudding Lane and who might be in need of an apprentice, Christopher promised to visit him. And perhaps he would, too, though he could not truly say that the making of gloves for the rest of his life seemed such a very fine thing.

The tenth day out of Shrewsbury not far off mid-day the coachman called down, "We are at Brentford, master. London lies but eight miles ahead."

"Draw the curtains back, Christopher," ordered the glover's eager wife, in spite of her husband's protests of the cold. Quickly the boy obeyed her. She stuck her head out one window; Christopher stuck his out the other.

The day was gray but clear. Rime-frost gleamed still on the grass of the fields. Against the winter sky the dark towers and spires of London seemed a Camelot of promise to the excited boy, who was glad he had chosen to see London first. Few Chester folk ever had come to London. Except for Reverend Fothergill, who had been born near it in Fulham, he knew no one who had. No man would name him "Barstow changeling" here.

The coach jolted on over the rough road past the

neat green farms of Middlesex. Before long they were rattling through Kensington, and both Christopher and the glover's wife gasped at the splendor of the very fine new brick houses noblemen had built outside the city. Next they turned northward to avoid the congestion of Westminster and the city. Finally the Shrewsbury glover himself shoved Christopher away from the window and stuck his nose out into the icy air. He seemed worried.

"Wife, something's amiss in London. When I came here ten years past, the way was blocked with carts and wagons and coaches. I was forced to wait." As the coach went on, the man's look changed from worry to alarm. He bit his lip. "Is it the plague? I'd not heard it was in London, but there's no one on the streets." The glover shouted up to the coachman, "Go to Cheapside to my friend's house in Goldsmiths' Row." To his wife he said, "We'll risk it, Audrey, but if you spy a door marked with the cross that means a plague house, tell me swiftly."

Driven from his window view, Christopher sat, nervous, across from the grim-faced merchant. The wheels of the coach and the barking of the half-starved dogs of the city were the only sounds he heard. He'd been told London was a city of church bells, but not one had pealed greeting, though he knew the hour must have struck since they'd come into the city. The boy kept his eyes fixed on the

glover and heard the man mutter, "I've seen no cross mark, and it is not plague weather now. But I see no shops open and no apprentices stand outside to shout their masters' wares."

"Is it a holy day?" asked his wife.

The man seemed to reckon in his head and so did Christopher. "No holy day at all, Audrey. It is but a Tuesday, the thirtieth day of January. I am to be at the Court of Common Pleas six days hence."

The couple from Shrewsbury did not move from the coach windows until the coachman had taken them all the way to Goldsmiths' Row. There he stopped the coach and climbed down to open the door.

"Where is everyone?" the glover's wife asked the coachman. "Did you see anyone from where you sat?"

"No, I do not know, mistress, where the people are," he told her, helping her down onto the cobblestones. After he'd come down too, Christopher aided the glover out. When the man was safely on the ground leaning on his cane, the boy stared about him. He saw splendid, tall four-story houses around him, but no door had a cross painted upon it. Yet where were the people? Everyone in Chester said London Town swarmed like a beehive with people!

The merchant, his wife, and the coachman stood together, hesitating. Then the man said to Chris-

topher, "God keep you, boy. Do not forget the name of the glover in Pudding Lane." He caught his wife's hand. Without another word or waiting for Christopher's thank-you, he hobbled toward one of the fine houses, went up the steps, and rapped at the door. It opened at once. The glover and his wife disappeared inside, but an instant later a serving boy came running out, spoke briefly to the coachman, and hurried back inside the house. The coachman got up onto his box and started away down Cheapside, leaving Christopher alone in the middle of the street, staring after him in wonder. The serving lad's face had been white as flour and his eyes red.

Christopher looked hopefully at the house the lad had gone into, but no one came out to ask him inside, too. So hands in his pockets, he started off, his cloak flapping in the cold damp wind that sent refuse scudding along the gray cobbles. As he walked southwest, leaving Cheapside, the large swinging signboards of the many London taverns thundered over his head and the shutters banged away on the upper stories. The wind made the city's only sounds. The boy saw before long that he had come to a less fine part of the city than Goldsmiths' Row. The houses were older; windows were made of cheap bulls'-eye glass, and the roofs thatched with straw. Their second stories overhung the street. Christopher walked under them in lonely gloom, growing

more and more uneasy each moment. Where were the people?

Already he'd seen that London was a city of great size, but except for the red-eyed serving lad and a man who'd hastened around a corner and slammed an unseen door, Christopher had not come upon one soul. And then as he went around a turning and got a blast of gritty wind in his face, he heard something at last that was not wind-caused—the sound of voices. Hearing them comforted him. They came from a small stone church some doors away from where he stood. Christopher debated going inside, then decided against it. The congregation sounded to him as if they prayed together, a prayer he did not recognize. He had not come to London to pray in strange churches. He'd come to see the sights.

Feeling a little less lonely, though, Christopher went on, passing a second church. In it he heard singing, a hymn he knew. Humming it, he quickened his pace. He'd go see the Thames River. The glover had said that London lay on the north bank of it and Southwark on the south and that the Thames was the true high road of the city. That was where he'd find the ships from all the ports of the world. He should see the ships before he saw anything else. The glover had said they brought spices, silks, and jewels to London from parts of the world Christopher had very likely never heard named.

His boots ringing hollow on the cobblestones, Christopher headed south, guessing he'd soon find the Thames. Where two streets met, he paused, wondering which to take. While he did, the wind grew stronger. On it was borne a new sound, a thudding. He knew it at once for the sound of drums. Drums meant fairs and pageants to him. He started toward the sound. Perhaps there was a pageant or a procession or a street fair today?

Hurrying, Christopher collided with a boy somewhat younger than himself, who ran out of an alley. "Let me pass," the small Londoner cried. "I may be too late. My master bids me go if I choose and long remember this day."

Christopher watched the boy run down a broad street that led south. He ran after him, wanting to keep him in sight. Perhaps he'd lead him to the procession. At last he heard the murmur of voices, hundreds of them. Londoners dearly loved a spectacle, Chester folk said. Then that is where the people were today, lining a magnificent street to see some merry entertainment. Christopher Barstow wanted to see it too. Pageants and processions cost not a farthing and surely would be long remembered, as the small boy's master had said.

Keeping the little Londoner in view, Christopher came rushing down King Street. There ahead of him he spied the throng, packed tight as salted fish in a barrel, in a square space between high buildings

of red brick. The small boy darted between two men, and they closed ranks behind him, but Christopher wasn't to be denied his view. He dived between a broad-backed woman in a blue mantle and a gray-haired man and inched his way some feet into the crowd. He looked around.

What he saw made his mouth fall open. There was no pageant or procession. There was no cleared space for one to pass. Christopher saw seventy-five feet from him a platform draped with black cloth. Men stood on it. Three were armed common soldiers in pot helmets and breastplates. Two others, judging by their sashes, were officers. Two more men, very strange-looking figures, stood beside a low block set upon the platform. The man who held the bright-bladed axe wore a black mask over his face. His coat was of heavy wool, his hair and beard gray and spiky looking. The other masked man, who spoke with him, was dressed the same, but his beard and hair were of ropy black strands. Three more men stood near them with inkhorns, paper, and quills ready. Ringed around the platform below, Christopher saw more soldiers with tall pikes. Behind them waited a second ring of soldiers, troopers mounted on horses.

Before Christopher could ask a question of the old man standing on his right, a great shout arose from the throng and the words, "He comes!"

Christopher looked with hundreds of others at the brick building ahead. The platform had been built against its front. Men lined the edge of the building's tile roof and crowded every tall window along its face—save for one. Now out of this window stepped some men directly onto the platform. One was very old, wearing a long black gown; one was another officer; and the third was a small man, bare-headed, in a dark cloak.

Christopher knew him at once. "It is King Charles!"

"Aye, the king," said the old man next to him. "He dies today." He shook his head. "He should have died near ten o'clock, but the common headsman of London would not do the work though he has beheaded many great folk of late. Finding a headsman has brought all the dalliance. It is nigh onto two o'clock now. 'Tis said they offered a hundred pounds in gold to soldiers to do the work, but at first no man would take the offer. The Parliament found two men at last." The old Londoner pointed at the scaffold. "Look you, boy. See them now in the false beards and wigs so no man will ever know their names and someday hunt them down in the darkness with a dagger in the back."

While Christopher stood silent, gaping, the old man rambled on. "It was said long ago, that this king would be doomed. He came to his crowning

not in gold and crimson or purple, as befits a king, but clad all in white like a sacrifice."

Christopher had scarce heard anything of this after the remarks about the headsman of London refusing to do his work. He felt dizzy and his stomach heaved. "But they can't kill the king! No one can kill the king!" he found himself crying out.

The Londoner sighed. "Can they not? There is no thing Parliament and Oliver Cromwell cannot do. The king was tried for treason and condemned and his death warrant duly signed. Where were you that you did not know of this?" The old man looked down severely at Christopher.

"Journeying from Chester. I came today. I do not. . . ."

The boy would have explained, but a sharp-faced toothless woman on his left poked him hard in the ribs and exploded, "Hold yer clack, the both of ye. The shorthand writers make ready with their quills. The king will speak."

Christopher and the old man fell silent, watching, as the king took a piece of paper out of his pocket and unfolded it. Christopher saw him turn his head to speak to the men on the platform with him. The whole great throng was quiet now, though few could hear the king's last speech except those nearest the scaffold. Christopher was much too far away.

In spite of the woman, he whispered to the old

man, protesting, "But no one can execute the king of England! The king cannot commit treason against himself, can he?" Christopher's stomach pained him, and his head hurt too. On each side of him and on his front and back he felt the press of the throng, their knees and their sharp elbows. He tried to move away, but he was wedged tight into the crowd.

If the old Londoner replied, Christopher didn't hear him through his own growing terror and panicky desire to run. But in spite of all, he could not tear his eyes from the platform where the king went on reading from his paper. The boy saw him put it back into his pocket when he'd done. He saw him given a linen cap by one of the officers and watched him tuck his shoulder-length brown hair up under it, aided by the man in the long black gown, whose face worked in grief.

Christopher saw the king unpin something golden from his doublet and hand it to the man in the black gown. Then, unaided, he took off his cloak and the doublet. For a long moment he stood in his breeches and blue shirt. Once more he put on his cloak. Now the king raised his hands together in prayer and looked up into the lead-gray sky. His lips moved just as they had when he had stood on the walls of Chester five years past. Christopher Barstow's lips moved with the king's, reciting the Lord's Prayer.

And then as the tears started down the boy's

cheeks, the king placed his head on the block. The headsman moved forward. The crowd held its breath, waiting. Of a sudden King Charles stretched out his hands. Christopher saw the axe rise, then in one gleaming, terrible flash saw it strike down. Such a horrible groan as Christopher never had heard before rose from the throng as if from one person. The boy did not know that he'd added his own voice to it. He could not look away, though a woman in front of him had sunk down, fainting. He saw the headsman stoop and lift the dripping-red severed head of his king by its long hair, then cast it scornfully down again onto the scaffold.

There was no second groan at the terrible sight. Instead there were shoutings, the noise of horses' hooves, and sudden shrieks from the frightened throng. Mounted troopers stationed at the north and south ends of King Street came riding to scatter the Londoners. The people at the edge of the crowd fled first down the side streets.

Within seconds Christopher and his companions had space to turn about and run. The hooves of a rearing horse came so near the boy as he darted away that he was almost struck on the shoulder. The woman who had elbowed him was hit by the barrel of another horse and flung to the cobbles, while the old man fell sprawling and was leaped by a following trooper and his mount. Christopher sprinted down a narrow lane behind a dozen others—men,

women, and boys. They dashed into branching lanes or into houses, but not Christopher. He kept running until he stumbled onto what he'd sought to begin with—the Thames.

There he leaned sobbing against the side of a stone warehouse, staring down at the flight of slime-covered steps leading into the dark gray water. After a time he came to the brink of the river and, bending over, began to vomit into it. When his stomach was emptied, he sat down on the top step. House-covered London Bridge to his left and the many kinds of ships at anchor above and below it interested him not at all. The watermen who passed below in their wherries, thinking he wanted to hire a boat called out "Westward ho, young master" and "Eastward ho" and went unanswered. Finally Christopher buried his head in his arms, wishing that he never had come to London Town. With all his heart he wished himself back in Chester, humbly drawing ale. His father's fist and his mother's cruel tongue and the name changeling did not seem half so harsh to him at this moment.

To himself he muttered bitter words, "I will sail to the New World. I'll find a ship!"

Clutching at the step, Christopher began to get up, but as he did a hand fell heavily onto his shoulder. He heard a man's voice from behind him. "The steps are slippery, boy, and the Thames can be a cold grave. Do not fall into it."

III



WHITE
KING'S
PAWN
TO WHITE
KING FOUR

Christopher looked up into one of the most merry faces he'd ever seen. The man's jaw was square, his cheeks reddish, and his long hair yellow as butter. His eyes were blue as a harebell's, his nose snub, and his mouth broad but strangely thin-lipped. His hat was a great black one bedecked with a sad bronze-colored plume.

Carefully Christopher got up, helped by the tall, well-knit stranger, who had caught his arm to support him. Christopher gazed at the rest of the man who had hoped to save him from the Thames. His torn cloak was a stained blue, his doublet of russet leather, and his belt plain. The lace of his collar was tattered, his mustard-colored breeches shabby, and

his boots battered and worn. But he wore gleaming spurs, and at his side hung a sword in a scabbard. Christopher, as an innkeeper's son, had no excellent eyes for such warlike matters, but it seemed to him the scabbard had once been a fine gilded one and the hilt of the sword was inlaid with silver.

“Are you ill, boy?” asked the man.

“No.” Christopher shook his head. He would have turned away, but the lean stranger reached out and took his arm once more.

“Did you see the king die?” he asked suddenly.

Christopher's eyes filled with tears once more. He could only nod.

“Ah,” said the man, “so did I.” He let go the boy's arm.

There had been sympathy in the words. Christopher, finding his voice, cried, “The Parliament and Oliver Cromwell murdered King Charles!”

“Murdered? Aye, murder it was.” The stranger's eyes had gone bleak. He spoke the last words in a whisper. “Foul murder indeed. And Cromwell and those other men who signed the king's death warrant shall pay dearly for it.”

Christopher loved this speech. “Are you a Cavalier, sir?” He could not stop the question for all that it was probably ill-timed.

“Do not ask me that so openly, lad.” The man jerked his head toward a row of waterfront taverns.

“We shall speak together privately over a glass of wine.”

The boy hesitated, then started with the man toward the Cat and Mutton, the nearest tavern, but his companion gestured toward a red lattice two doors east of it. The signboard showed a horn painted yellow, black, and gold.

“We go to the Golden Horn. It is where I lodge when I am in London.” The man smiled. “I am named Captain Peter Dell. I do not drink with men I do not know, even if I may share their politics. Who are you?”

Christopher bowed to the stranger he was certain now was a Cavalier. “Christopher Barstow of Chester at your service, sir.”

Dell flung his arm over Christopher's shoulders. “Well then, to the Golden Horn it is, Kit Barstow out of Chester. What brings you to London Town on such a mournful day as this one?”

Together Christopher, who mulled his reply to this question but said nothing, and Captain Dell entered the common room of the Golden Horn. Except that brown-faced sailors with golden loops in their ears sat at the tables, the ale-smelling, low-ceilinged dark room was much like the Three Blackbirds. Christopher felt at home at once. Hearing himself called Kit reinforced the feeling.

The captain propelled him to a table nearest the

fire and sat down sighing, thrusting out his long legs. "My luck holds," he said. "There's a seat by the fire. I was chilled to the very marrow today." He looked at the boy. "God's blood, but the wind was cold before the Banqueting House."

"The Banqueting House, sir?"

"Aye." Dell's droll face grew sober at once. "You saw the scaffold built against it, if you saw the king die."

Christopher stared into the flames and held his hands out to them, shuddering. So that building from whose window his king had stepped to his death was named the Banqueting House? He had not known there was such a place in London.

Dell leaned forward over the scarred table, his boots crunching on the sawdust of the floor. "How did you judge the temper of the people who saw the murder done, Kit? Will they rise against the Parliament and Cromwell? God's blood, they should!"

"I do not know," said the boy. "I am new come to London." He was silent for a moment, then blurted, "But if I were a Londoner, I would storm the Parliament and Cromwell's house tonight."

"You hate them then?" asked the man, reaching for a long clay pipe from a rack set beside the hearth.

"I hate men who kill their king."

"And Cromwell too?"

“In Chester men say Cromwell leads all England.”

Dell filled the pipe with tobacco from his pocket, then with a tongs placed a coal from the fire in the bowl. He breathed deep of the smoke. “They say truly, Kit. Oliver Cromwell holds all England in the palm of his hand for the squeezing.” The man called to the little potboy who was approaching with cups on a tray. “Here, lad, we’ll have wine.”

A sailor seated on Dell’s right growled, “The wine was not ordered for you. We spoke first.”

“Did you?” asked the captain, rising. He put his hand to the hilt of his sword, lifted it from the sheath an inch, and let it fall back with a small click. He smiled as the sailor turned his head away, scowling, and the potboy hurried to Dell’s table.

Dell took up his cup. “That is how I serve men who cross my path when I do not feel peaceable, even if they might have the look of buccaneers about them, Kit,” he said, loud enough for the sailor to hear. When the sailor said nothing, Dell went on, “Drink deep, Kit. It will put blood in your veins once more. Then tell me what brings you all the way to London Town. You did not answer me when I asked before.”

“I do not truly know,” said Christopher after a deep swallow of the warm red wine. It was strong and not cut with water as it should have been. “The wine is too strong, Captain.”

Dell waved his pipe. "This is London and the wharves. Sailors do not drink watered wine. They tell me this is but milk to them after the fiery rums of the Indies. It will warm you. Drink it."

Christopher managed a grin and took a second gulp. The wine started a comforting blaze in his vitals; he felt it moving through his veins just as the captain had said it would. "I feel somewhat better," he admitted soon. Then he asked, "Are you a Londoner?"

"Did you not hear me earlier, boy? I said I lodged here when I came to London. My home lies in Norwich. I came here at Yuletide. God's blood, I would take no pride in naming myself London-born after this day."

The boy nodded gravely. "Can you tell me of the king's trial? I did not know a king could be tried by any court or judges."

"Nor did I!" Dell scowled through the pipe smoke. "As a Cavalier I thought, of course, that the king of England was the law of England."

"Then you *were* a king's soldier?"

"I am a king's true Cavalier, Kit. King Charles is dead, but he leaves a son in France. This son is now my king and yours—all England's king, though the damned Roundheads admit it not."

Christopher nodded once more. It pleased him well to hear the captain curse the Parliament men and Cromwell and name them Roundheads, the nick-

name they detested, though many cropped their hair short above their ears and well deserved the name.

“The devil take the damned Roundheads who murdered their king,” Christopher said over his wine. “I saw King Charles five years past at the battle of Rowton Heath. Were you there, Captain Dell?”

The man took his pipe from his mouth to say, “No, I served with Prince Rupert, the king’s nephew, in 1645.”

“Rupert,” the boy gasped. The boldest and bravest of the king’s soldiers, the cavalry commander who had smashed the Roundhead armies again and again. “What battles did you serve him in?” Christopher’s eyes shone bright; his cheeks flamed with color.

“At Edgehill, Marston Moor, and Naseby where I was wounded by a musket ball and sent home. It was long before I was healed. By that time the war was over and Rupert gone from England.” He frowned. “I found Norwich little to my liking. My family were not in sympathy with the king’s cause.”

Christopher broke in. “Nor were mine! They are Presbyterians and grew very angry when I was befriended by an Anglican priest in Chester.”

“Aye,” said the captain glumly. “That is the way of it in Cromwell’s England. I could not speak Rupert’s name in my brother’s house at all.”

“And I could hear no good word of my godfather who also served the king!” agreed Christopher. He added proudly, “He was a king’s officer like yourself.”

Dell was interested in this. “Who would he be, Kit? Perhaps I know him.”

“Sir Arthur Aston. He is a kinsman of mine.”

The captain set down his pipe and slapped the table hard. “By God’s wounds and ears, I know the man!”

Christopher sat up very straight. At last he’d found someone who would speak willingly and knowledgeably of his famous kinsman. Reverend Fothergill had not known Aston as a soldier, but this Cavalier who had ridden with Prince Rupert surely would. “Did you serve under Aston, sir?”

“I did indeed—in Germany.”

“You were with *him* there? Did you know him well?”

Dell smiled. “He was my commander, Kit. I was but a boy then, little older than yourself, a poor common soldier, who served as a volunteer under him. No, he would not know my name and by now would not know my face. That was more than seventeen years past, and I was not long with him. A fever I took at a seige brought me home to England.” The man asked very suddenly. “Where is Sir Arthur Aston now? Do you know?”

“In Ireland.”

“*Ireland!*” The Cavalier whistled. “If he is in Ireland, he serves the king’s cause still. Tell me, Kit, where does he serve in Ireland?”

“I do not know.”

Dell changed the subject swiftly, asking, “When did you eat last?”

“At breakfast before I came into London.”

“Well, then, you shall sup now—to return what you gave the Thames and its fishes.” Dell roared, “Landlord!”

A large man in an apron lumbered over to the table from the taproom.

“Fetch beef, cheese, bread, and fruit tarts for the lad here. But first bring more wine.”

The host of the Golden Horn stooped over the table. “Can you pay for it, Captain? Ye sold your old nag four days past. Yer money should be near gone.”

“I can pay.” Dell looked up angrily, but this time spoke in a low voice, where Christopher had expected another roar. “My host, would you deny food to an honest lad who is kin to Sir Arthur Aston?”

The landlord of the tavern smiled, showing only four fangs in his upper jaw. “I’d deny nothing to a man who is a kinsman of bold Aston on this day.” And he was gone to the kitchens.

Christopher asked his companion, “Is this a Cavalier inn?”

“It is, indeed, though it is not noised abroad for fear of the Roundheads who own England. Would I lodge at a Roundhead inn?”

In spite of his embarrassment, Christopher asked, “You have no money, Captain Dell?”

“Next to none, Kit. I stood on the wharf seeking a ship to take me to France in secret when I spied you puking. I could not stomach England either and felt you to be a man in sympathy with me. I hoped to offer my sword to the young king and someday return with him to England and deal with Cromwell and the other murderers.”

“A fine devise,” murmured Christopher, “but why must you go to France in secret?”

“No man or woman leaves England without a passport from the Parliament. Some men there mark me well. They would give me no passport to France. They might rather clap me with a hearty will into gaol here in London.”

“Oh.” The boy’s face fell. “And if I choose to go to the New World must I have a passport, too?”

“Yes, Kit.”

Christopher got up and stood in front of the fire. Like his new-found friend, he wanted to escape England now. He knew there was no place for him in London. The groan of the throng and the horrible sight of the king’s head held aloft in the executioner’s hand would be with him to the end of his days as it was. The Parliament, the accursed Round-

head Parliament, met in London. There also lived the murdering Cromwell! How could he apprentice himself to a London tradesman who doubtless had approved the killing of the king or, if not, had done nothing to prevent it? All that remained for him was to go home to Chester, take his father's beating, and remember London with horror.

His eye fell on some sober-faced men playing chess at a table nearby. Seeing them made him think of Fothergill, who had more than once said a man's life was at times like unto a game of chess—"checked at every move." The thought added to Christopher's longing for his home.

But the supper had come at last. Christopher went to eat a little to please the captain. His appetite was gone, but he finished the second cup of wine while he picked at the food. The drink made him feel more giddy. He wanted to put his head on the table, sleep, and forget what he'd witnessed that day.

Dell was not drowsy. He told Christopher, "The host does not always ask good Cavaliers to pay. I am happy that you are a kinsman of Sir Arthur Aston. God's blood, mentioning him to me was an excellent thing. I have few farthings left to me."

Forcing his speech, Christopher asked him, "How would you make your way to France then?"

"I would earn my way as a seaman. I have made voyages before this time, Kit."

The boy shook his head. He'd rowed in a boat upon the River Dee at Chester, but he'd never been to sea. He asked, "If I could have a passport, would seven sovereigns take me to the New World?"

The Cavalier laughed. "It would, indeed!" Dell's manner grew more close. "Tell me if I am mistaken, Kit, but I judge you are runaway from Chester."

"I am," confessed the boy.

"How many days have you been traveling?"

"Twelve, sir." Christopher had reckoned it that morning.

The man frowned, thinking, then speared a piece of tart with his pocketknife. "It is possible your parents have guessed what you would do and sent your name to authorities at all seaports to stop you or to trace your whereabouts."

"I could use another name if I could find a ship," Christopher told him wearily.

"There is no need of that, I think." Dell got up and came to sit next to the boy. "Harken well to me, Kit Barstow. You tell me you have seven sovereigns."

"Yes, but it is of little use to me now. I think I want a ship to take me away. I will not apprentice myself here in London." The boy yawned. "Or in England anywhere."

"Ah, you have become a king's Cavalier also?" the man asked in a soft voice.

"I am." Christopher spoke fiercely in spite of his drowsiness. "I saw the king murdered."

"Kit, would you serve his cause now?"

The boy bobbed his head, "Aye, gladly, if I could."

Dell whispered into his ear, "I believe I know your heart as you know mine. Why not put this gold to its best use—to aid the king's cause?"

"How?" Christopher came full awake, gasping.

"Do not seek a ship to the New World or, like me, one to France. Seek a ship bound for Ireland. Pay your passage and offer your services there to your kinsman, Aston."

"I am no soldier, Captain Dell!"

"God's blood, nor was I when I saw him first. I soon became one, serving under him."

Christopher's head swam. Aston? Ireland? He'd never truly thought seriously of that. He told the man, "Aston sent me the gold."

"Then it is even more fitting that you go to him, Kit."

The boy turned heavy-lidded eyes on the man. "I could not ask for a passport under any name to go to Ireland to my godfather, who has taken up arms against the Parliament. They would clap me, too, in gaol here in London."

Dell slapped him on the back. "Indeed, you could not! You must sail in secret. It is not impossible."

Christopher caught at the man's hand. "Will you

go to Ireland with me or are your hopes set on France? I will pay your passage.”

For a few moments Dell hesitated, then said, “The young king is in France or The Netherlands, I know not which, he moves about so. I think he does nothing but wait.” The man smiled. “So, Kit, I will go to Ireland with you right gladly. It suits my purposes better, I think, than France.”

“I thank you,” said the boy, “but where shall we find a ship?”

Dell spoke quietly and thoughtfully. “Not here. In Poole perhaps. I can see to this matter with the landlord, but I shall require money for horses.”

Christopher took the purse out of his shirt, loosened the drawstrings, fished out a gold piece, and put it into Dell’s palm.

Dell arose, pocketing the coin. “I’ll see to all,” he promised. “Have no fear. I’ll come back with the name of the ship and master, and nags. Before midnight we shall leave London.” Dell looked angry. “To go would suit me well. Did you know, Kit, that King Charles spoke with his daughter, who is held prisoner here by the Roundheads, yesternight and told her farewell? The news is that the princess will die of her grief. I do not wish to be here and learn of her death. She is very near to your age.”

Christopher had to know the answer to one question. “Where will the old king lie?”

“I do not know what Parliament and Cromwell

will do with the body of the king they've murdered today. I have heard, though, that the Roundheads for a shilling sell Londoners a view of the king's corpse and at the scaffold let them dip their kerchiefs into his blood."

Christopher sighed deeply, his eyes closed. "I wish I could tell you where Aston stays in Ireland. I wish to see him too."

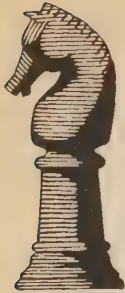
"It is of no concern," said Dell. "We shall find him, you and I." He paused. "Oliver Cromwell will find him too." His voice was harsh and grating. "Before this year is out, I promise you Cromwell will sail to Ireland to stamp out the Cavaliers who gather to oppose him. He must! You may fight Cromwell yourself."

Christopher said nothing. The thought was so staggering it left him wordless.

Dell went on. "With Aston and other king's men there, Ireland is ever a dagger at Cromwell's back. He will not suffer that threat. Now sleep, Kit, and dream of Ireland. Soon you will see your godfather, who is a true king's faithful knight."

Shaking his head from side to side to clear it of wine and sleep, the boy watched Dell put on his old cloak and stride to the door. For a moment the man talked with the landlord, then opened the door, filling it. A cold wind blew inside off the foul-smelling Thames. Then, cursing, the host of the Golden Horn slammed the door to.

When Dell had gone, Christopher got up and made his way to a stool not so near the hearth. The fire had grown of a sudden too warm. The stool he'd chosen was not far from the chess players, who had begun a new game. While his head reeled and he thought of Dell's words and of their sudden decision to make for Ireland, Christopher watched one of the players start an attack. It was a boldish one—black king's knight to black bishop three. The boy did not think he would be able to stay awake long enough, though, to see if the attack would control the center of the board.



IV
BLACK
QUEEN'S
KNIGHT
TO BLACK
QUEEN'S
BISHOP THREE

Soon Christopher went to lay his head on Dell's tavern table and fall asleep. The host came to stand over him, looked down at him for a long moment, smiled, then motioned to the potboy to clear away what remained of the food. Christopher did not even hear the thunk of the wooden trenchers being piled atop one another as the potboy worked. The uncut wine made him sleep as he'd never slept before and mercifully with no dreams of the king he'd seen beheaded that day.

Not far off midnight the boy was awakened by someone shaking him. He looked, startled, into the face of Captain Dell and at first did not know him. The strange man's face so near to his frightened him and made him draw back with a cry.

“Nay, nay, Kit,” said Dell soothingly. “Do you not remember me? I have horses ready across the river.”

Christopher began to tremble. Yes, he remembered now—the king’s murder, his flight to the Thames, his meeting with the loyal Cavalier, and their plans to make for Ireland. He reached for his cloak on the floor beside the table. “I remember you.”

The captain smiled. Christopher found it a strangely melancholy one for such a merry man. “Twice now you and I, Kit, have used the word *remember*. I have heard tonight that the word was spoken once before today.”

“Who said it?” asked the boy, throwing on his cloak.

“King Charles, himself. Did you see the old man who wore the black gown standing on the scaffold with him?”

“Aye.”

“That was the bishop of London. To him the king said but one word after he gave him his George from his doublet. He said, ‘Remember!’ ”

Yes, Christopher had seen the king give something golden to the old man. Then that had been the insignia of the Order of the Garter, the George. And, yes, he had said something to the old man next to him.

“Captain, we shall remember, you and I,” prom-

ised the boy bravely, tying his cloak strings tight.

“All men shall in England, Roundhead as well as Cavalier. Cromwell will remember as much as the young king.” Dell spoke in a somber fashion.

Christopher's next words were very proud. “My godfather will never forget!”

As they left the Golden Horn, Dell said, “Kit, Sir Arthur Aston is a very able soldier by trade. He has served many kings faithfully, but none more so than King Charles. Did you know that the Roundheads once asked him to join their cause against the Cavaliers and lead them?”

Christopher was amazed. “No, I had not heard that.”

“It is truth. Aston refused the offer, a thing the Parliament will not forget nor forgive.”

“Perhaps that is why my father and mother hate him so?”

“That may be,” agreed the captain, leading the way through the night to the river steps, where a man waited with a boat. “Take us to Southwark,” Dell told the wherryman, as he and the boy took seats in the stern of the boat. When they'd been rowed in silence across the Thames and the wherryman given his pay, Dell went with Christopher to a house some yards from the river. He knocked at its door and identified himself. For some moments he spoke with a person inside whom Christopher did

not see. Then, the door closed abruptly. A few moments later a man led out two saddled horses from behind the house.

Christopher heard the man ask Dell, "Master, how will you leave Southwark? The roads are watched this night and bonfires built in them."

"Why is that?" asked Christopher, alarmed.

"The king died today. Who knows the temper of the people in the city or who might come raging into London from the country, now that the news has spread?"

The captain answered boldly. "All roads are guarded, you tell me. I say I care nothing for that. Brave men can o'erleap a watchman's blaze if need be, but I know ways out of Southwark that will not be guarded." He swung his horse about.

Christopher Barstow turned his mare's head to follow the captain. He cast one long look behind him at the Thames, black water in the night. He did not think he would see it ever again.

The boy trusted Peter Dell, who spoke with courage and acted with it as well. If any man in the world could take him safe to Ireland, it was the captain who had served under Prince Rupert. What did it matter that Dell was close to penniless? Kit Barstow had enough money for both of them. If Dell had asked him for all of his gold pieces, he would have given them up willingly to go to Ireland with

him. He only hoped there would not be need to jump his horse over a watch fire. He was not a fine rider. Innkeepers' sons in Chester had little opportunity to ride.

Dell was as good as his word. He did indeed know ways out of Southwark that were not hedged about with Parliament's guards. He led Christopher at a trot down one narrow, dark meandering street after another, going always to the west. Once the boy heard a watchman call out the hour of the night and spied his torch down a lane. Dell halted until he had passed. Then when the watchman could no longer hear the clop of hooves, the captain went on.

Before long they were out of Southwark and into the open fields of Surrey that lay beyond it. There Dell drew rein and waited for Christopher to come up to him. The man gestured toward the pale streak that was the southwest road. "We'll travel more swiftly now, Kit. Can you keep with me?"

"I'll try, sir."

"Then give your mare her head." Dell struck his spurs into his horse and was off in a bounding hand gallop onto the chosen road. Of her own accord Christopher's mare followed at the same gait with the boy hanging on, his cloak floating out behind him in the cold wind.

Some miles along the road the skies burst in a downpour of sleet and hail. Christopher hoped the

captain would seek shelter. He did not, though the boy longed to rest under one of the many trees along the way. At rainy daybreak Dell stopped at last before a small country inn. He dismounted and helped Christopher, stiff from cold and the strangeness of riding, down out of his saddle. "We'll rest for a time," he told the boy. "Do not answer any questions put to you. I will speak for you. I am your kinsman now. Do you understand the danger?"

Christopher nodded. They went into the inn, where Dell shouted for meat and drink for himself and his "nephew." Over a pork pie Christopher listened to him tell the landlord they rode to Bournemouth to say farewell to kinsmen bound for the New World. Captain Dell lied with great and convincing ease, Christopher noted. This pleased him; he felt he himself did it with ill grace.

After some hours' sleep, Christopher resting next to the snoring Dell in a great bed, they were on their way again. The sleet had stopped, but the rain had not. Two days more they journeyed along muddy roads, and when they halted for lodging, Dell made all the talk. And not once did he speak of the death of the king, though Christopher wished to hear what other folk thought of the foul murder.

At last they rode into Poole. Through the endless drizzle the boy saw the harbor and the greensward leading down to it. The captain had told him a ship

might be waiting there whose master made a business of smuggling goods into Ireland. The Cavalier host of the Golden Horn had known the shipmaster well and sometimes transacted business with him. When Christopher had asked what sort of business, Dell had only laughed and said, "I do not pry into the private matters of smugglers or pirates, Kit, unless they pry into mine."

As they went slowly through the gray, wet streets of Poole toward the sea, Christopher was wary. He'd heard that pirates raided seaports and carried people off to be sold as slaves in North Africa. How could he and Dell serve the king's cause chained to the oars of a Moorish galley? They would surely die in a few months' time. What if this shipmaster was a pirate who would sell them both?

The captain dismounted at the bottom of a wharf and gave his mount's reins to Christopher. The boy waited, watching him stride off. He saw him stop and hail a pinnace tied at the wharf. A squat, little red-capped man climbed up onto the wharf and stood talking with Dell for a time, his hands on his hips. Then he nodded and the captain turned back, running over the boards. "The master of the *Periwinkle* will take us for four pieces of gold. I had the watchword for him from the innkeeper. He sails for Ireland with the nighttide."

"What of the horses, Captain?"

"I shall sell them here. They'll fetch no great sum

in a seaport, but we cannot take them aboard so small a ship.”

“Is the *Periwinkle* a pirate?” asked Christopher fearfully.

Dell smiled. “It is best not to look too deeply into that. The master said he would take us to Ireland. I believe he will.”

Dell found a livery stable at the top of Poole and sold the horses and their gear. Then he and Christopher went to the wharf once more. Dell offered the boy the money for the horses, but Christopher refused it. “Keep it, sir,” he said, and gave the man four sovereigns from Aston’s purse. “This is for our passage.”

“I thank you, Kit.”

Together they boarded the *Periwinkle*, where Christopher was introduced to the sour master by his true name and as the godson of an officer in the king’s cause. The man only grunted and spat over the side, then told a sailor to show them their quarters belowdecks. They were ill-smelling and wretched, two filthy bunks and a table set between. Sniffing the foul air, Christopher asked the captain, “How long will it be before we reach Ireland?”

“The wind holds the answer to that. Two days if we sail before it; three if we sail against it.” He laughed. “It will matter little to you in any course. I think you will be too ill to mark the time.”

And so the boy was. As soon as the pinnace had

left Poole harbor, he had to run to the ship's rail to empty his stomach. Again and again he made the journey until it seemed to him he was well nigh turned inside out. Dell, the master, and the crew were not sick one moment. They broached a keg of French brandy, part of the cargo they were smuggling into Ireland, and spent the first two nights at sea carousing.

The third night, entering Saint George's Channel, they were dead sober, though. A larger ship had come looming up out of the mists off the Lizard. It soon became clear even to seasick Christopher that the pinnace was the object of her chase. The master of the *Periwinkle* gave frantic orders to tack to the wind and sail as close to the shoreline as possible. There the pinnace dodged in and out about rocks and cliffs where the sloop could not maneuver.

"What is the ship?" Christopher asked Dell, who stood at the gunwale with him, looking to the stern. He thought even Dell looked worried.

"The master tells me he believes she is a Parliament sloop."

Christopher gulped. "What if she catches us?"

The captain said, "The master and crew will be hanged. The brandy will be taken and doubtless poured down Roundhead throats."

"No," said the boy, "what will happen to *us*?"

"As to that, we shall probably be hanged too."

Hearing these words, Christopher Barstow sat down suddenly on a keg on deck and put his head into his hands. When the sloop fired her cannon at the pinnacle to make her come about, he groaned, then went below to fall onto his bunk and wait for death. He was still there when Captain Dell came clumping down the companionway to tell him, "Kit, we've had some luck. We've changed our course to due west and sailed into a drift of fog from Ireland. The sloop can't find us now." He grinned. "Come see for yourself."

Christopher went on deck again. This time instead of dark skies and chill breezes he found what seemed to be sodden sheep fleece everywhere about the *Periwinkle*. The moisture made him gasp for breath. "We'll go on the rocks, Captain?"

"Nay, Kit, you'll be in Ireland tomorrow morn, and we'll strike cross-country at once for Kilkenny."

"Kilkenny?" Christopher never had heard the name.

"Aye, Kilkenny. The master of this ship tells me that is where the marquess of Ormonde may be found. Where he is, the king's Irish army should be—and your godfather too."

"Why do you think Aston will be there too?"

Droplets of mist fell from the Cavalier's broad-brimmed hat. "Did I not just tell you that Lord Ormonde commands the royal forces in Ireland?"

He is lord lieutenant for King Charles. Sir Arthur Aston will serve under him, so I think you will surely find him somewhere near to Ormonde."

"Oh." The boy was silent. Then he asked, "Have you been to Kilkenny?"

"Not I. I was in Dublin Town to court a light-o'-love long ago." Dell pulled a comically long face. "Unless matters fall out very well for us, I shall not see Dublin this time nor the maid, who I am certain has grown fat by now and has at least six children."

"Why not go to Dublin, Captain?"

"The Roundheads hold the city—as well as other towns."

"There are Roundheads now in Ireland too?" Christopher had not known this.

Dell told him, "Cromwell's Roundheads are everywhere abovestairs, belowstairs, and in my lady's chamber. Perhaps they lie now beneath your bed a-listening, Kit."

The fog had vanished during the night, so when Christopher came up on deck at the cry "Land Ho," a pale, cold February sun was shining on a wind-swept gray sea. Beyond it lay a white curl of surf, low brown cliffs, and green hills.

"It is Ireland," said Dell, coming up behind the boy.

“But there’s no town nor harbor—only a cove,” protested Christopher.

“Smugglers seldom head for ports, Kit.”

A sudden loud sound made Christopher whirl about. The captain of the pinnace had discharged a musket. Now a sailor stood at the mainmast running up a scarlet flag. A musket shot came from the shore where little black figures were running down to the beach.

“We are awaited,” said Dell. “Those are some of our Irish friends in the smuggling business. They’ll have carts atop the cliff for the brandy.” He laughed. “I think one of them might well be going to Kilkenny. No one has the thirst of an Irish soldier. A good horse under a man is best of all, Kit, but riding in a cart is better than wearing out boot leather.”

The *Periwinkle* approached the cove rapidly, her crew alert for the rocks in the sea. When she’d passed them safely, the ship came as far into the cove as she dared without running aground. Men rowed out in small boats to meet her, and the transfer of the brandy and bales of silk goods from France and Italy began. The unloading was swiftly and skillfully done. From the rail Christopher watched the kegs and bales being lifted down. For the first time he saw the “wild Irish” that tavern visitors sometimes jested about over a jack of ale.

They seemed a comely people to him—tall, mostly dark-haired, and garbed as any Englishmen. He'd expected skins of animals and bare feet, from the tales he'd listened to.

When the last keg had been loaded into the last boat, the master of the pinnace called down some words to the leader of the smugglers in a language Christopher didn't know, gesturing toward him and Captain Dell.

The smuggler chief looked glum for a time, then nodded and rowed close alongside the pinnace.

"He'll take ye to shore," the master of the *Periwinkle* told Dell. "He says Lord Ormonde was at Kilkenny last he heard. A wagon goes there today with brandy."

Dell pounded Christopher on the back. "What did I tell you, Kit? Our luck holds true. We'll ride to Kilkenny in high comfort."

"Don't the smugglers speak English?" asked Christopher, not anxious to travel with people he could not understand and who could not understand him.

"They do, the most part of them," said the master of the *Periwinkle*, "but I speak to them in the Irish that pleases them. They have no love for the English."

Dell grabbed a rope and swung on it out over the side of the ship down into the small boat. Chris-

topher followed him far less gracefully and sat on a brandy keg where he was glowered at by a dark-browed Irish rower as the man pulled for the beach. Wagons waited out of sight beyond the cliff. As the pinnace sailed out of the cove, the Irishmen started to carry the kegs up the cliff. The leader of the smugglers growled at Dell and the boy, "You work, too, or ye'll not ride to Kilkenny this day."

"Indeed, we shall work," replied Dell, who, with Christopher, at once picked up a brandy keg and started up the steep, narrow path.

Out of breath, Christopher paused at the cliff top and looked about him. He saw a gently rolling green land, which shaded to blue in the distance. The air was damp for all that the sun was shining and the sea sparkling under its beams. A shout from another Irishman startled him, and he fell to work again, taking the kegs set down on the cliff top to the wagons, where other men were lifting them up and stacking them. Before long three wagons were ready to leave. One lumbered off to the north. The second one started due south. Christopher would have run after it and jumped on it, but the captain held him back. "Nay, Kit. I say the first cart goes to Dublin Town to the Roundheads, and this second one goes to Cork." He strode to the front of the third wagon. "Are you for Kilkenny?" he asked the red-haired driver.

The driver didn't answer, but only jerked his head. As the other smugglers, their loading done, struck off in all directions inland on foot, he took a westward road. Christopher and Dell pulled themselves up into the back of the cart and sat down on kegs. Christopher was uncomfortable, but he still could laugh when the captain told him all he needed was a cithern with red ribbands to it and a brace of saucy pretty maids to make this one of the sweetest mornings in the world.

A few miles farther on Christopher suddenly asked Dell the question that had gnawed at him throughout the voyage. "Do you think my godfather will welcome me? I have never drawn a sword or fired a pistol. I have never set eyes on him that I remember."

Dell yawned. "He will. You need only tell him you saw good King Charles murdered and are now a staunch Cavalier. I think, Kit, you and I will take the news to Kilkenny. The master of the *Periwinkle* did not speak once of the death of the king, and I did not tell him. It would be a swift ship indeed that would have brought the news to Ireland before us."

V



WHITE
QUEEN'S
PAWN
TO WHITE
QUEEN THREE

Christopher ached in every joint and muscle, it seemed to him, by the time the Irish carter stopped midafternoon at a small village of thatched houses. The boy got down to walk about with the captain, who yawned, then gestured to the west where Christopher saw a varied green and bluish landscape, laced with silvery rivers and lakes. The blue murk of peat smoke rose soft over farms in the valleys in the distance. For all the beauty of the countryside, the air was very sharp. Christopher was certain it was far colder than it had been at the coast, and he hunched in his cloak, shivering.

“Is Ireland always so chill?”

Dell grinned at him. “As I remember it, Kit, the

climate changes here as swiftly as tavern wenches' kisses grow cold with the loss in weight of a man's purse. Ireland is not a healthful home for any Englishman." He looked intently at the shivering boy. "Do you wish you had not come and perhaps taken up with some sleek London tradesman?"

Christopher mumbled, "No, I think not. I am hungry, though."

"That can be remedied." Dell went off to a stone cottage where he conferred with a woman Christopher didn't see. He returned in a short while with two oatcakes and a piece of baked fish wrapped in a cloth. The captain was wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He coughed. "I'll confess it, Kit. The chill drove me to it. I've had a sip of the good-wife's poteen, too, for your shilling. It is a sort of usquebaugh the Irish make. Never drink it, boy. Stay with honest French wine or good English ale." Dell hiccuped as he bit into his oatcake.

It was near pale, bleak sunset when the cart came at last to the town of Kilkenny. Christopher had fallen into an uneasy sleep, but Peter Dell awakened him, and together they watched their entrance into Kilkenny, leaning out over the sides of the cart. At first Christopher saw only a jumble of towers above the River Nore, but then as they neared the town he could make out the old cathedral on its great rock and behind that the darker gray stone bulk of

Kilkenny Castle. Below these the town clustered as if for protection. The carter took them into Kilkenny along a narrow winding street. Off it lay others equally dim and meandering. Down them Christopher spied very old stone houses and others of timber with thatched roofs, every bit as fine as in English towns.

“Where does the carter go?” he asked Dell.

“To hell as far as I know, but more than likely to some inn to sell the brandy. We’ll not go there with him. We have other business.” Dell jumped out of the cart and pulled the boy down after him. Christopher saw him stare from one end of the street to the other, once the carter had driven off. “This is the High Street, I think. We shall make for Lord Ormonde’s castle. If Aston is here, that is where you’ll find him, Kit.”

Not half so bold now that he’d reached his destination, Christopher followed the captain down High Street. It was filled with men, most of whom stared curiously at him and the captain, though no man spoke. Finally one of them, a tall freckle-faced man with auburn hair, challenged Dell. “Who’d ye be?” he asked, his hand on his sword hilt. “I know ye not. What do ye here? You have the look of Englishmen.”

The captain did not put his hand to his sword, too. Instead he swept off his hat and bowed. “Captain

Peter Dell, a loyal Cavalier late of Prince Rupert's Horse, come to offer my services to Lord Ormonde."

The Irishman kept his hand on his hilt. "And the lad?"

"Christopher Barstow of Chester. He is godson to Sir Arthur Aston," Dell explained. Then he demanded, "Take us to him or to Lord Ormonde at once. We have news from England of the greatest importance."

The Irishman scoffed, "What could that be?"

"It is for Lord Ormonde's or Aston's ears first. Now will you direct us to one or the other of them."

The Irish soldier hesitated, but when Dell said, "We were in London some days past," he whirled about and started to force a path through the throng of men, shouting something in the Irish that made them give way. Christopher and Dell walked down the High Street behind their guide and went with him past the halberdiers at the castle gates. He took them into the courtyard, across it, and through a side door, then down long, damply chill stone corridors, where the men's boots echoed loud. Up a flight of narrow steps they hastened somewhere in the heart of the castle. There the Irishman rapped at a small door.

It was opened by a boy near Christopher's age. He was slim, tallish, dark-haired, and dark-eyed, garbed in black wool with a broad white linen collar.

He stared at the Irish soldier, then behind him at Peter Dell and Christopher. Finally he asked a question in the Irish.

Christopher caught only the word Aston in the torrent of Gaelic spouted forth by the tall Irish soldier, but he could not miss the sudden anger on the boy's face as he held the door wider and stood aside for the three to enter. First Dell, then Christopher, then the Irishman entered the room, which Christopher found to his joy comfortably warm. He stared about him at the small, round, tapestry-hung chamber, the dark furniture, and the blazing hearth fire. From a chair set before it came a man's deep voice. "What is it, Conn? A message from Lord Ormonde?"

"An officer of the garrison, Sir Arthur, and two others." The dark Irish boy spoke English in a soft voice. He added, "One claims he is your godson. Both are new come from England."

"Gods! I won't believe it." There was a thumping sound as the man in the chair got up to face the doorway.

Now for the first time Christopher saw his godfather. Somehow he'd always thought of Aston as a giant, but he was not. He was small, gray-haired, and dressed in a blue velvet coat and scarlet breeches. One leg was clothed in a black stocking and silver-buckled shoe. The other was no leg at

all, but a wooden peg leg made of golden oak, banded at its base with gleaming metal. Christopher had rehearsed several speeches on his way to Kilkenny with which to greet his generous kinsman, but now the words to all of them stuck in his throat. He glanced helplessly at Captain Dell beside him.

Bowing again, sweeping off his hat, Dell came to his rescue. "Captain Peter Dell at your service, Sir Arthur. I served under you in Germany long ago and of late with the king's cousin, Prince Rupert of the Rhine." He nodded toward Christopher. "We are come from England to join your army. May I have permission to introduce to you your godson, Master Christopher Barstow."

Aston gaped at Christopher. "How did you come here?"

Christopher tried to copy Dell's courtly manner. "By ship, sir."

"Prove to me you are who you say."

Christopher took the leather purse out of his pocket and walked forward, handing it to the man, who looked closely into his face. "Reverend Fothergill gave me this in Chester where my parents keep the Three Blackbirds. You sent the money to him for me to use however I saw fit. I had thought perhaps of taking passage for the New World, sir, but in London on the next to the last day of January I saw King Charles murdered by the Parliament, so I came. . . ."

“*What?*” demanded Aston. “They have killed the king! They have dared do this thing! You saw this! No, you did not. You are raving mad.”

Christopher was too crushed to speak. Once more Dell spoke for him. “It is God’s truth, Sir Arthur. I, too, saw the king die and his head held up to please the throng.”

Christopher watched the Irish boy hurry to his godfather’s side when it seemed Aston might fall, but the old soldier waved him away. “No, Conn. Bring me wine and wine for this English soldier and my godson. Sit you down.” Aston waved to a bench by the fire as he went back to his chair. Then he seemed to recall the Irish soldier still waiting by the door, his jaw dropped onto his chin with shock at the news from London. He crooked his finger and the Irishman came. “Cornet Fitzgibbon, you will ride at once to Youghal with a message to Lord Ormonde. Do not tell one single man of this garrison what you have just heard.”

The Irishman nodded as Conn brought three cups of wine and after that paper, ink, a quill, and a sandbox to the table at Aston’s elbow. The boy pushed chessmen and a chessboard out of the way so the old soldier could write.

But the old man did not take up the pen. Instead he demanded of Peter Dell, “Tell me of the king’s death.”

Christopher tried to keep his eyes fixed on his

godfather's grim face as Dell told his story of the king's beheading, the disguised executioners, and the king's last word. But his gaze kept wandering to Aston's wooden leg. Neither his parents nor Reverend Fothergill ever had spoken of it, but Dell had once as he and Christopher supped at a country inn on the road to Poole. Aston had not lost his leg in battle; he had fallen from a horse and broken it so badly it had been amputated. Dell had added that some men said the old man's leg was made of solid gold or was hollow and a hiding place for jewels. But only fools believed that.

The boy did not know what to make of his kinsman who welcomed him so little, but he comforted himself with the thought that the terrible news of the king's murder would surely affect Aston more than the arrival of a godson he did not know. Later his godfather would welcome him with more warmth. At present Aston sat with a stark face, hearing the captain's fluid account of the trial and execution of the king. Dell knew far more than Christopher did of what events had led up to the execution. He had been in London since Yuletide and knew all the news.

When Dell was done speaking, Aston stared at Christopher. He spoke slowly. "I begin to believe you. I see now that Parliament and Cromwell dare anything. Tell me what you saw, boy."

Christopher began with his arrival in the silent

city, then told of the drums and his going to King Street. The tears started as he spoke of the scene before the Banqueting House. When he'd finished, Aston gave him his handkerchief out of his sleeve.

"Why did you come to me, Christopher?"

"Men say Oliver Cromwell will come to Ireland. I hate him. I want to fight him."

Aston shook his head. "Christopher, I know your parents are not friends of King Charles. Why, then, are you? I had not expected it."

"Because I saw the king die."

Aston nodded. "That is reason enough, but I think you would have bettered yourself by being apprenticed to some good master in England or by staying in Chester as an innkeeper. The trade of soldier is a hard one. I would not have chosen it for you or any other lad."

Christopher looked at his hands, embarrassed. His godfather had not once embraced him.

Aston looked away from him to the Irish soldier. "I shall write Lord Ormonde that the king is dead. As the old king's appointed lord lieutenant here, he must announce Prince Charles to be King Charles the Second. I think he will ask him to come to Ireland."

Dell spoke up. "Lord Ormonde is at Youghal, sir, not here in Kilkenny."

"Aye, but Youghal is not too far."

“What does he do there?” asked Dell.

“He gathers soldiers,” Aston answered shortly. Then he began to write. He sprinkled the words with sand from the box to dry the ink, folded the paper, and gave it to the Irish boy. Christopher saw Conn hold a stick of dripping wax to it. When the proper amount had fallen, Aston pressed his heavy ring into it. “Go now, Fitzgibbon, and remember to hold your tongue until Ormonde knows the news.”

The Irishman took the note, bowed and left, while Conn removed the paper, ink, quill, and sandbox.

Aston asked, “Christopher, did you run away from Chester?”

“Yes, sir.”

The old soldier sighed deeply. “I ran away to the wars when I was little older than you. There is some measure of Aston in you. You resemble my father, though I do not.”

Christopher Barstow's heart swelled with joy. “I am happy to hear it. I am named changeling in my family, sir. My brothers and sisters are like unto my parents.”

The man dismissed the Barstows swiftly. “They concern me not at all, Christopher. Tell me of John Fothergill. How does he fare?”

While Dell went to look out a casement window onto the Nore flowing below the castle, the boy spoke of the Anglican minister and his parents' dislike of

him. "My people are Presbyterians. They named Fothergill a Papist."

Aston chuckled. "Did my old friend once try to convert you to his faith?"

"No, sir, he gave me your gifts and taught me chess." Christopher had grown more shy than ever now. He knew a godparent's duty was to oversee his godchild's religious education. "Did you give him instructions not to teach me?" he asked.

"Aye," said the old soldier, reaching for his wine cup. "Fothergill is an Anglican. I am reputed to be a Roman Catholic, Christopher. In good faith I could not ask it of him, could I?"

Christopher drew back on the bench, stunned. "Are you?" He faltered, aware that Peter Dell had turned around from the window to listen and the Irish boy was waiting too.

The old man said, "My enemies in England call me that. Men here in Ireland say I am not a Catholic. I do not know what I am except that I am a soldier and war is my trade. The tsar of Russia, whom I once served, is of the Greek faith, the king of Poland a Catholic, and the king of Sweden a staunch Protestant. I do not question the faith of the man who pays me, and he should not question mine." Aston looked keenly at Peter Dell. "And what of you, Captain? What is your faith?"

"God's blood, sir, if I had one I lost it long ago,"

exclaimed Dell, coming to sit down once more. "I think as you do when it comes to matters of religion." He added, "But you have long served King Charles, and you have not always been paid by him."

"Aye, Captain, but I did not serve the king because of his Anglican faith. I served him and not the Parliament, which might have paid me better, because I am an Englishman and he was my rightful king. I shall serve the new king as well as I may if I am paid or not. Tell me, why have you come to Ireland?"

"Sir, I think you know why Kit and I have come here. Is there a place in your army for us?"

"Captain, there is for you and well I think you knew it when you came. As a proven soldier you are not unwelcome. I shall put you in Captain Brayfield's Troop of Horse." The old man frowned at Christopher. "But what shall I do with you, godson? You are not a soldier. Has it once entered your mind that you may very likely have come to Ireland to die?"

Christopher did not know what to say. It was the first time he had thought of the possibility. He said, "Let me serve you as I can."

"But I am well served as is." Aston gestured toward the tall Irish boy by the fire. "I have Conn Magowan to serve me. But, Christopher, you shall

come to me now and then to play chess as Conn does.”

“Is he a soldier then?” asked Christopher swiftly.

“No, Conn is not,” Aston answered at once. “He is a bold lad who escaped from Drogheda, which is now held by a Roundhead garrison as Dublin is. Conn made his way by night across Ireland to Kilkenny to seek service. When I heard his tale, I would not permit him to become a soldier.”

Dell asked, “Why not? He looks stalwart enough.”

“Because he is learned. His father is the schoolmaster at Drogheda. Conn reads Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He wishes to become a priest.”

“I have been taught my sums and to write and read,” flared Christopher. “You will be served by a Papist rather than by a kinsman?”

“But I have no need of you, Christopher.” Aston frowned. “I think I should send you back to Chester.”

“No!” cried the boy. “I won’t go!”

Peter Dell put in quickly, “Sir, I can teach him what I know.”

Aston mulled this suggestion over, then said, “Very well. He shall be quartered with you and serve you as Conn serves me. Will you do that, boy?”

Christopher mumbled, “If I must.”

Aston thumped his wooden leg on the floor. “Listen

well to me, Christopher Barstow. These Irishmen who serve Lord Ormonde are all Catholics, though Ormonde himself is a Protestant. Take care what you say here. The Irish have very little love for Englishmen, even for those of us who serve with them against Oliver Cromwell and the Parliament. Curb your tongue. They are sudden to anger. Mass is heard here in Kilkenny. You need not hear it, but you must never show disrespect to priests and monks you may see. It may not be easy for you to remain in Ireland.”

“I will vouch for Kit,” promised Dell. Then he asked the old soldier, “You do not remember me from our days together in Germany, do you, sir?”

“No, I do not. There were many young Englishmen.”

Peter Dell smiled, rising. “Where am I to find Brayfield’s Troop of Horse?”

“At the bottom of the town. He will quarter both of you somewhere in Kilkenny. Tell him I sent you and do not, either of you, speak of the king’s execution to any man. Farewell, Christopher. When I require you, I shall send Conn Magowan to fetch you to me. Remember what I have said. If you wish to return to England, come to me and I will aid you.”

Christopher got up, scowling. His meeting with his godfather had not gone at all the way he’d hoped. He was being sent out into the night like a stranger.

Still he managed a polite bow before he left, copying Dell.

Conn Magowan went out onto the top step with him. Christopher gave him a look of pure dislike and envy and would have passed him by, but Conn reached out, grabbed him by the shoulder, and slammed him hard against the stone wall of the staircase.

“We need no more vile English here,” the Magowan boy whispered into Christopher’s face. “You English have plundered Ireland for centuries, murdered us, and tried to stamp out our faith. We’ve poor land now and poor food, and you steal even that from us.” Christopher struggled, but Conn held him fast. “You English have made parts of Ireland into deserts—only wolves and foxes live there today. If you’d help the cause of the new king, go back to England and start rebellion there against the Parliament. Leave Ireland to the Irish—and be damned to all your English souls!”

Caught off guard by the sudden attack and the fierceness of the speech, Christopher at last found his tongue and his strength. He hurled himself away from the wall, his arms flailing. One of his blows caught Conn on the cheek as Christopher hissed softly, “I’ve been told you Irish are little more than beasts. You plow without a harness by fixing the plow to your wretched horses’ tails. You pull

the wool from living sheep instead of shearing them to make your wool."

Christopher aimed a blow at Conn, but the Irish boy stepped away. He looked fiercely at Christopher, and this time hit him so hard on the side of his head that he reeled back downstairs where Captain Dell caught him.

"Go back to England as your godfather bade you," said Conn.

Dell laughed at the words. "No, boy, we shall not go back. We saw King Charles die. You did not. We, too, have something to avenge. Come, Kit." He helped Christopher away as the Irish boy went back inside and closed the door.

"I did not know they hated us so much," gasped Christopher.

"They do indeed. And watch your tongue. Eight years past the Irish rose in rebellion against the English who lived here. They slaughtered English Protestants by the thousands. That is one of the reasons why Oliver Cromwell will come—to avenge this massacre. He is never a man to forget a debt."

As they started down the corridor, Dell went on, "Lord Ormonde is no great soldier, but he knows well what is to be. Before the army Parliament sends out under Cromwell lands in Ireland, Ormonde must take Dublin, and this town of Drogheda Aston spoke of, from the Roundhead forces who now hold them."

The Captain let out his breath. "It will be a merry spring, I think, and there is not much time in which to make a soldier of you, Kit."

Christopher paid little heed to this talk of time and Ormonde and Cromwell and armies. He complained, "Why does my godfather have an Irish boy to serve him when I would do it?"

"Think upon it, Kit. How could Aston keep the favor of the Irish soldiers he leads if he dismissed this Magowan lad and gave his place to you? They would say he insulted them. Sir Arthur is no fool, though you may think him hard. He must wring the best that can be had from these Irish."



VI
BLACK
KING'S
BISHOP
TO BLACK
QUEEN'S
BISHOP FOUR

Captain Brayfield was a thick-bodied, elderly Englishman, a crony of Aston's who also had served in Germany, but like Aston he did not recall Peter Dell. Brayfield's troopers were quartered in Kilkenny in the houses of the citizens. Without difficulty he found Dell and Christopher a chamber above a cobbler's shop in the Street of Swords. The cobbler had glared at them, but when his frightened old wife had put her hand warningly on his arm, he'd held his tongue.

Dell flung himself onto the bed—spurs, boots, and all—the moment the cobbler had shut the door. He boasted, "I shall show these wild Irish how well an Englishman instructs and how well you, an English

lad, can learn the use of arms. Tomorrow I'll start to teach you the use of the sword, musket, and pistols. You are too small yet to bear a pike." He frowned. "But I must get you a sword and pistol."

Christopher sat down on a stool and removed his cloak. He looked at the captain who seemed content enough to be in Ireland and to have no doubts how he would fare in Lord Ormonde's army, even if the Irish troopers under Brayfield had greeted him with no show of friendliness. Christopher sighed. He did not think he would show great aptitude for weapons. His father had ever named him clumsy. He said, "I think perhaps my godfather has the right of it. I should go home. How shall I serve you? I do not know."

"Serve me as little as possible. You are my friend, Kit, not my servant. I have no money and doubt if I will be paid much in Ormonde's service—if at all. You have paid out for everything. You brought us here to avenge the king's murder. I am more truly your servant than you are mine."

Tears filled the boy's eyes. "You are more to me than my godfather, for all that he has sent me baubles and money and now withholds his friendship. Money has little meaning, Captain."

"Do not scorn money, Kit. Money is the one thing in the world that knows no master—except for the wind and sun and rain."

Christopher pondered the words. They reminded him of a scene and suddenly he recalled it. His father had said something of the like in Chester weeks past. And then, too, Aston's purse had been the topic of the speech.

The next day until the snow commenced, Christopher Barstow trailed Captain Dell about, watching him demonstrate to Brayfield and the sullen Irish troopers how Prince Rupert's Cavaliers could ride, leaning from the saddle, to snatch kerchiefs off the ground. Christopher was well pleased with the respect he saw in the eyes of the Irishmen, one of whom murmured in his hearing in English, "And we gave the Englishman a horse that had a demon in him, too!"

The boy repeated what he'd heard to Dell, who said, "I guessed they'd give me a horse no other man wishes to ride. Next I shall find the best swordsman in Ormonde's army and challenge him."

"To duel with you?" asked Christopher, alarmed.

"No, to a public match so all may see who is the better swordsman. The Irish will not love us, but they will respect us. This afternoon I shall begin to teach you the art of fence, but first I shall see your godfather."

"Why see him?" Christopher wanted to know. During the night he'd decided he would not seek

out Aston unless he was sent for. It was clear to him that his kinsman had no affection for him. As Fothergill had said, Aston was a harsh man.

“Because you have need of a sword and pistol. Go to the cobbler’s house and wait for me to return.”

Christopher obeyed. Some hours later, Dell appeared, whistling gaily. He had a pistol stuck into his belt and carried a sword in its scabbard. “Your godfather, Kit, saw reason in my poor requests. You shall go to the castle with me in the afternoons to study.” Handing the sword to the boy, who took it gingerly, Dell put the pistol on the bed with the words, “I will show you how to load and fire this at once, Kit. Sir Arthur bids me tell you come after vespers to play chess with him.”

“Will you go too?”

Dell shook his head. “Nay, I was not asked. While I was in Aston’s chamber, a message arrived from Lord Ormonde in Youghal. The riders who bore it must have gone on the heels of the wind. Ormonde has announced young Charles the Second as king. By now the news is known of the old king’s death here in Kilkenny.” Dell paused and walked over to throw open the casement windows. Snowflakes fell steadily, deadening the air. Through them Christopher could hear the mournful tolling of the town’s church bells. “Kilkenny will go into mourning,” the

captain went on. "There will be little to do, but sleep and play the part of the soldier in a garrison. I have not seen one pretty face in Kilkenny, and the beauty of Irish girls is one of the world's wonders. I think all the maidens have been sent away into the bogs. Someone must have known I came!"

Christopher laughed with him as he drew out and examined the sword. It was three feet long and had a crossbar and a bell of pierced steel to protect the hand. It was not heavy.

"The sword is one of Aston's own and can be used in either hand," explained Dell. "I can use it in both, though few men know it."

The next day Christopher went with Dell to Kilkenny Castle where a steward ushered them into a small, empty stone hall. There the captain showed the boy the proper guard position, his feet close together, knees bowed, with his weight on his left foot. Right-handed Christopher held his sword arm bent and his left hand dangling over his left eye, ready to move it instantly to protect the other eye too. For an hour Dell demonstrated the guards—prime, seconde, tierce, and quarte—by his own positions. Christopher paid close heed, following the man's every movement, though he felt in his heart he never would have the grace of body to become a good swordsman.

Dell said, "You work hard, Kit. I hope you do so well at chess."

“I am more practiced at that. Perhaps I can beat my godfather and have him gain more respect for me.”

But that night, to Christopher’s unhappiness, Aston beat him easily at the chessboard, and then suggested he play Conn Magowan. “You were taught by John Fothergill, who played me many times as a lad, and I have taught Conn. Let us see who teaches best.”

Christopher found the Irish boy a crafty opponent. Conn made no foolish moves as Christopher had hoped. Both played cautiously under the eyes of the old man. Their game ended in a stalemate. Aston said, “You are well matched, but remember that prizes, in wars as well as in games, are not won by a draw. A man wins by boldness!”

As Conn put the chess set into its box, he said sharply to Christopher, “The English captain who came with you teaches you arms?”

“He does. There’s no Irishman who can touch him as a horseman, though he was given a devil of a horse,” Christopher replied as tartly. “Have you heard that, too?”

“I have heard it,” said Aston, while Conn frowned. “Are you stiff, Kit? Fencing is difficult at first.”

“Very.” Christopher smiled, pleased by the thoughtful question. “Captain Dell, I think, is the best swordsman in this place.” He couldn’t help

adding, "He seeks an Irish swordsman here for a public match."

"Does he?" said Aston. "I believe Lieutenant O'Beirne would oblige him with great will. What would you wager on O'Beirne, Conn?"

"Not a farthing. I do not wager."

"I shall. I'll wager all I have on Captain Dell," Christopher exploded.

"I'll take O'Beirne and match you, boy," said the old soldier.

Christopher laughed. "It is all your money, sir. Do you think O'Beirne is such a master swordsman?"

"As a commander of Irishmen I should favor Irishmen. O'Beirne is a fine swordsman. I know how he fences. I do not know this Peter Dell, though I think I've met the likes of him many times before. His sort has courage and is at times a good soldier, but sticks at nothing very long. I think he loves only himself."

"But he loved the king enough to come with me to Ireland to avenge his death!" said Christopher, angry once more, and very aware of Conn's watchful dark eyes on his face.

Aston went on slowly, "Christopher, I do not know if such men truly love anything more than themselves though they seem to fancy glory well enough when it is their own. They are often loved

by others, but I have seen that they do not love. They seek for themselves and do not scorn money."

"Aye, many Englishmen have come here to fasten their teeth in our throats," added Conn.

Aston scolded him. "Kit, at least, did not, did you, boy?"

"No, I will not stay in Ireland once the Round-heads are beaten. There is nothing in Ireland that I seek."

He saw the Magowan boy's expression change. It was clear that Conn knew he spoke the truth. Rather than say that he hated what he'd seen of Kilkenny and the unfriendly Irish, Christopher asked Aston, "Sir, when will Oliver Cromwell come?"

The old man shook his head. "No one has brought me word of his devises, but I believe he will not come here in midwinter—nor will Lord Ormonde attack Dublin or Drogheda now. The roads are not passable. Kit, tell this Captain Dell of yours that it will put heart into the garrison to see him fight with Lieutenant O'Beirne. O'Beirne is at Youghal with Lord Ormonde. We shall join Ormonde elsewhere before long. Tell Peter Dell also that he is to fight with dulled and blunted blades. We cannot afford to lose experienced officers in an army already small. When Cromwell lands he shall have a better blade."

Christopher said shyly, "I thank you, sir, for the sword you gave to me."

“Use it well. That is all I ask of you, Kit.”

When Christopher told Dell later that night that Aston favored a public match, the man nodded and asked from his customary place on the bed, “Where shall I find this O’Beirne? He is not with the garrison here.”

“He is with Lord Ormonde at Youghal.”

Dell rolled over to fix the boy with one bright eye. “Do we go to Ormonde at Youghal or does Ormonde come to us?”

“We join Ormonde elsewhere. My godfather did not tell me where that is.”

Throughout February Dell drilled with Brayfield’s troopers and in his off-duty hours instructed Christopher. It did not take long for the boy to learn how to use the pistol and musket. The blade was more difficult. He soon despaired of ever becoming a good swordsman and even the captain confessed he thought other lads could have made swifter progress. “But you can be a king’s musketeer without shame,” Dell told him one afternoon after Christopher’s shooting at haystack targets outside the town.

“My godfather says I am ‘a straw in the wind,’ sir, because I have no trade in mind. Conn Magowan agrees with him. Conn says he chose to be a priest when he was six years old. I told him I meant *not* to be an innkeeper when I was the same age. He said it is not the same thing at all.”

“A king’s musketeer has a trade,” Dell said, walking beside the boy to the Street of Swords. Then he asked, “Did Aston tell you when we are to join Lord Ormonde so I can find this O’Beirne? You went again last night to Aston’s chamber.”

“In County Tipperary next month. All shall march from here to Cashel.”

“Ah, we move at last. Perhaps Ormonde has had word of Cromwell’s whereabouts.” Dell’s eyes were merry as he looked up at the somber winter sky. “I do not know Cashel, but I trust I shall find some pretty faces there as well as this lieutenant with a famous sword.”

To the thump of drums, Sir Arthur Aston led his little army southwards out of Kilkenny on a rainy day in March. At the head of the column, Aston rode a fine white mare with a curiously fitted stirrup for his peg leg. Brayfield’s Troop of Horse followed. At the very end of the procession, after the mud-splattered foot soldiers, came the carts. In the first one Christopher and Conn Magowan rode with Aston’s chests and personal belongings.

Christopher heard the Irish boy’s question over the creak of the wooden wheels. “How do you fare in your schooling?”

“The pistol and musket suit me best.” Christopher had thought for some time that Conn, who was taller and slimmer than he, though well-knit,

would make a fine swordsman. He mulled over telling him this, then blurted out, "You should come to the captain, too, in the afternoons. I think you would fence well—perhaps better than I."

He saw Conn's sudden shake of the head. "Christopher, a priest has no need of arms."

Aware that Conn had used his name for the first time, Christopher used his. "Conn, how will you stand against Cromwell and his army then?"

Wrapped in his black cloak with his back against a chest, Conn said, "I do not know. I'll trust to God to preserve me from him."

Christopher could not understand this. He asked, "Why did you flee from Drogheda if you did not truly mean to fight the Roundheads someday? I thought you came to be a soldier, too."

The Irish boy sneezed before he replied. "I fled because I found it hard to hold my tongue among the swaggering Protestants there."

"All Protestants do not swagger, Conn," said Christopher fiercely.

"Your braggart captain does."

Christopher fell silent. It was true, he supposed, in some eyes. Dell had cut quite a figure in Kilkenny. The Irish soldiers stared after him when he went down High Street. Some few nodded. The troopers of Brayfield's Horse had come to admire him. Because of him they even showed some courtesy to his

English serving lad. Once a stable boy had asked Christopher to tell him of the king's murder and had listened well. Only the stable boy and Conn Magowan, among all the lads of Kilkenny, had spoken to him.

"It has not been easy for me to hold my tongue among the swaggering Catholics in Kilkenny," said Christopher.

He heard Conn's sigh; then there was silence.

On the next day the carter pointed out a great rock ahead, which rose abruptly out of a broad green plain. "That would be Cashel's Rock, lads," he told the boys.

Cashel was an old walled town set around this rock, which had St. Patrick's Cathedral, an ancient, gray, fireswept ruin, perched atop it. Brayfield's troopers were quartered in houses near the west wall. This time Dell and Christopher lived with a bachelor, a surly linendraper who set his table sparsely with eggs and oaten cakes for the most part. Never a piece of beef or fowl did they see and only occasionally a fish.

Captain Dell did not find the town as boring as Christopher did. At Cashel the captain met Lieutenant O'Beirne, who had ridden north from Youghal with Lord Ormonde.

The boy went with his friend to see the Lieu-

tenant, who lolled in his lodgings with some fellow Irish officers, drinking poteen. Two of Brayfield's troopers were present with cups in their hands. One hailed Dell loudly. "Ho! Here is the Englishman who had the best blade in Kilkenny—or so he says to all who know him." He touched O'Beirne's sleeve, pointing to Dell.

The English captain bowed, his shabby hat plume sweeping the floor. "And so I did. I have come to challenge Lieutenant O'Beirne to a public match."

Christopher looked on as O'Beirne pulled his boots off the curb of the hearth, where he'd been toasting his feet, and arose. He was a little taller than Captain Dell, but it seemed to the boy that his arms were uncommonly long. O'Beirne's curling hair was fiery red, his upper lip long, his face very freckled, and his voice roaring loud.

"An English dandiprat!" He turned to his companions. "Should I take up his challenge?"

"Aye, Dermot, I'll stake my purse on ye."

"And I," said one of Brayfield's men. "Aston favors the match."

"And I," said another Irishman.

O'Beirne flexed the muscles of his sword arm. "I'll honor ye then, little man."

Christopher flushed at the insult, but Dell was cool. He bowed again. "You shall name the time and the site, sir. I am new come to Cashel."

Four days later the bout took place in an enclosed tennis court built many years before. Christopher had bet his godfather that Dell would win, placing all his remaining sovereigns into the wager. He had felt foolish at the time, but he had no choice. It did no good at all to tell Aston the money was his!

The match was set for midmorning. Christopher and Dell came early, both with swords. Before any Irish arrived, the boy fenced with the captain to make him limber, then sat on a bench next to his friend, who wore only his cloak, linen shirt, boots, and breeches. It was to be the boy's welcome work to look after Dell's hat and doublet during the match.

"I hope you win," he told the captain. Then he asked, "Will you use your right hand or your left?"

"I have no doubt of it, Kit. I shall use my right hand. The skill I have in my left is our secret."

Christopher was silent. He was not so certain of Dell's success. The Irishmen had wagered heavily on O'Beirne, Aston had carefully pointed out before he'd taken the boy's wager.

As the court filled with Irish soldiers Christopher was even less sure. The Irishmen clustered thick about O'Beirne, flattering him and calling out to him in Irish. And then, just before the bout began, came another group of men, among them Aston, quite resplendent today in a purple velvet coat trimmed with silver lace. For all of Aston's splendor,

the short man who walked beside him eclipsed him totally. This man wore a cloth-of-gold coat and garnet-red breeches. On his long hair, which was so fair it was near to white, he had a great wide black hat with white and scarlet plumes. Other men, magnificently garbed, but drab by comparison, accompanied him.

Dell confirmed Christopher's guess by a whisper. "That is James Butler, marquess of Ormonde. The Irish name him James the White because of his hair."

Christopher could not tear his eyes from the king's commander in Ireland until an Irish soldier came out onto the court to announce the match. He did not speak in English to Dell, but motioned to him to come forward from his bench. The gesture angered Christopher, as did the Gaelic.

Dell gave the boy his cloak and went out onto the court, smiling. O'Beirne met him there in his shirt, also smiling. The two soldiers bowed, then touched blades.

For a time they fenced with caution. Then of a sudden O'Beirne began a wild lunging attack. He slashed away so fiercely with great sweeping strokes that the onlookers, who had pressed too close during the first moment of the match, leaped for safety to the sides of the court.

Peter Dell retreated coolly until he was only a few

feet from Christopher, who looked on dismayed. Ever the Englishman parried the Irishman's lunges, but he did not attack. Christopher could see Dell's back only. His view was of O'Beirne's face. It was growing more and more red and perplexed. Finally O'Beirne halted, frowning, wiping his forehead with his arm.

His Irish comrades shouted at him, and he shook his head. Then the man shrugged and started a ferocious lunging once more.

This time Peter Dell was ready. In the swiftest movement Christopher ever had seen him make, he stooped and brought his blade up under the taller O'Beirne's. It pierced the Irishman in the shoulder before he could recover from his reckless lunge. Blood stained his shirt a split instant later.

"Go on! Go on!" shouted Captain Brayfield from the sidelines. "Dell has drawn first blood."

"Go on, O'Beirne. The paltry wound matters not," cried Lord Ormonde himself.

Dell did not attack. He shook his head slowly from side to side. "Nay, my lord." The Englishman turned to face Aston while O'Beirne waited, pale, his hand to his shoulder, the blood welling through his fingers. Dell's words were for Aston. "Sir Arthur, you said we were to take blunted blades. We did not. What sport is there in that?" He bowed to the old soldier. "But I am yet mindful of your

speech. I could not deprive Lord Ormonde's army of so gallant and bold an officer as Lieutenant O'Beirne. The match is at an end. I will not continue unless Lord Ormonde commands us."

Christopher's heart swelled as the Irishmen began a prideful murmuring of approval. Dell's words had delighted him. Ormonde's delighted him more. "Captain Dell, because of you I have lost ten pounds in gold today, but I would have gladly lost a hundred rather than be without either you or Lieutenant O'Beirne. The match is ended."

The dazzling nobleman spoke to an officer near him. This man came to Peter Dell and said within Christopher's hearing, "Lord Ormonde has been told you were lately of Prince Rupert's Horse."

Dell nodded as the bewildered O'Beirne left the tennis court to be ministered to by the surgeon of his regiment. Naked sword still in hand, Dell replied, "That is true."

"And you are now of Brayfield's Horse?"

"Aye."

Ormonde's officer said, "Lord Ormonde bids me to say that you are ordered to attend him tonight at his headquarters. He plays at Primero at cards."

"I shall attend him."

Both men bowed and the Irishman walked away to speak to Ormonde. The nobleman did not glance at Peter Dell, but made a gesture to those around

him. Surrounded by his men, James Butler left the court. Sir Arthur Aston clumped along in the wake of the others. He did not look back at Christopher. Twice as rich as before, Christopher almost wished he had not wagered with his godfather. He hoped he would not be embarrassed when he came to collect what was owed him. Conn Magowan had said to him disapprovingly that Aston had told the Irish officers who served under him that O'Beirne would surely have "first blood."

Happy that the match was safely over, Christopher helped Dell put on his doublet. "You have the favor of Lord Ormonde now, Captain."

"Aye, Kit. I sought it from the first day we came to Ireland. I had hoped to find him at Kilkenny."

That night Dell went to the great nobleman's headquarters for the first time. In the weeks that followed he was seldom at the linendraper's until past midnight. Not only did Lord Ormonde favor his company, but Dell had found himself a handsome maiden, who lived on a farm near Cashel.

Not once did Christopher catch a glimpse of her, though he was greatly curious. One night while he cleaned the everlasting mud from the captain's boots and his own, he asked, "How did you find the maiden? What is her name? I never see you but at lessons now."

"Her name is Maeve, or at least this is what the

firt-gill tells me. She came into the marketplace to sell eggs, and there I found her with a basket over her arm smiling, waiting for me. Ask me no more about her, Kit. I shall not tell you. Find a maiden of your own." Dell hauled on a clean boot, grunting. "I go to Ormonde now. I think he likes to keep me near him for my sword. One of his officers told me the Roundheads who hold Dublin and Drogheda have hired assassins to kill him. All know he is here in Cashel."

This information made Christopher catch his breath. "Will we be long here in County Tipperary?"

"You find Cashel very dull?" asked the captain.

"Aye. My godfather is most of the time with Lord Ormonde, too, and Conn does not bid me to play chess often with him. And then sometimes he beats me. I do not seek Conn's company. He does not like me, nor I him, though we do not hit one another now."

"Kit, I have it that we march on Dublin when summer comes and the roads are fit for cannon and heavy-laden wagons."

Christopher thought of the battle he'd seen from the rooftop in Chester. He asked fearfully, "Does Lord Ormonde know when Cromwell comes?"

Dell nodded. "He has had news that Cromwell is still in London. The young king's spies in England

keep him informed as to that. As for the new king, he is in France at the court of his mother. I do not think he will sail to Ireland, though Ormonde writes him to come.’’

Dell left the chamber, jamming his hat onto his head after straightening a new scarlet plume someone had given him—probably his Irish Maeve, Christopher thought.

Christopher sat on his stool thinking about battles. He had no illusions that he was ready yet to set himself against any other man as a soldier. He was no swordsman or expert marksman, and Dell had yet to teach him much more of riding than to stay atop a horse. Christopher mourned his own clumsy worthlessness and much doubted that he could acquit himself well even as a musketeer on foot. How could he avenge the king’s murder?

Weeks passed. Springtime came and the air of Tipperary grew soft and sweet, but Christopher was no more happy. Dell was with him less than ever. On the next to the last day of May the captain left him entirely when Brayfield’s Horse set out with Lord Ormonde’s army to attack Dublin. Peter Dell rode away among three thousand cavalry and seven thousand foot soldiers, leaving Christopher behind. At Ormonde’s orders, Aston stayed to help hold Cashel. And at his godfather’s request, Christopher

Barstow stayed too. His godfather had judged him "unready" to go to Dublin with the army after a private conference about his progress with Captain Dell.

That morning of departure Christopher had asked the captain if he could not follow him secretly.

"Nay, Kit," Dell had told him, buckling on his sword. "What would I do with you in camp?"

"But what am I to do here?"

"Each day go outside the town and shoot with your pistol at the straw target we set up. When I see you next, I shall expect to find you much improved."

Christopher had sulked. "My godfather commands me to stay and so do you. How shall I help the king here?"

Dell had smiled. "We have seen much of war, Kit, your godfather and I. You are not ready to be more than a hindrance to us yet."

At high noon Christopher watched his friend ride out of Cashel on his fine black horse. He had no eyes for the Irishmen in Brayfield's Horse, whose horses shied and tossed their heads, protesting the pounding of drums. Not even the marquess of Ormonde, shining like the sun in yellow satin, with tawny plumes in his hat, could hold his eye for more than an instant. He saw only Peter Dell and waved frantically when the man rose in his stirrups to wave at him.

A sour taste in his mouth, Christopher started

down the stairs off the wall once Dell was out of waving distance. He stopped halfway. There at the foot of the steps stood five Irish boys near his own age, their eyes fixed on him, challenging him. One stepped forward, spat, and called up, "*Sassenach!*"

Christopher knew the Gaelic word for an Englishman. He knew the boys, too. They'd sometimes followed him and the captain through Cashel, though they'd never dared come close. Now that they'd seen Dell ride out through the gate, they were bolder.

While Christopher stared down at them, one of the boys picked up a clod of dirt. He threw it at Christopher, who ducked and fled to the top of the wall again. The dirt missed, but the second clod caught him painfully in the stomach, dirtying his doublet. The next was no clod at all, but a small rock. It whizzed by his head. Christopher started to run along the wall. Delighted howls from below made him run faster. Two of the boys detached themselves from the others and came up after him, pounding behind him. The other three ran along below the wall trying to pelt Christopher with whatever they could lay hands to.

A shawled woman attempted once to stop them, grabbing at their leader as he passed, but he pushed her out of the way. An old man had no more success with them. They knocked him sprawling.

Christopher sprinted on along the narrow sentries' space behind the parapet. He could find no patrolling soldiers to protect him, but suddenly just ahead he spied a black-clad figure climbing up onto the wall.

As Christopher came thudding toward him, he saw that it was Conn Magowan. Christopher had no breath to call out, but Conn knew him at once. The Irish boy's swift gaze took in the three lads below and the two at Christopher's heels. As a rock came hurtling between him and the English boy, Conn shouted in Irish.

The Cashel boys on the wall halted, one piling up on the other's back. The three below stopped, rocks and dirt still in their hands. They listened, their mouths agape, as Conn yelled at them.

Christopher could not understand one word he said. But when Conn had finished, the boys dropped the clods of dirt and rocks. All five went away quietly, their eyes on their feet, refusing to look at Conn or Christopher.

Leaning against the wall to catch his breath, Christopher said, "I thank you, Conn. I came here to say farewell to Captain Dell."

"And I came to see Lord Ormonde go."

Both boys looked out over the parapet. The army had dwindled now to a black column in the misty blue-green distance.

"I shall pray for them," Conn said.

“I shall pray too.” Christopher was suddenly shy. He avoided Conn’s eyes, as he asked, “What did you tell those boys?”

“That you saw King Charles die and came here to Ireland of your own free will to serve the new king. You risked your life to come. Your Roundhead countrymen might hang you gladly if they could catch you. I said to them that they know nothing but small Cashel and its marketplace, while you become a fine swordsman and a king’s musketeer. I said you were taught by the English champion, who defeated the great O’Beirne himself.” Conn laughed. “You’ll not see them again, Kit. They’ll fear you now.”

Christopher laughed too. “They fear *me*?” He shook his head. “Captain Dell they should fear, but not me. Come with me, Conn, while I practice with my pistol at a target. I promised Captain Dell I would.”

Conn smiled. “I see no harm in that, though I little like the noise. I’ll come, but only if you’ll go with me to the top of Cashel’s great rock afterward to visit the ruins of the cathedral.” He touched Christopher’s shoulder. “You will miss your countryman, Kit, but take cheer. Sir Arthur tells me riders will arrive from Lord Ormonde each day with the news from Dublin’s siege. When you spy a rider on the Dublin road, go to your godfather’s lodgings and hear the news. Who knows there may even be

word of your fine Captain Dell. Brayfield's troopers expect great feats from him."

"And so do I," Christopher said. He added, "I would not have come to Ireland without him, Conn."

Riders came often down the northeast road in the days that followed. Christopher, who spent much time on the wall watching, ran then to his godfather to hear the news. He learned that, on the nineteenth of June, Ormonde's army began to besiege Dublin. The Roundhead commander, walled up in the city by the besiegers, had sent his cavalry twenty miles north to Drogheda where they would find hay and grain lacking for the horses in Dublin. Ormonde's soldiers had been watchful. They had attacked the Roundhead cavalry on the road to Drogheda. Then Lord Ormonde had sent two thousand men and fifteen hundred horses to besiege Drogheda.

Christopher saw that Conn was in a fever of excitement. Would Drogheda fall? What of his father, the schoolmaster? Had he been killed by the Roundheads? Conn walked about Cashel much with Christopher, who had nothing better to do, talking of his home and his father. Christopher learned that Conn was motherless from birth and, unlike him, had no brothers and sisters. He found himself telling Conn of his elder brother Tom and the Chester goldsmith and the Barstows' favoring of their oldest son.

Conn listened gravely and once said, delighting Christopher, "Your mother and father and brother treated you very ill, Kit. Do not go home to Chester. There are many other places."

"Then you do not think I am a straw in the wind?" Christopher couldn't help asking.

"No, Kit. I did not know this about you. It was wrong of your family to hate this Reverend Fothergill."

"Conn," Christopher asked, "if Fothergill had lived in Drogheda, would your father have permitted you to befriend him?"

Standing with his back to the ruined wall of the old cathedral, a favorite daily haunt of the boys, Conn frowned. "No, Kit, perhaps not. I am a Catholic. This Fothergill is an Anglican."

"And I, too, am a Protestant," Christopher said. "I pray for Lord Ormonde's army and Captain Dell each night. Conn, do you think my prayers can reach up to heaven through all your Catholic incense here?"

Conn Magowan's sense of humor was sharp too. "I think God can hear even a Protestant—even in Ireland, Kit."

On the thirteenth of July news came by courier from Lord Ormonde to Aston that although Dublin Town held out against him, Drogheda had fallen

to him. The Roundhead garrison had marched out after surrendering. Ormonde summoned Aston to leave Cashel at once to take command of the king's garrison at Drogheda.

"You shall go home, Conn," the old soldier told the delighted Irish boy in Christopher's presence. "And you shall come to Drogheda with me, Christopher," Aston added.

Christopher was pleased for Conn's sake. But what was Drogheda to him, except another Irish town where he would be lonely? Still, his heart lifted a bit when he remembered Drogheda was only twenty miles from Dublin. Perhaps he could see Captain Dell soon. He missed him greatly—more each day.

Sir Arthur moved swiftly once he had his orders. With an escort of soldiers and with Conn and Christopher in a cart, he left Cashel on the fifteenth of July. On the eighteenth they were before Dublin. Lord Ormonde rode out from among the tents of his besieging army to confer with Aston.

Because the officers drew rein very near their cart, the two boys heard their speech. Ormonde's first words struck Christopher to the heart. "Sir Arthur, there's been news come today from England. On July tenth Oliver Cromwell left London for Bristol. 'Tis said that great devil rode like a lord in a coach

drawn by six gray Flanders mares. Four days later he was at the port."

"Then he comes soon to Ireland," said Aston.

"As soon as he finds ships enough for his army in Bristol. Sir Arthur, I ask you to hold Drogheda fast for me. I must conquer Dublin if I can before Cromwell comes or I shall be caught here by him." Then the two men moved their horses away from the cart.

While Christopher listened to the soft sound of Conn's voice behind him starting a Latin prayer, he thought of the horrors he'd seen under the walls of Chester and the weeping face of the king.

Conn's prayer done, Christopher heard his question, "You are English, Kit. You will know. What of this Cromwell who is an Englishman too? What do you know of him?"

"He is very terrible, Conn."

"Would he truly kill *you*, Kit, as easily as he would kill me?"

Christopher gnawed at a fingernail and said, "I think he might kill me with a lighter heart, because I am English and therefore a traitor. Cromwell set his own name to the king's death warrant. Captain Dell told me once he had heard that some men refused to sign it. He told me Oliver Cromwell himself held their hands and forced the strokes of their quills."



VII

WHITE
QUEEN'S
KNIGHT

TO WHITE

QUEEN'S
BISHOP THREE

Aston's forces entered Drogheda through the octagon-shaped Butler Gate in the western wall and proceeded down a winding way past Mill Mount, which Christopher stared at in some surprise. It was a tall earthwork topped by a windmill. Clearly the mount was man-made. Conn said without Christopher's asking, "Some say in Drogheda that an old hero or Irish king was buried there. His subjects raised the mound over him to honor him."

The cart had turned onto cobblestoned Ship Street. Leaning out, Christopher could see the wide, lead-hued, steep-banked River Boyne, which divided Drogheda into two parts, north and south. Soon

they were on the house-bordered drawbridge over the river, the only bridge Christopher could see through the gaps between the houses. The houses of Drogheda itself were mostly of wood, but here and there the boy saw old ruins, all of gray stone.

Conn pointed them out as the sites of religious houses of four centuries past and added that the twenty-foot high and four-foot thick city walls were as old. Across the Boyne atop a steep hill Christopher spied a handsome church built of stone with a high wooden steeple. He knew it to be Roman Catholic and carefully did not ask of it, but Conn volunteered eagerly, "That is Saint Peter's where we attend Mass, my father and I. It is Father Brian's church. He taught me what Hebrew I know." The Irish boy jerked his head. "You did not see it, Kit, but Saint Mary's Church lies to the south near the wall and Duleek Gate, the southern gate."

"How many gates to Drogheda?" asked the English boy.

"Many. Why do you ask?"

Christopher said slowly, "I wonder which gate Cromwell will come to."

Conn smiled. "All are strong gates and the old walls are thick. Kit, you told me yourself that Chester's old Roman walls were not breached by the Roundheads who besieged the town. You told me Chester surrendered of its own will."

Christopher nodded, but could not help saying, "Cromwell never came to Chester."

"And he is not yet before Drogheda." There was color in Conn's cheeks. Christopher guessed it was because Conn had come home. He sighed enviously. He had no home now. Captain Dell was his last comforting link with England—and even he was gone. His godfather, for all of their games of chess and their conversations, was little more than a stranger to him.

"Where do we go, Conn?"

"Tooting Tower in the northeast wall near Saint Sunday's Gate. It will be fortified still."

There were two stone towers in the wall near to that massive old gate, Bowlters' and Tooting. As Conn had predicted, Aston's column drew rein before one of them. Conn leaped down before the cart wheels had stopped rolling. "Tell Sir Arthur for me, Kit, that I've gone to seek my father in West Street. I'll soon return to him."

"There'll be no need for that if your father is hale," came a deep voice from beyond the covered cart. Aston rode to where the Irish boy stood.

"Sir?" asked Conn.

"I thank you for your services, Master Magowan, but I think it best if you remain here with your father. Christopher shall serve me now."

Surprised, Christopher gazed at Conn. The Irish

boy didn't seem downcast. He looked swiftly from Aston's face to Christopher's, then back again. "Aye, sir. I will stay with my father for as long as I may." Conn bowed and left, running.

Christopher watched his godfather look around at Saint Sunday's Gate, and then heard him mumble, "I like this place Ormonde sends me not at all. There are too many gates for such a small garrison and but one drawbridge over the river. Narrow streets are easy to defend, but men cannot move swiftly in them. I like it not."

"Conn says the walls are strong, sir," put in Christopher.

"They look to be, but for all that I see, I have very much to do here." Aston's frown was heavy. "Now, Kit, follow the men who take my chests into the tower on the right. Take the finest chamber for me and make it as comfortable as you can." The old soldier reached down and flicked the boy on the shoulder with his whip. "An innkeeper lad should be able to see to that with ease."

"Aye, sir, I'll serve you as well as I can." Then Christopher asked, "But what of Captain Dell? Who will serve him?"

"With Lord Ormonde's army I doubt he has a servant at all at the moment. In any event, Kit, you shall serve *me*. Let Dell look to his own welfare. I have need of you."

Christopher left the cart and looked up at the man on horseback. "Sir, will I see Conn here or will he avoid me because I am English, as people did in Kilkenny and Cashel?"

"I think you will see Conn. He is Irish, but he knows now that not all Englishmen mean him harm. I trust he and his father can help greatly in all I must do to make Drogheda stronger."

Christopher gazed after his godfather who rode off to be helped out of his special peg-leg stirrup by his groom. He knew his work would be harder serving the old knight than Peter Dell and not half so merry, and he doubted that he would laugh overmuch. No, he did not truly think he could come to love Aston as he did the Cavalier he'd met in London.

The July days passed sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly for Christopher Barstow. The hours dragged their heels while he served his godfather in his tower chamber. Aston spoke little to him. He was much occupied with fortifying Drogheda, inspecting and repairing the walls, and building a strong wooden palisade around high Mill Mount. At other times he consulted with his officers or the leading townspeople, ignoring lonely Christopher, who stood behind his chair, waiting to be called, wishing he could see Captain Dell. Serving Aston, the boy could

not ride south to Dublin and seek out his friend as he had hoped.

The happy moments at Drogheda were spent with Conn, his tall dark-haired father, the schoolmaster, and, to Christopher's amazement at first, red-cheeked little Father Brian. Conn had sought Christopher out the day after their arrival, bringing his father with him. The priest in his long black gown came walking with them to Tooting Tower in the fine, soft rain. Christopher took them all to Aston's chamber. Then while the men spoke together, he and Conn spoke outside.

"Are we to be seen together in Drogheda?" the English boy asked, blushing.

"We are indeed, and more than that. My father has two horses. Tomorrow I'll take you about. Do you ride well?"

"No."

Conn laughed. "The old mare is for you then."

Christopher hesitated, then asked, "Did you tell the priest and your father that I saw King Charles die?"

"Aye, Kit, but that is not the whole reason we are to be friends here. They think I should show you that we Irish were gentle when you English were barbarians. Did you know we Irish sent monks to parts of England to teach Christianity?"

Christopher felt his face growing scarlet. Hot

words rose in his mind, but looking about him at unfamiliar Drogheda made him remember Aston's warning to hold his tongue for wisdom's sake. "You say the mare is gentle, Conn?" were his only words.

The next morning Conn came early to Tooting Tower with two chestnut mares. Christopher awkwardly hauled himself onto one horse and clung with his knees as they rode south over the bridge and out through stout Duleek Gate. The mare was gentle and old and the day fine. Christopher did not fall off once. He enjoyed his view of ancient New Grange, a burial mound thousands of years old. He and Conn tethered the horses and climbed to the top of the high cairn to gaze across the distance at a great green hill, topped by darker green tree clumps.

"See Tara, the hill of the kings, Kit. Did you know Ireland had a high king only two hundred years after the death of Christ?" Conn spoke very proudly. "The O'Neills were far-famed high kings of Ireland before the English came nearly six hundred years ago." The Irish boy frowned. "Though they called themselves Christians, too, the English tore down our religious houses and stole the stones to build castles for themselves, so they could be our overlords and command us. And then an English king, for a fancy, changed his faith to Protestantism and that faith, as well as the English language, was

forced upon us." Conn's dark eyes were kindling. "Kit, someday the Irish will have this island for themselves again—if it takes a thousand years!"

Christopher had listened carefully as he looked at misty Tara, where no building now stood to mark the greatness of the old high kings of Ireland. "I would not oppress you, Conn," he told the other boy.

Conn's grin was quick. "I know *you* would not." He led the way down, sliding over the cairn to the horses, heedless of tears in his breeches, and mounted. Next he took Christopher to Monasterboys, the ruins of an eighth-century monastery, and showed him the three great Celtic crosses standing in its graveyard near the burnt-out shell of the Monks' Tower.

"The Danish raiders came here in their long ships, Kit. They murdered all the monks and lived here until a high king came down out of Tara, killed many of them, and burned the tower with Danes inside."

Christopher asked swiftly, "So not all who have come here to Ireland to plunder have been Englishmen?"

Conn shot Christopher a sharp glance, then laughed. "Not *all*. Ireland has ever been a rich prize to greedy folk." A shadow crossed the Irish boy's dark face. Christopher, watching him, knew his

thought—the same as his—of Cromwell gathering soldiers across the Irish Sea.

In the last days of July, Christopher learned what the folk of Drogheda called him in the Irish—*Ridere an Ré*, King's Knight's Pawn. People even smiled at him when he and Conn passed by together. Father Brian had given Christopher this nickname, because Aston had been knighted by King Charles and because of Aston's fondness for chess and his skill at the game. The priest, an excellent player himself, played Aston several times in Christopher's presence, and each time lost. When Christopher played against the little priest, with Aston and both Magowans watching, he was three times worsted in very few moves—once in only three moves.

“You have much to learn,” said Father Brian, “and you must be more bold or you will never be more than a pawn of other men in all your days.”

Christopher let out a sigh. He'd heard this advice before, months past at Kilkenny. His godfather had said that boldness wins the prize in wars as well as games. His eyes caught Conn's amused ones across the chamber by the window. He thought Conn remembered the words too. They had been very strange ones from his godfather's mouth—what need had Conn, a would-be priest, of a soldier's boldness? And now a priest who would never bear arms

had chosen to tell him, Christopher Barstow, to pursue boldness. Captain Dell would be entertained richly by the source of this piece of advice when he came to Drogheda from Dublin Town.

Dell knew Christopher had come to Drogheda. The boy had sent him a letter in the same courier's pouch that carried Aston's dispatches one day to Lord Ormonde. Riders came and went constantly along the Dublin road. But none brought an answer from the captain to the waiting boy.

A courier arrived near midnight at Aston's tower on the second day of August. The sound of his horse's hooves on Drogheda's cobblestones at so late an hour brought Aston from his great bed and Christopher from his small trundle bed to look out the window.

"What is it?" the old soldier called down to his guards.

The light of the torches held by the guards shone on the helmet of the rider and on the lathered sheen of his horse. "Lord Ormonde sends me with a message."

Moments later the courier was in the tower chamber, telling his message. "Sir, the Roundheads came out of Dublin at nightfall and attacked our camp at Rathmines. We were routed with many losses."

"Losses?" snapped Aston.

“Aye, sir—men, arms, and stores.”

Christopher heard his godfather mutter, “We have none to spare.” Then he added, “Where is Lord Ormonde now? You, Kit, fetch this man some wine.”

The cup in his hand, the courier faltered on. “Ormonde falls back on Kilkenny with his foot soldiers. The Roundheads in Dublin Town did not pursue him.” The man spoke more slowly, pulling heavily on the wine. “I think the Roundheads will wait in Dublin for Cromwell to reinforce them. Lord Ormonde’s cavalry will be here at Drogheda before sunrise. He sends them all to you.”

Aston, who was in his bedgown, spoke to Christopher, who’d thought instantly of Brayfield’s Horse and Captain Dell. “Help me with my leg and clothing, Kit. There’ll be no sleep tonight.”

At dawn Christopher was waiting at the summit of Mill Mount, the highest spot in Drogheda. One hour after misty sunrise he spied what he’d waited for—a column of horsemen trotting on the brown Dublin road. He hastened down to Duleek Gate, feeling frightened. What if Captain Dell had fallen at Rathmines? The courier had said many had died there.

The boy stood behind the guards at the great gate. He heard a sentry on the wall challenge the cavalry

and the response, "King Charles's men." Then he saw the gate open and watched the first troopers come through. Their horses were weary; the men drooped in their saddles. Some wore bandages on their thighs and legs; a few had been tied to the saddles.

Brayfield's Horse did not lead the procession of the defeated, but came toward the end of the column, the elderly Englishman leading them. Behind him rode Captain Dell, jaunty as ever, mounted on the same black horse he'd ridden from Cashel. Dell looked unmarked.

Christopher, who'd been counting the troopers in silence, ran forward and caught at Dell's stirrup. "Captain, Captain!" he cried happily.

Dell looked down at the boy walking beside his horse. "Kit," he said smiling. "By God's wounds and ears, 'tis Kit."

Keeping up with him, Christopher babbled, "I serve my godfather and lodge with him in Tooting Tower so I cannot be with you, but I've found a chamber for you in Saint Laurence Street. It has a fine great bed and hearth and. . ."

The boy heard Dell's familiar laugh. "I thank you, Kit, for your consideration of my welfare, but did you find me a pretty maid here in this grim Irish place to make life pleasant?"

"No, sir."

Dell gave him a mock scowl, then rose up in his stirrups and looked about him. "I see the walls and gate are stout." He pointed to Mill Mount and asked its name, then to the gray church on his right. "How is that named? Its steeple is high, an excellent place for sharp-eyed men with muskets to pick off Roundheads when they come!"

"Saint Mary's Church. The steeple of Saint Peter's north of the Boyne is higher yet, Captain."

The Englishman nodded. "Drogheda seems a strong place. Lord Ormonde will pour the flower of his army into it soon, I'm told. He means to hold Drogheda at all costs."

Christopher couldn't help asking, "Has Cromwell sailed from Bristol yet?"

"No, Kit, not yet, though news has come that he has many ships—near a hundred—ready. That means a great force." Dell looked down at the boy, whose face had gone glum again. "Take heart, Kit. I told you I would come to no harm at Dublin, and I did not. I do not think I will die here in this drear town of Drogheda. No more of this. I am weary. When Brayfield dismisses me, do you think you could take me to this Saint Laurence Street and fetch me a bottle of your godfather's best wine without his knowing it?"

"I could and will, Captain. I'll bring you Malmsey.'

As the cavalry approached the drawbridge over

the Boyne, Dell asked, "How fare the chess games with the Magowan boy?"

"I play now with Father Brian and my godfather for the most part. Conn lodges with the schoolmaster, his father."

Dell's eyebrows rose in surprise. "With a priest? You play chess with a Papist priest?"

"Aye, Captain. I like him. He bids me be more bold."

"That is often good advice, Kit, but strange from a priest, I think." He changed the subject swiftly. "Brayfield's Horse lost thirty troopers. It is said in all Ormonde lost some thousands at Rathmines. Drogheda is the most important town in Ireland at this moment, though I cannot say that it differs greatly to my way of thinking from Kilkenny and Cashel. Tell me, how many great guns are here and what are the numbers of Drogheda's garrison?"

Christopher told him what he knew, then added, "The people like me better here, sir. They smile sometimes."

"Ha!" boomed Dell as they left the bridge. "I trust the maids will smile on me. I saw not one wench in all the weeks we were besieging Dublin Town."

For some reason Peter Dell could not find a single maid in Drogheda to suit his fancy, he complained

to Christopher. He spent most of his time drilling with his troop; the rest of it he expended outside the walls with a fowling piece, shooting grouse to have a better supper at his lodgings. Christopher walked to Saint Laurence Street as often as his godfather permitted, but seldom found Dell there in his fine chamber.

One night Christopher waited late for him. Dell returned after midnight, cloaked and wet. At first the boy thought he seemed angry to see him. Then the man put his finger to his lips and said with a grin, "So you have found me out? You've spied on me and seen I go outside the walls. I've found myself a fishermaid in a village near the mouth of the Boyne. Her hair is black as a crow's wing and her eyes more blue than the gentian flower."

Christopher had guessed that was it, as he'd waited, fidgeting. "What is her name?" he asked.

"Maeve," said Dell, taking off his cloak and letting it fall into a sagging, sodden mass.

The boy frowned. "Are all Irish maids named Maeve?"

The captain gave him a swift glance and threw his plumed hat on the bed. "All seem to be who take my fancy."

Christopher went away, slamming the door. So it was to be neglect all over again. Captain Dell loved him well, but he loved the maidens more. Tomorrow, if Aston would give him leave, Christopher

would seek out Conn Magowan's company for a welcome change.

At midday the old soldier went to Duleek Gate to greet reinforcements Lord Ormonde had sent, leaving Christopher to his own devices. He went to West Street, disturbed Conn's father teaching small children the alphabet, and learned that Conn had gone to the Boyne with a fishing rod after trout. Christopher found him easily, sitting on the steep green bank with Father Brian for company. Christopher felt at ease with the little priest, who informed him that Mayflies were the finest bait in all Ireland and also teasingly told him if he had the ill luck to wed an Irish mermaid, first to remove her tail and hide it well. If not, she'd find it, put it on, and go home to the sea. Then he arose and left, saying he had something else to do.

"What's amiss, Kit?" asked Conn, when they were alone.

"Captain Dell has found himself a sweetheart once more. Would that she were a mermaid!"

Conn's brows gathered into a black line. "In Drogheda? What is her name?"

"Not in Drogheda. In a fishing village at the mouth of the Boyne. Her name is Maeve. Are all maids in this Ireland named Maeve?"

Conn laughed. "They are not. I think the captain jests with you. I know this fishing village well. It is

tiny. When I stole away to Kilkenny last year no maidens at all were there—unless they were closed up nearby in Saint Brigid's Convent."

"What is that?"

"A house of holy nuns on the cliff a mile above the village overlooking the sea. There'd be no Maeve who'd meet an English captain there—or any other soldier." Conn put down the fishing rod, frowning. "I believe, Kit, Captain Dell lies to you."

Christopher scrambled to his feet, furious. "He does not lie! He has never lied to me. You hate him. You'd turn me against him."

Conn spoke quietly. "It is truth that I do not like him. I have seen him here in Drogheda. I say he swaggers still. Brayfield's Irish troopers have somewhat more to say of him."

"What is that?"

"He did no deeds of valor at Rathmines as all had thought he would. No man remembers seeing him during the battle. Some say he took refuge and came out of hiding only when the battle was ended."

This was too much for Christopher Barstow. He whirled around and rushed up the bank. Peter Dell, who'd ridden with Prince Rupert, a coward? The boy ran to Saint Laurence Street to Dell's lodgings, but he was not there. A passing soldier told him that Brayfield's Horse drilled on a little plain south of the city.

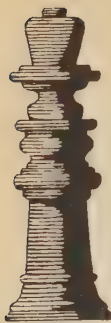
Christopher went to stand on the south wall not far from Saint Mary's Church and watch the cavalymen maneuver and wheel about at Brayfield's shouted commands. At this distance the boy could not distinguish Dell from the other riders and wished he had his godfather's spyglass. He could not believe the captain had lied to him, but there was a way to find out.

He'd watch and follow Dell at night. Aston slept very heavily the first part of each night. It would not be difficult for Christopher to slip away unnoticed for a few hours and be back by dawn in case his godfather called him.

Conn was mistaken. There was a wench, a Maeve. He'd see her and throw the fact into Conn's face and laugh. He'd been a fool to trust an Irishman more than his own countryman.

His spirits rising, Christopher started down the steps that led off the wall. Halfway down he heard wild shouting and hastened back up to the wall's top to lean over the parapet. A lone rider came galloping up the Dublin road. Brayfield's Horse made way for him to pass through, then fell in behind him at a gallop.

The courier's voice came floating over the distance to the gatekeepers and guards and Christopher. "The English ships have landed! Cromwell is in Dublin Town!"



VIII
BLACK
QUEEN
TO BLACK
KING'S
BISHOP THREE

Christopher pounded through Drogheda to Tooting Tower behind the rider. Out of breath, he burst in on his godfather who spoke with the courier. The boy heard the old soldier's sharp question, "You saw the ships from England?"

"Aye, sir," the Irishman replied. "I waited in a secret place until my brother came out to me from Dublin with the news."

"And what is that once more?"

"Many more ships will sail from England. Cromwell, who names himself lord lieutenant of Ireland and general for the Parliament of England, has three thousand men in Dublin. His coming was honored by Dublin's cannon firing a welcome. My

brother told me all male Catholics were driven out of the city at once, and no man who gives shelter to a priest for the space of one hour will be suffered to live. 'Tis said Cromwell's cavalry stable their horses in Saint Patrick's Cathedral in the town."

Christopher gasped at this insult. There was no flicker of emotion on his godfather's face. Aston said only, "Then, it is clear to me. The Roundheads shall come soon to Drogheda!"

That night Christopher Barstow lay on his trundle bed waiting for Aston to fall asleep. When he heard the old man's wheezing snore, he got up and crept down out of the tower. He told the guards he could not sleep and wanted to walk about the town. They let him pass. The boy made his way through rain to Saint Laurence Street and from a doorway opposite Captain Dell's lodging took up a watchful station. Candlelight shone from behind the casement window for a time; then it was extinguished. A moment later Christopher saw Dell come out of the house and start down the street toward the eastern gate, Saint Laurence's. Christopher followed him, hastening from doorway to doorway, wondering how Dell would leave Drogheda. All gates were heavily guarded, and Aston had put out an order that very day that no one was to leave the town after night-fall without a pass from him.

But Dell did not make for the eastern gate itself. He detoured through the dark, wet streets just before he reached the barbican and disappeared around the side of a house built next to the city wall. Christopher waited, then followed. He saw the captain go up the steps that led to the top of the wall and take something from under his cloak. It was a rope. Swiftly he looped it over a spike set in the wall. Then Christopher saw Dell lower himself over it. The boy went up the steps when the captain was out of view. He examined the dangling rope and looked up and down the wall for patrolling sentries, but saw none. He knew the walls were well guarded. However, he guessed that Dell, knowing the sentries' rounds, would be back before they came and found his telltale rope.

The boy looked over the wall and saw the captain striding swiftly. If he didn't hurry, he'd lose him. Taking up the rope, Christopher went down the high wall, hand over hand. Then he started to run over the damp high grass.

The way was hard. Christopher climbed one stone fence after another. It seemed to him he ran for hours, keeping the captain in sight, but at last Dell stopped. To Christopher's great surprise, the man sat down in the middle of a meadow. Dell did not go to the fishing village where his Maeve lived. The only habitations in sight were a ruined stone cottage

and a large stone building a distance away on a cliff top—Saint Brigid's Convent.

The boy crept closer behind the stone wall, which separated his meadow from Dell's. He wondered if the captain's Irish light-o'-love would meet him there because her family disapproved of her Englishman lover. Christopher was uneasy, not only because he was afraid Dell would catch him, but because he was not alone in his field. A flock of sheep shared it with him. And they were curious! The animals came one by one to sniff the crouching boy and to gaze at him.

Christopher waited. Finally he heard something—a high sharp whistle. It was answered by another one, this time far closer, from Dell. Christopher peeked over the top of the wall. A tall cloaked figure was coming toward the meadow from the south. Christopher saw Dell arise. The newcomer came up to him. The boy saw that this person was taller than Dell—certainly no maiden. It was a man.

The boy heard his words. "Cursed be he that holdeth back his sword from blood." The voice was deep, musical, and English.

Dell spoke next as if reciting, "Yea, cursed be he that maketh not his sword stark drunk with Irish blood, that maketh them not heaps on heaps."

The stranger added, "And their country a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment to nations."

Then he asked suddenly, "What is the number of Aston's forces now at Drogheda?"

Dell replied, "Two thousand and twenty-one foot soldiers and three hundred twenty horse. Near all are Irish. Lord Ormonde may send more. The walls are stout, but Aston lacks round shot, matches, and provisions."

"What of the old traitor's cannon?" demanded the stranger.

"Some few cannon, one master gunner, two gunners, and three gunners' mates."

Christopher began shuddering as the truth burst upon him. There was no Maeve at all. Peter Dell was a Roundhead spy! And he had trusted him and brought him, a foul traitor to King Charles, to Ireland! Tears of misery flooded the boy's eyes.

"Is this all you have to tell me this time?" the stranger went on.

"It is all, Doctor Moonjean. I shall meet you two nights hence at this place if Lord Ormonde has sent more men and supplies into Drogheda."

"Aye, sir, but do not fail to desert in good time. General Cromwell bids me tell you he values your services here in Ireland. The boat will be waiting for you in the cove we spoke of last time I came to you. The fisherman who owns it lives in the cottage above the cove. He has been well paid for his silence and cooperation and expects you. You know the watchword for him. My boat waits. I must go."

Christopher saw the two men bow. The stranger hurried off toward the cliff and a path, which the boy knew must thread its way down beyond the convent to the sea. He guessed the man would be in Dublin Town by midmorn with the intelligence Dell had given him. The cruel thought bit deep into Christopher's soul, but was replaced at once by another.

Dell was coming directly toward him as if he would jump over the stone fence at the very place where Christopher lay hidden. Scrambling on his hands and knees, the boy tried to get away. But his frantic movements attracted the ram, who had been quiet as long as the boy had remained still. The ram came trotting toward him, then lowered his head menacingly, his curved horns ready to butt. Christopher shielded his head and face with his arms as the animal rushed at him. It caught him in the chest and side, shoving him hard into the wall. In spite of himself, Christopher cried out in pain as the wind was knocked out of him.

Immediately he saw a scarlet flash and heard the thunderclap of a pistol. Dell had shot the ram as he had gathered himself for a second charge. An instant later the captain was hauling Christopher to his feet. He shook the boy hard while the sheep scattered over the meadow, bleating in fright.

“What did you hear, Kit?” the man shouted.

Christopher hoped he would be believed. He mut-

tered, "I followed you to catch a glimpse of your new Irish sweetheart."

"But you saw me meet a man! What did you hear of our speech together?"

"No words at all. You were too far away."

"You lie. I think you heard every word." Dell tightened his grip fiercely on the boy's arms. "You will not go back to Drogheda this night, Kit Barstow." Grabbing Christopher by the shoulder, Dell pushed him ahead of him toward the cliff top.

The boy cried out, thinking Dell meant to pitch him over into the sea. "You'll kill me!" he shrieked.

"Nay, you fool. I save your life," said the man.

Not once relaxing his hold on the boy, the Englishman propelled him to the great door of the convent. He raised its knocker and three times rapped with it. At last a shutter was opened in the door, and a woman peered out.

Dell spoke to her, holding Christopher so tightly he bruised him. "I am an Englishman loyal to King Charles. I have come over the sea tonight to join Lord Ormonde's army. This is my son. I seek shelter for him lest he have another fit of the falling sickness tonight."

The woman hesitated, then said in a soft voice, "I must speak with Reverend Mother. Wait here."

The rain poured down as they waited without

speaking. Christopher was too frightened to cry out again. At last another woman came to the little shutter. She questioned Captain Dell, who lied glibly about sailing from England to aid the cause of the king and the Irish, now that Cromwell had landed in Dublin. The woman finally ordered the door unbarred. Dell pushed Christopher before him into the wide stone corridor.

The Mother Superior of Saint Brigid's, a bent old woman, ordered the nun who stood beside her with a candle to usher the Englishmen to a chamber where they could pass the night. Christopher heard Dell call her back to ask for stout cords to bind his son lest he have a second fit and do himself harm. The man lied with perfect ease and was believed. There was a little blood on Christopher's doublet, thanks to the ram's sharp horns. Dell claimed it was from a fall Christopher had taken on the sharp stones as they had left the boat that brought them to Ireland. Christopher's loud protests of "No, No" only made the Mother Superior, gatekeeper, and ushering nun shake their heads in sadness for the boy's illness.

When a nun brought the cords, Dell bound Christopher hand and foot on a narrow straw-filled bed. He sat on a stool across from the boy, watching him. When the nun left them, he said, "Kit I think you heard all that was said to Doctor Moonjean, did you not?"

“No,” lied the boy once more.

“I will not believe you, though it is of no importance. You will not return to Drogheda. I have a boat nearby. I shall go back to Drogheda before daybreak, but you will board my boat and sail in it to Dublin and from there be sent safe home to Chester. You’ll meddle no more in great matters that concern you not. I will send a letter with the master of this boat to Doctor Moonjean.” Dell smiled. “You well know, Kit, that I am an agent for the Parliament and General Cromwell. I tell you this openly. I tell you, too, that all men now under arms in Drogheda will surely die. Why should you, an English lad, die with those Irishmen?”

Christopher looked murder at the man. “You spied for Parliament in London, too!” he accused.

“Aye,” Dell agreed. “I went to the Thames to talk with men I might find there and learn the temper of the people on the day the king died. The Parliament feared rioting and hoped to forestall it. To find you that day was a piece of great good luck.”

The boy looked bitterly at his bound hands. “Because I was kin to Sir Arthur Aston and I would take you with me to Ireland! You made me befuddled with wine so I would talk.”

“You have the truth of it. You have played a very small part in a very great devise, Kit. The tavern-keeper of the Golden Horn played his as did the

master of the *Periwinkle*. As an Englishman you should be proud to know that you help Parliament.”

Christopher accused sullenly, “There is no Maeve here and there was no Maeve in Cashel.”

“No maiden Maeve at all, though once there was a Maeve in Dublin Town—years past—as I told you. I have a good English wife in Norwich.”

The boy went on, “And you were never in Germany with my godfather! And you did not ride with Prince Rupert!”

“I was in Germany with Aston. That is truth, but I rode with Black Tom Fairfax, Parliament’s cavalry commander.” Dell leaned forward. “Harken well to me, Kit. There is no mercy in General Cromwell’s heart for these Irish. He comes here for vengeance on the rebels. I have spoken to you before this time of the massacre of Protestants eight years past. They were put to the sword by the cruel Catholics. Villages were burned to the ground. The Protestant English were roasted over fires or prodded to their deaths by sharpened wooden stakes held by Irish children. Many were stripped naked and sent out in midwinter to die of cold and hunger on the road to Dublin. The Catholic Irish are the dregs of mankind, I tell you. General Cromwell will punish those who did these crimes. Kit, you are not Irish. These vile Irish tolerate you. They do not love you. They hate you.”

Christopher thought of Conn Magowan. Conn

didn't hate him, and the folk of Drogheda smiled on him. He shook his head. "Aye, you spoke of swords stark drunk with Irish blood."

Dell chuckled. "Not I. Those are words from a pamphlet printed in London. I did not conceive them. They were chosen as watchwords by Doctor Moonjean, the master of Cromwell's spy service—not by me."

"Why do you serve Cromwell and not the young king?" the boy asked suddenly.

The captain's smile faded, and he became brisk. "When Parliament pays its armies, its pays handsomely. The king seldom pays at all. I have need of money."

"You used my godfather's money to come to Ireland!"

Dell shrugged. "Money knows no master, Kit." He got up from the stool. "I go now to settle matters with the master of my boat and somewhere in this house of women to find quill and paper to write a letter for him to take to Moonjean, vouching for you to General Cromwell. That will keep you from being hanged as a traitor. You will not believe me, Kit, but I have grown quite fond of you, more fond, I think, than your godfather, who loves you little. You make me remember myself when I was your age, so I will save you now!"

Christopher would not reply. He glared at the

man. "What did you do at Rathmines? Brayfield's troopers name you coward."

Dell answered promptly. "I was drinking poteen a league away with a maiden named Maeve." He adjusted his cloak. "I shall soon return. While I am away, you can ponder that you owe your life to me. I think keeping your life shall repay old Aston's sovereigns you expended to bring the two of us to Ireland." Laughing, the Englishman left the nunnery cell and Christopher.

When Peter Dell had gone, the boy swung himself around to sit up on the bed and stare at the candle the nun had left them. It burned low. Soon he would be in darkness and afterward aboard a boat sailing to Dublin. He thought bitterly of the day of the king's death in London and his meeting with the captain. He'd dreamed he could help the Cavaliers; instead, by fetching a spy to Ireland to his godfather, he'd done them great harm. He sniffled as he heard shuffling coming toward him. Whoever it was would not see him weep if he could help it.

A woman his mother's age came into the cell with a cup in one hand, a candlestick in the other. She was slim and queenlike in her long black nun's robes and wimple. Her face was calm and beautiful. "I am the infirmarian. Are you in pain?" she asked Christopher.

"No, I'm not in pain."

“Reverend Mother has sent me to bring you a soothing syrup so you will sleep.”

“I’m not ill,” the boy protested, moving his head away from the cup she pressed on him. “I’m not that man’s son, and we didn’t come by boat from England. We came from Drogheda. I am named Christopher Barstow and am Sir Arthur Aston’s godson.”

“From Drogheda?” The nun looked puzzled and withdrew the cup. Then she said, “It is said no one leaves Drogheda after dusk.”

“Spies will! The man who brought me here is a spy for Oliver Cromwell who is in Dublin now. He’ll send me to Dublin by boat, and he’ll go back to Drogheda. He informs Roundheads who come from Dublin to this cliff top how many Irishmen and cannon there are at Drogheda.”

The woman set the cup on the stone floor and, stooping, put her hand on Christopher’s forehead. “You are not fevered.”

“No, my lady, I am not ill. I have no falling sickness or fevers.” Christopher did not know how to address a nun.

“I am called Sister Catriona,” the woman told him, smiling. She touched his chest. “You have been harmed, though. Did you fall?”

“No. The ram in the field butted me, and the English spy shot him.”

Sister Catriona looked sharply at Christopher. "So that is the sound we wondered at. The sheep belong to this house. You say the old ram is dead?"

"Aye." Swiftly the boy told her how he'd followed Dell out of Drogheda, watched him meet a stranger, and been captured. He finished with the sour words, "Would to heaven I'd paid more heed to Conn Magowan."

"Magowan?" The boy saw how the woman's eyes widened.

"My friend in Drogheda. He seeks to be a priest someday. He served Aston before I did. Do you know him?"

"Like others here, I am Drogheda-born."

"Then you know Conn Magowan or his father, the schoolmaster?"

"There were Magowans in Drogheda that I knew." The nun bent nearer. "Tell me, boy, do you know the Magowan's house?"

"Aye, Sister Catriona." Christopher's hopes were rising. "It lies in West Street. It is half-timbered and not large. Do you know it?"

"As well as I know Saint Peter's fine steeple."

Christopher wriggled in his bonds. "Sister, loose me. Loose me before the English spy returns. I'll run back to Drogheda and warn them who he is."

The woman did nothing but look at Christopher as he went on. "Oliver Cromwell will come to Drog-

heda. He is in Dublin Town tonight. He stables his horses in Saint Patrick's Cathedral there. I heard a courier tell Sir Arthur Aston this today."

Finally he saw the look he'd hoped to see—the nun's eyes blazing. He saw her hand go to the knotted cord she wore as a girdle, where the knife she used to cut her food at table was tucked. Then her hand fell to her side.

"I tell you God's own truth!" he cried desperately.

"Wait you. The cords are too stout for this little knife. I'll fetch one from the kitchen." Taking up the candlestick, she hurried out in a rushing of black skirts.

Christopher sat in a perspiration of fright, straining his ears. He had no idea where the convent's kitchens lay or how far the boat kept ready for Dell's escape lay from the convent's cliff top. Who would return first—the Englishman or the nun? Christopher had not the faintest doubt in the world that Dell had told the gatekeeper nun a convincing tale as to why he had left the convent and his son and had promised to return.

To Christopher's joy, Sister Catriona returned first, a long knife in her hand. She asked him to hold out his hands, but before she would cut the bonds she demanded, "Swear to me that you have told me the holy truth."

“I swear it.”

The woman sliced through the cords that bound his hands and feet. At once Christopher stood up. His eyes were on the knife she held. “Give me the knife, and I’ll kill the traitor when he comes,” he begged her.

The woman looked at him and shook her head. “Nay, there’s been no blood spilled in this house, and there’ll be none spilled. Now, lad, go! The gate-keeper will open to you. I have spoken with her, and I will try to explain to Reverend Mother what I have done before the Englishman returns. She will deny him entrance. God keep you.”

Christopher felt he should do more than bow to her, but did not know exactly what. So he bowed as deeply as he could, then stammered, “I hope you will be safe when Cromwell comes.”

The nun smiled. “We are in the hands of God, as are you.”

The boy turned and hurried down the corridor to the convent door. The nun stationed at it opened at once to him and slammed shut the bolts after he sped through it into the night.

Christopher was halfway across the first meadow when he heard the snap of a pistol and felt the plucking of the ball passing through the cloth of his sleeve. Captain Dell had returned! The boy doubled his speed, running as he’d never run before,

knowing the long-shanked Englishman pursued him. He vaulted the stone wall that enclosed the convent sheep in their meadow, slipped on the wet grass, and fell headlong. The dead ram lay on his side not far away.

Christopher thought frantically, and a mad idea flashed to him. He went swiftly on his hands and knees to the ram and, lifting him, crept underneath his blood-soaked fleece. There he lay, holding his breath. He could hear the captain casting about in the meadow, cursing. After a time Christopher raised his head cautiously and saw the man going back over the wall toward the convent, shaking his head.

The boy waited for a while, then struggled out from under the heavy ram. He stood up and looked about him. In the wet blackness of the night he could see nothing but the pale blurs of the other sheep huddled at one end of the meadow. Again Christopher started off at a run over the miles to Drogheda. He came shouting to Saint Laurence's Gate, "Do not fire! Open the gate! I am Aston's servant. I have news for him!"



IX
WHITE
QUEEN'S
KNIGHT
TO WHITE
QUEEN FIVE

Exhausted, Christopher went up the steps to his godfather's chamber and opened the door. Aston sat in a chair in his bedgown and nightcap. The boy saw the look of anger on the old soldier's face, then watched it turn to surprise as he noticed the blood on the boy's torn doublet and breeches.

"You are wounded?" he demanded.

"No, it is sheep's blood—though I was hurt by a ram and shot at." Christopher went forward and threw himself onto his knees, his head bowed. How could he tell his godfather what he'd done? But he must. He drew in a deep, gasping breath and said, "I followed Captain Dell over the wall tonight. He

said he went to meet an Irish sweetheart, but instead near the convent by the sea he met a man from Dublin, a man named Moonjean. He was a Round-head, too!"

Christopher felt his godfather flinch, but the old soldier did not interrupt the boy as he went on with his story of betrayal, finishing with, "I was a fool to believe him. I brought him here to Ireland."

At last Aston spoke. "And you heard him tell this Moonjean the numbers of our garrison and cannon?"

"Aye, sir."

Aston sighed deeply. "I know this man, Amyas Moonjean. He has the favor of Cromwell and the Parliament, I'm told. Lord Ormonde lies now at Trim with his army. I shall send a courier to him at once asking more men. Your Peter Dell will not know of this. Dell will not return to Drogheda. He is not a fool."

Christopher's head was still bowed. No, Captain Dell surely had taken his boat to Dublin. His usefulness in Drogheda was at an end once Christopher had told his story. Sister Catriona and the Mother Superior would tell Aston of Dell's lies and of his keeping Christopher prisoner at the convent if Aston chose to verify the tale.

"Get up, Kit. It is near dawn. Help me with my leg, then summon Captain Brayfield to me."

Arising, the boy asked, "Must everyone here in Drogheda know?"

Aston nodded. "I am afraid they must. Dell will be missed in Brayfield's Horse. The officers must be told. They will not be pleased with you."

"I know, sir," Christopher wiped his eyes on his sleeve. "Dell told me all will surely die here at Drogheda when Cromwell comes."

Holding out his stump to have his leg strapped on, Aston told the boy, "If you believed that, perhaps you should have escaped when he offered you the chance. You would have been safe among the Roundheads in Dublin."

Christopher looked away from the old man's eyes, not willing to find accusation in them. "No, I could not go to men who murdered the king—not even when Captain Dell told me I would not be hanged by them." The boy's face twisted. "Dell said he was fond of me and wished to save my life."

Aston laughed sharply. "Well, take heart, Kit. I am not so certain as your captain that Cromwell will prevail at Drogheda!"

Once he had delivered Aston's message to Captain Brayfield and the astonished Englishman had heard the shamefaced boy's tale, Aston dismissed Christopher to sleep. Christopher slept, but his dreams were evil. He awoke near sunset at the sharp sound of his godfather's peg leg on the tower steps. Aston

came in. "Kit," he said, "Conn Magowan has asked after you. He came to Mill Mount to find me."

Christopher stared at his own boots. "Does he know, sir?"

"He does. The news spread swiftly. Conn wishes to see you."

"I do not want to see him. He always disliked Captain Dell." Christopher bit at his lower lip. "Conn would not have fetched a traitor to Ireland. He is not only more learned than I am—he is wiser."

"Oh, I do not know as to that, Kit. Dell is a clever man and bold. He could have hoodwinked many. I disliked him, but never thought him to be a spy. You are only a boy. Bring me a cup of wine now. I am weary, and my stump pains me."

"I am no clever boy at that," Christopher told himself mournfully as he poured the wine, an innkeeper's char, if ever there was one. His brother Tom and his parents had had the right of it. He was fit for two things only—to be deceived by people he trusted and to be an unwilling innkeeper. Aye, he was a straw in the wind, and what bold thing had he done but run away from Peter Dell?

As he turned around with the cup, he heard his godfather say, "What think you now of Peter Dell?"

Christopher said fiercely, "I hate him. I would see him die."

“Because he harmed your good opinion of yourself by hoodwinking you?”

“No, because he, too, saw King Charles murdered and he thought it a good thing. He is a Roundhead.”

The boy saw the old soldier smiling. “Come, Kit. Forget the man. If ever you see him again, you will know what to do, I trust. Ready the chessboard for me. We shall have a game before I sup. Remember! Boldness takes the prize. Show me you have the stuff of a king’s knight someday in your game.”

Two weeks passed, weeks in which Christopher managed to avoid seeing Conn Magowan by keeping as much as possible to Tooting Tower. He saw neither the Irish boy, his father, nor the priest, but on his few ventures outside he could not help noting how the people of Drogheda eyed him with mistrust. There were no more smiles for the King’s Knight’s Pawn, only resentment and scowling. The people spoke Irish as he passed, where before they’d often spoken English. Christopher did not tell his godfather this. Aston had far greater things in mind—making Drogheda as ready as he could. Ormonde had sent what he could spare the first week. The best of his army lay behind Drogheda’s walls by the end of August!

Mill Mount was palisaded and the windmill supplied. Aston’s few cannon were positioned at the

city gates and the town provisioned. There was nothing more to do, but wait for the courier from Dublin. Each day townspeople came, worried, to the walls to peer over them at the southern road—watching, ever watching.

And at last on the thirty-first of August a courier came riding. He clung to his horse's neck thundering past Duleek Gate through the town to Aston's tower. Christopher heard his terse report to his godfather. "Cromwell left Dublin at daybreak with a vast great force of men on foot and many horse troopers."

Aston received the news calmly. "A great force on foot will require at least two days to come to our gates. The people who wish to go out from Drogheda will have time in which to do so."

Christopher, standing behind his chair, wondered about Conn, who had fled Drogheda before because of Roundheads. Would he go now to Trim where Ormonde was? As for himself, he would not leave, not even if he had a refuge. If he died at Drogheda, he would die at Drogheda!

That evening Christopher was left alone when his godfather stumped off to Mass at Saint Peter's. For a time the boy stared lonely at the chessboard, wishing he were far away in Chester with old Reverend Fothergill. Then he got up and walked to Saint Laurence Street in the misty night to look at the

house Captain Dell had occupied. His heart ached as he turned away. A small rebellious part of him loved the merry Englishman still. More lonely than ever, Christopher made his way to Saint Peter's atop the steep hill and stood outside the church. He knew that Aston, Conn and his father, and Father Brian were inside—the only folk he truly knew in Drogheda. After a time the boy pushed open the heavy doors and went inside behind tall dark railings. Beyond them lay the church proper. He could hear Father Brian's soft voice chanting in Latin. Christopher waited for a time, listening, praying himself for deliverance from the armies of Parliament, then silently left Saint Peter's. He wore a smile. What would his parents and brother Tom have to say to his action, particularly if he told them that this church in far-off Ireland had felt much the same to him as their meeting house in Chester? It, too, was a house of God!

Two days later Christopher was on the south wall near Duleek Gate with his godfather to see the English come. However, he saw nothing at all. He knew they had arrived, because the wind carried the thump and thud of their drums and bugles, but Cromwell encamped his army a distance south of Drogheda.

Christopher heard Conn Magowan's voice calling

from below as he stood on the wall. Flushing scarlet, he refused to turn around as he heard Conn's footsteps on the walkway. Instead he leaned over the wall as though to stare at its old stones below. He did not want to see Conn. When he felt the Irish boy's hand on his shoulder, Christopher kept his head down.

"How do you fare?" asked Conn.

"I am well," said Christopher.

"I have sought you sometimes in the town, Kit, but did not find you."

Christopher looked up and stared out across the fields of late summer. The fields and hills were green as ever, though the leaves on the oaks were turning brown. Green, brown, blue, and gray—those were the melancholy colors of Ireland, it seemed to him. Even the wheat fields lacked the ruddy gold of England's grain.

"I was with my godfather," said Christopher coolly. "He has need of me. You should know that. You served him once."

There was silence. Then Conn said, "I hope you are not angry, Kit, because I did not trust your Captain Dell and told you this."

Christopher was astonished. Angry? He, angry? He should ask the Irish boy's forgiveness for trusting too much in the man. The folly had been his. The words of apology stuck fast in Christopher's throat. He could only shake his head.

A sudden command to his aide from Aston, standing a few paces from him, saved Christopher from having to speak. "Send out Brayfield's Horse now to scout the enemy," his godfather said. "I must know their numbers."

The boys turned to see the aide leave the wall and hurry down to the troopers waiting behind the gate. The aide spoke with Captain Brayfield, who shouted an order that brought the men into the saddle and into a double file while the gate was opened. As they rode out, their horses' hooves a-clatter on the cobbles, Christopher caught his breath in a sharp gasp.

"What ails you, Kit?" asked Conn.

"I was remembering. I saw this all before—the king's troopers riding out of Chester before the battle of Rowton Heath."

"And Chester did not fall?"

"Nay." Christopher looked full at Conn and found the words. "You do not hold me to blame for bringing a Roundhead traitor to Ireland and hate me for it?"

"No, Kit, do not forget Dell hoodwinked all of the Irish garrison, too, and they well knew enough to suspect any Englishman." Conn gazed over the south fields. "Kit, 'tis said you could have gone to Dublin Town to safety, but would not."

"Aye, and it seems to me, Conn, you will not flee Drogheda either."

“I stay, so does my father, though many go now out of Saint Sunday’s Gate to the north.” Conn flung his arm around Christopher’s shoulders in a friendly way.

Christopher told him shyly, “I came to Saint Peter’s the other night and went inside the vestibule.”

Conn laughed at him. “Next time come into the church. There’s nothing there to frighten you but the statues of saints, and no saint has ever harmed anyone—even a Protestant!”

Though Christopher had feared they would never come back at all, Brayfield’s troopers rode into Drogheda without a single man missing. Brayfield came to report to Aston on the wall. “Sir, there were far too many troopers for us to attack. We dared not ride too near them.”

“What are the numbers of the Parliamentary forces?” asked Aston.

“I would guess near ten thousand, sir. They make camp now and set up pavilions.”

Aston looked at the lead-gray sky, and said, “They’ll not find Ireland’s rain hospitable. Did you see cannon? Siege guns?”

“I saw sakers and light guns they’d brought with them, but no cannon or demicannon.”

The old commander nodded. “The great guns will

come by sea from Dublin then. When they are brought to our walls, our time of testing will arrive. 'Tis the third of September. We shall be ready for Cromwell. Ten thousand men is a sound number to besiege near three thousand soldiers safely behind good stout walls.'"

Hearing this, Christopher gaped at Conn, who was gaping at Aston. Conn evidently thought ten thousand a very great number, too!

Aston put his best musketeers in the steeple of Saint Mary's Church, in south Drogheda, and above Duleek Gate and the southeast wall to pick off the Roundheads who would drag siege guns to Drogheda. The enemy were shot down by the marksmen as they advanced with the large cannon, but more took their places.

On September the ninth Cromwell's artillery was in position.

From Tooting Tower Christopher Barstow heard the first round shot fired. He was brushing Aston's best velvet doublet and dropped it. Aye, he remembered that dull, booming roar from his boyhood in Chester. He winced. He had not liked it then. He did not like it now, nor did he like the crackling sound of the muskets firing, which he also remembered.

His chars done for the morning, Christopher got out his pistol and put it into his belt. He stared

down at it for a while, thinking of Peter Dell's teaching him how to use it, then went out into the rain. He left his sword behind. The boy found his godfather easily near Duleek Gate on the wall, his spyglass to his eye, examining the Roundhead batteries. Christopher could see the tongues of flame and puffs of gray smoke coming from the cannons' flaring mouths as they fired against the high wall behind which Saint Mary's Church lay. The Roundheads were not attempting to force strong Duleek Gate, but to batter down the wall itself. Christopher looked on as cannon ball after cannon ball hurtled against the old stone wall.

He heard a sudden shouting from the Irish officer next to his godfather. "A herald rides from the Parliament camp, sir."

Christopher strained his eyes, then of a sudden saw a rider on a bay horse, a man who wore helmet and breastplate and carried a white banner.

"Do not fire on the herald! Open the gate to him!" Aston bellowed to the gatekeeper below. Then he turned to the officer. "You, sir, help me down the steps. I find them difficult." Leaning on the Irishman, the old man went down. Christopher came unbidden behind him. He saw the gate swung open by the guards and Cromwell's herald trot through.

He was a lantern-jawed pale man with pale eyes. "Sir Arthur Aston?" he demanded without dis-

mounting. "I bring a message from General Cromwell."

"I am he."

The herald reached into his sleeve and, riding closer, gave a piece of white paper to the king's commander. Christopher saw how he eyed Aston's wooden leg and remembered Dell's words that some "fools" thought it golden. Then the Roundhead reined his horse about and galloped out of Drogheda. Christopher did not take his eyes from his godfather as he unfolded the paper and read aloud:

Sir:

Having brought the army belonging to the Parliament of England before this place, to reduce it to obedience, to the end effusion of blood may be prevented, I thought fit to summon you to deliver the same into my hands to their use. If this be refused, you will have no cause to blame me. I expect your answer and rest,

Your servant,

O. Cromwell

Christopher and the Irish officers waited silently to hear Aston's reply as he stuffed the paper into his pocket. He said dryly, "I have been summoned to surrender. I shall not." The old man turned fiercely to his officers. "Do you know what this means that I shall not answer Cromwell?"

The man who'd helped Aston down to the gate

replied, "Aye, sir, Cromwell will take down the white banner that flies over his camp and set up the scarlet one. It means if he takes Drogheda, he'll give us no quarter."

"No mercy! Kill every man of us!" added another officer.

"If they take the town," said Aston, who already had started for the wall again.

Christopher spent the remainder of the day with his godfather wishing he could put his fingers into his ears when the great guns boomed, but he feared Aston's scorn too much. Aston himself never twitched when crumbling gaps appeared in the southeast angle of Saint Mary's wall nor when a well-aimed cannonball shattered the church steeple, killing the musketeers inside. An hour or so later, Aston announced calmly that the scarlet flag now flew in Parliament's camp beyond the siege guns.

At dusk the cannonading stopped. Aston left the wall at last, ordering a triple line of earthworks be thrown up behind Saint Mary's Church. Irish soldiers came hurrying with spades and dug feverishly in darkness as Aston consulted with his officers. Christopher once dared ask him if he wanted food or wine. He thought his godfather looked at him as if he'd never seen him before, when he said, "Aye, lad, fetch me wine and some meat if you can find some."

Christopher went to the Magowan house for the food and wine. "The Roundhead cannon have made a breach in the wall by the church," Christopher told Conn outside in West Street as he left. "Cromwell will give us no quarter." The boy bit his lip. "Conn, that means we shall die—every man under arms in Drogheda."

"We are not members of the garrison, Kit."

"You are not, Conn. I am. I keep my pistol. Would you have my sword?"

In the dark downpour, Christopher thought he saw the Irish boy shake his head, though he could not be sure. But Conn's words could not be mistaken. "What use would a blade be to me? I never have had a sword in my hand."

Christopher slept badly that night inside Mill Mount, wrapped in his cloak on the hard floor of the windmill. Aston, who had occupied a pallet near him, shook him awake near daybreak. "It is time to go to the wall, Kit. Help me with my leg."

The boy helped the man strap on his peg, and together they went to the south wall. In spite of the fitful drizzle, which had not ceased for two full days, Cromwell's gunners were at work with the first light, once more attacking the already weakened wall.

All that day the siege continued, roundshot after

roundshot crashing into the wall in the same area. Christopher slumped down behind the wall. He could bear to watch no longer. The guns of Drogheda were of no use at all, deployed at the other city gates. Christopher's thoughts in his wretchedness were often of Peter Dell, who had given information to Cromwell of how few guns, gunners, and little ammunition the king's garrison had at Drogheda. By this time black hatred against Dell had replaced the little love Christopher had left for the man. If Drogheda fell, he, Christopher Barstow—thanks to Dell's treachery—must bear a great share of the blame. The glances of accusation some of the Irish officers gave him as they passed him to report to his godfather assured the boy of that.

In midafternoon the guns of Parliament suddenly ceased their roaring. A new sound took their place—that of men's voices singing. Christopher got up, curious. He looked over the wall and saw men marching past the silenced cannon. They wore pot helmets of iron, breastplates, and scarlet coats. Each had a sword at his side and a pistol in his hand. The boy knew them as members of Cromwell's renowned New Model Army. Captain Dell had spoken to him once of them. They never named themselves Roundheads, supposedly were never drunken, never looted, and if they cursed paid a forfeit of twelve pence for each oath.

Christopher knew the hymn they sang as well as he knew his name, for he had sung it at meeting many times, sitting between his parents. It was one of the Psalms of King David from the Bible. To its words the Roundheads advanced onto the wide breach their siege guns had made in the southeast wall.

The Irish defenders stood waiting behind the breach, weapons ready. They met the Roundheads at the breach with wild piercing shrieks, but the English did not falter in their hymn. Though as they fell in numbers under Irish muskets and pikes, the song grew more thin. The Irish howling, mingled with the hymn, was an unholy thing. Christopher watched, his teeth clenched, his knuckles white clasp- ing at the wall, seeing the English fall on the wiry grass below.

His godfather's shout brought him out of his trance as what remained of the Roundheads turned about and ran back toward their camp. "They flee! They flee!"

Christopher shook his head as a cold wind off the sea struck him. He had seen the Roundheads run away, but he knew in his heart they would come back—and before nightfall. He slumped down behind the wall once more, pulling his knees up to his chest, so men could pass him by easily. He could not watch such a thing again.

When he heard the singing commence once more, he put his hands over his ears. Let his godfather chide him. He cared not at all. Even with his hearing stopped up, he could not shut out the cries and shouts and the sharp crackle of pistol fire. It was as if he relived Rowton Heath again, and the rolling drums of the Irish made him think of the execution of the king in London. The picture was small in his mind to start with, but it grew and grew until all the boy could see in his mind's eye was the severed head held aloft in the executioner's bloody hand.

Shuddering, Christopher felt someone touch his shoulder. He looked up into the blanched face of an Irish officer. "Sir Arthur requires your services, boy."

Christopher got up. One sickening glance over the wall showed him hundreds of red-coat Roundheads, lying in heaps below the breach. Irishmen lay dead in the breach itself. As the boy looked on, soldiers of Drogheda's garrison began to pull their comrades out over the stones and lay them in rows in Saint Mary's churchyard. The second attack of the English had been repulsed. And it was not yet dusk.

The boy found his godfather icy calm, leaning on a parapet, his spyglass in his hand, the windswept rain beating on his face. "Ah, Kit," he said, "We've had hot work today, and there may be more dispute to come. Fetch me my warmest cloak."

Happy to get away from the wall, Christopher

sped uphill through Drogheda to Tooting Tower. As he ran over the bridge, a woman called down to him from one of the houses, "How fares it?"

"We've twice driven the Roundheads back!"

Christopher returned to Duleek Gate to the thump of Irish drums. This alone told him that the defenders of the breach readied themselves once more. The Roundheads came a third time. It was nigh to five o'clock. The light would soon be failing, and the rain was heavier.

The cloak bundled under his arm to keep it dry, Christopher hurried to his godfather, who promptly put it on, discarding his wet one. "They come again?" the boy asked.

"They do. And look you well this time, Kit, and see who leads the third assault. Cromwell himself in the scarlet cloak with the white plumes in his helmet."

Christopher stared into the gray gloom. Oliver Cromwell—at last! How long they'd waited in fear for him. And he was here! The boy saw a large man walking ahead of hundreds of others, a sword flashing naked in his hand. Christopher swallowed hard, afraid, then had one shuddering glance at the breach where the Irish waited. He started to recite the Twenty-third Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd—" Then he stopped in horror when he realized this was what Cromwell and his soldiers were singing.

Christopher could not look away or take refuge.

He could only stand riven to the high wall and watch in the rain. He saw Oliver Cromwell stand aside to let his soldiers pass. He saw him wave his sword, urging them on, though he could not hear his voice. The psalm ended. With a terrible hoarse roar the Roundheads were upon the Irishmen, driving them back by the fury of their onslaught. Red coat after red coat leaped through the breach in the wall into the churchyard and over the new-made earthworks. For a time the Irish stood their ground, fighting hand to hand with swords, their pistols useless once they had been fired. And then as more and more Roundheads poured through, the Irish began to break, one by one, two by two, turn and flee into Drogheda.

“Damn them. They run!” cried Aston. “To Mill Mount! To Mill Mount now! We’ll hold them there. A horse! I must have a horse!”

Mill Mount was a distance from Duleek Gate. Christopher was the first off the wall. He hurried down to the gate and commandeered one of the horses ready there, then went back to help the old soldier down the steps and up into the saddle. Aston cantered off toward the Mount with Christopher after him on foot. The boy found himself almost at once part of a throng of running Irish soldiers and mounted officers. He looked back once over his shoulder, but saw only bobbing heads and white

faces of the Irish, pounding along behind him. Gasping for breath, Christopher arrived at Mill Mount, ran up its steep slope, crossed the drawbridge built over its moat, and saw it drawn up after only two more Irishmen followed him inside. He hurried into the mill, pushing his way through the mass of men to look out over Drogheda from a walkway built onto the mill.

His hand pressed to his aching side, Christopher stared down at a nightmare. Hundreds of Irish were streaming up the narrow, chief street of the town toward the Boyne and the town's only bridge. Close-packed, they could not move swiftly, and the bridge was narrow. Christopher took in his breath in a painful gasp as he turned next to look to the south of Drogheda. The Roundheads who had broken through the wall had opened Duleek Gate to their cavalry. Troopers with raised swords came clattering through the gate behind the Irish on foot.

Then the boy saw the last of the Irishmen. He heard their wails of terror as the cavalry swept down upon them. He saw the swords rise and fall and listened to the shrieking as the Irish were cut down to die in the street. He watched the English troopers slice their passage through the mass of Irish until they reached the bridge. The houses built along the bridge blocked his view for a moment, but then he saw the red-coat troopers galloping on the

other side of the Boyne. Behind them they'd left hundreds of Irishmen, lying dead on the cobblestones or wounded, trying to crawl to safety, only to be pistoled by pursuing Roundhead foot soldiers.

Christopher saw the black-gowned, little figure come out of a side street, stoop, and try to aid a wounded Irishman to his feet into a house. He knew him even at the distance as Father Brian. And he looked on in horror as a Roundhead rushed upon the little priest with his sixteen-foot-long iron-tipped pike. He saw him spit the priest as an inn cook would spit a fowl for roasting. Christopher heard himself wailing, then put his head into his hands and rocked to and fro.

Shouting from below Mill Mount made him look down once more. There beneath the mill and palisades stood a large force of Roundheads. A burly man, an officer, judging by the orange sash slung across his chest, stepped out, his hands on his hips. "I am Colonel Hewson," he cried. "Do you surrender to me?"

Christopher heard a shout. He looked up and saw Aston at the top of the windmill, his white hair whipping about in the wind. "No, I do not surrender!"

"Then die, old traitor! There'll be no quarter given. Remember!"

Christopher never had felt so much alone before.

He could not join his godfather; he was too high in the mill, and the crush of Irishmen about him too thick. Near three hundred men had fled to Mill Mount. They were as close-packed as those on the street that led to the bridge over the Boyne.

As the Irish musketeers on Mill Mount began to fire down on the Roundheads, Christopher looked to the priming of his pistol. He was not weeping now. He had done with that.

A heavy cannon brought into Drogheda by the Roundheads pulverized Mill Mount's gate. Moments after, Colonel Hewson signaled with his sword for an assault, and Roundheads swarmed down into the dry moat and up over the palisades. Christopher trained his pistol on a climbing man, but could not fire, his hand shook so badly. Then the boy hurtled through the door behind him into the mill. Bags of grain were stored on this floor of the place, stacked high as a man's waist in some areas. Christopher slipped behind the high-piled grain and fell onto his belly, hiding himself. Aston had thought Drogheda could be long besieged and had provisioned Mill Mount well. From below his hiding place Christopher heard firing, shouting, and wild screeching. He saw a young Irish officer he recognized speed up the steps. A Roundhead following him, pistol in hand, shot him dead three feet from where Christopher cowered. The boy choked off a cry as the Englishman

stared about him, then clumped below, bawling as he went, "There's naught up here but bags of grain."

The dreadful sounds continued forever, it seemed to Christopher, then suddenly died down. He heard a man shouting from below, "We've got the old traitor down off his perch, Colonel!"

"What have ye to say?" came Hewson's loud, hoarse voice a moment later.

"God save King Charles the Second!"

Though Aston had been wrong and Drogheda doomed from the first, there was not one quaver of fear in the old soldier's proud words. Christopher put his ear to the floorboard, listening, then noticed the knothole nearby, which had been half covered by a grain bag. He crawled to it, pushed the bag aside, and peered down into the ground floor of the mill. Red-coated soldiers stood in a grim circle around his godfather, who faced them bravely, his hair streaming rain. The boy sucked in his breath.

"What shall we do with this king's knight, Colonel Hewson?" asked a tall Roundhead with a pistol ready in his hand.

Hewson, sitting on a keg, had taken off his pot helmet. He had a hard face and wore an eye patch. Christopher had heard of him in Chester. Once he'd been a peaceable cobbler in England. Now he sat at Cromwell's right hand. Hewson said, "We have

General Cromwell's orders. Kill him however you see fit. Then we shall search this place for other traitors and fetch out the rats—if there be more!"

The tall Roundhead soldier put his pistol in his belt, stepped forward, and struck Aston across the face with his hand. Drogheda's old commander fell at once. And at once two Roundheads were upon his peg leg. Christopher saw his godfather raise himself to strike out with his fist at them, but another Roundhead kicked him in the side of the head, stunning him. Yelling, one of the Roundheads wrenched off the wooden leg. He held it up, hit it against the floor, then upended it. Nothing fell out.

"'Tis naught but common wood—not gold at all and no jewels inside!"

As the other Englishman laughed at him, the soldier flung himself onto Aston's body. Straddling him, he battered the old man's head with the peg leg, making his blood puddle on the floor until the other Roundhead pulled him off, shouting, "Nay, Dickon, I felt a thing about his waist."

Christopher looked on in horror and fury as his godfather's bleeding body was torn at by both Roundheads and his money belt discovered. It contained two hundred gold pieces sewed into quilted silk. Many times Christopher had tied it around Aston's waist. He saw the belt handed to Colonel Hewson, who got up to take it and stood directly

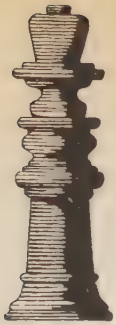
beneath the knothole. Christopher put his pistol to the hole, but the muzzle was too large. He withdrew it.

He heard Hewson say, "Here's old Aston's treasure. The Parliament will find good uses for it." He shook the belt, and then slashed at it with his dagger. As a shower of coins fell out and rolled jingling across the floor, Hewson kicked Aston's body. "The old traitor is dead—his brains are beaten in! He was bold as a lion, but it availed him nothing here!"

Bold! The word stabbed into Christopher. Aye, he must be bold too. Soon they'd come up to search among the bags of grain if they searched the mill. They'd surely find him then. Pistol in hand, the boy got up carefully lest the floor creak beneath his weight and betray him. Christopher Barstow would die, too, but he would choose his manner of death and have his one moment of boldness! And he'd avenge his godfather's brutal murder if he could before he died.

The boy crept down the steps as far as he dared.

Then, shouting his rage at last at what he'd seen the Roundheads do, he ran out onto the mill floor.



X
BLACK
QUEEN
TO BLACK
KING'S
BISHOP SEVEN

Christopher's rush took the English by total surprise. On their hands and knees, scabbling for the sovereigns, they gaped at him. Even Hewson stumbled back, dropping the money belt.

Christopher fired at the Roundhead who had killed Aston, then dashed out of the smashed open door and onto the drawbridge, let down now that the Roundheads had the town. He heard Hewson shouting after him, "Kill the Irish whelp who flees!"

A pistol ball whistled after Christopher. He felt a sharp stinging at the right side of his face, but didn't break his stride. Instants later he was over the bridge. One glance into the moat as he ran had showed him the piles of Irish corpses thrown over

by the conquerors to clear the way to the draw-bridge.

Christopher pounded on in the rain and dark until he had left Mill Mount well behind and was into the web of Drogheda's streets. He crouched in a doorway for a time, then became aware of the intense pain in his cheek and ear. He put his hand up and jerked it away at once, covered with blood. His cheek was severely cut. The lobe of his right ear was shot clean away. Taking his kerchief from his sleeve, he wiped at his face, then reloaded his pistol in the shelter of the dark doorway. He hoped he had killed the Roundhead in the mill.

The boy had just finished fumbling with the pistol when he heard the sound of boots on the cobbles. Toward him at a run came a bareheaded man, panting, an old Irishman fleeing to a place of safety. Behind him ran a soldier in a pot helmet and breastplate, sword in hand to cut the Irishman down. Neither spied the boy standing in the doorway, his back pressed to the sagging door. Christopher let the Irishman pass. The Roundhead he shot at close range, his ball going through the leather side straps that held his breastplate together.

The Irishman didn't stop, but went off down the street into blackness. Christopher bent over the dead Roundhead at his feet. A thought had come to him as he loaded the pistol. He was English. His speech

would not be marked as Irish. Christopher knew that the door behind him had been shattered by the Roundheads; this meant the house had been searched already. The English probably would not come again that night. Stooping, Christopher dragged the dead soldier inside and shut the door as best he could. It was so dark he could not see at all. Then he made out a fire gleaming low on a hearth. He hauled the Roundhead to it, and the fire glared scarlet on the dead man's body armor. As Christopher took off the pot helmet, he heard a small whimpering. Whirling about, his pistol in one hand and the helmet in the other, he cried, "Who is there? Come out now. I am no enemy. I served Sir Arthur Aston!"

He waited and at last two women, one old, one young, came out of the blackness. He did not recognize them, but they knew him.

"We were at prayer and you frightened us. You are truly the king's knight's serving lad," the old, shawled woman said, after peering into the boy's face.

Christopher replied, "Aye, mistress. Help me into this man's coat and armor."

Trembling, the Irishwomen helped him get the breastplate off the Roundhead and buckled it onto Christopher over the dead man's blood-drenched red coat. "You are wounded," the old one said to him. "Shall I bind your ear for you?"

Christopher told her, "I would be grateful," and thought, Aye, this will also hide my face.

When the woman had bandaged his ear and cheek with strips of linen, Christopher bowed. "I thank you, mistress." He added, "Roundheads prowl Drogheda now. Do not go out of this house."

"Why do you wear Roundhead garb? Where do you go?" asked the younger woman.

Christopher shook his head, not wanting to tell her he had thought of escaping the city. He said, "Mill Mount is taken. I have business yet in Drogheda."

The young woman brushed away tears. "I heard the Roundhead who came here to kill my father and brother say all was taken but the steeple of Saint Peter's Church and Bowlters' and Tooting Towers."

Christopher heard this news with joy. He caught the woman by the edge of her shawl. "Tell me, who leads the Irish now?"

She said sadly, "I do not know that any man does. God bless you, lad."

Christopher left the house, taking up the dead Roundhead's sword outside the door. He walked as boldly as he could, though his knees felt weak as gruel. He went toward the chief street of the town, which the English had lit by torches flaring in cresset sconces. His face was hidden by the helmet and bandage, and no Roundhead on the street saw the boy's shocked expression as he passed by corpse

after corpse. The dead men lay on their faces and on their backs, their eyes staring up into the drizzle. Their blood, mixed with rainwater, ran down among the cobblestones in rivulets. Nearest the drawbridge over the Boyne the Irish dead lay piled high. Heaps on heaps, Christopher thought angrily, remembering the words Dell and the English spy had spoken together in the meadow.

Twice Roundhead soldiers called out to him. One asked, "What do ye seek, brother?"

"More Irish devils," he called back.

The other wanted to know where he went. "I seek a surgeon," he replied.

"Seek a town gate then. They camp outside the place."

Christopher had nodded and gone on. The bridge itself was cleared of dead men. Christopher guessed they'd been thrown over into the Boyne to be swept out to sea. The boy walked on. He'd go to Saint Sunday's Gate. Escape was possible by way of the north. Cromwell's army held the south and west.

At the north end of the bridge Christopher came to his first check. A cart blocked the way; Roundhead pikemen on guard clustered thick about it. Warily the boy came up, hoping he could slip by them, but a soldier challenged him. "There's to be more hot work tonight, my little lad. Come ye, see what the colonel has fetched us from Dublin Town."

Christopher came nearer, and then to his shock

and terror recognized the man sitting beside the driver of the cart. He was Peter Dell, but now he wore a red coat and armor and orange sash over his breastplate.

Dell called out, "I'll need three bold English lads to help me with the gunpowder if I'm to blow up Saint Peter's Church tonight and kill the hundred Irish rats snug inside."

The boy drew in his breath, dizzy. Terrified of discovery, he turned and looked into the cart. Aye, there were barrels there. He took a step backwards.

Dell shouted at him, "You there, the short lad. Climb into the cart. The pikemen must remain on guard here at the bridge." He singled out two other soldiers on the bridge who seemed idle. "You—and you!"

Christopher knew there was no hope in running. Keeping his head down, he got up into the cart, laying his sword in its bottom.

"Where is the sheath to your blade?" asked one of the chosen Roundheads as Dell and the carter drove off the bridge.

Christopher had not thought of it. He said softly, so Dell wouldn't hear his voice, "Cut off by an Irish sword. I do not know." He touched his bandaged ear. "I do not remember anything that took place before I was wounded."

"That is ever the way of a battle. I do not recall

Naseby at all," agreed the first soldier, leaning against a gunpowder barrel. "But ye'll remember well blowing up the church. The steeple's packed like salted fish with scurvy Irish. A hundred Irishmen will go to hell together! Ye can long remember that."

Suddenly the full ghastliness broke in upon Christopher Barstow. He'd paid little heed to what the woman told him about Saint Peter's steeple in his joy that Drogheda had not fallen totally to Cromwell. He'd thought chiefly of his own escape. When he'd spied Dell his only concern was of being detected. Now he thought of the church and the Irish in the steeple. Hatred of Dell consumed him. He stole a glance over his shoulder at the man's back—open to a sudden sword thrust if only he dared. Aye, he'd kill him and let the soldiers kill him next.

Christopher's hand went toward the sword, but drew back when the second Roundhead spoke. "We've rid ourselves of the Irish in the south part of the town. Now we'll do the same with the north. 'Tis said half the Irish caught north of the Boyne when we took the bridge fled to the steeple!"

Conn Magowan! Suddenly Christopher's mind went to his friend. Conn had told him once that he would stay north of the bridge to pray in Saint Peter's. If he had not been butchered, too, Conn would be in the steeple and perhaps his father also.

The cart turned east toward the church. Paralyzed with horror at the thought of Conn's being in the steeple, Christopher decided to remain in the cart. The grounds about Saint Peter's filled him with yet more terror and disgust. There lay more Irish dead in heaps, their mouths agape in a silent wailing. The streets below the drawbridge had been choked with Irish soldiers, but north of the Boyne lay women and children among the men.

"Now, lads," cried Dell, "Do as I command you. Take the powder into the church."

Christopher hesitated until one of the Roundheads pushed him. "Get you down, boy. Are your wits touched?"

Keeping his head low, Christopher got out. He took up one of the heavy kegs and went with it into the church vestibule. For a moment he stopped, remembering the other time he'd come there. Now it was well lit by torches and lanterns, and it was filled with Roundheads. The railing between the vestibule and the church had been torn down. For the first time Christopher Barstow looked fully into a Roman Catholic Church. It was large and, like his meetinghouse at home, filled with pews. The altar was railed off, but as Christopher came down the center aisle followed by the Roundheads from the powder cart, he saw red-coated soldiers hacking the rail down with their swords. Other soldiers were

pulling the statues of saints from where they were set against the wall and smashing them. "No Popery! No Popery!" shouted a soldier, pulling a cloth from the altar.

Christopher waited near the choir in the aisle until Captain Dell swaggered past him to look up into the vault of the church, his head thrown back. The steeple was directly overhead, the narrow winding stairs leading to it clearly visible at the side of the church.

"Place the powder here," he ordered Christopher. Then the man called to the English soldiers destroying the church. "Get yourselves away. I'll blow the church apart and the steeple down now."

Many of them grinning, the Roundheads left Saint Peter's. Dell went to the foot of the steeple steps, deserted now that the two guards had hurried out too. "Do you yield to us?" he bellowed up to the Irish in the steeple.

Dell waited. There was no reply. He shrugged, then came back to Christopher, who alone had stayed in the church with him. The boy saw Dell pluck at his chin as he looked at the powder kegs. "I do not know that I have gunpowder enough. I'll fetch another barrel to make sure." Without glancing at him, he ordered the boy to remain, adding, "If any Irish devil comes out of the steeple, shoot him."

Christopher nodded, not trusting his voice. He

watched the Englishman hasten down the center aisle. When he was out of sight, without hesitating for an instant, Christopher caught up a lantern set in a pew near him and ran to the steeple steps. He started up them, crying out, "Conn Magowan! Conn Magowan! It's Kit Barstow!"

"Kit," came a cry floating down from far above.

From much closer came a deep voice. "Stay, or I'll shoot you."

At the first blind turning of the winding staircase the Irish had set their own guard, a red-haired man with a pistol.

Christopher halted, then said, "I am not a Roundhead. I served Aston before he died."

"Then why do you wear English armor?" The guard's eyes were deadly.

"To leave Drogheda." Christopher pulled off the helmet, showing the man his face.

The Irishman nodded grimly. "I know you now, but I also know you as an Englishman who fetched a spy to us." He did not lower the pistol.

Christopher spoke in desperation. "Is Conn Magowan or the schoolmaster up here? They'll vouch for me."

"The schoolmaster lies dead below, a sword run through him when he tried to kill a Roundhead with a cobblestone. His lad is here with us."

"Conn! Conn Magowan!" Christopher raised the cry once more.

Finally he heard footsteps on the stairs. Groping his way down them, his shoulder bandaged, came Conn Magowan in his shirt. "Kit, you were not killed at Duleek Gate or Mill Mount?" Conn seemed astonished.

"No. Captain Dell is below in the church. He's come back, and he's set gunpowder in the church. Yield to him." The words fell out of Christopher's mouth. "He's a devil gone mad. He'll blow you all to heaven!"

To Christopher's amazement the guard laughed. "That's not such a bad place to be."

Conn Magowan nodded. "Kit, we've been asked to yield before by Oliver Cromwell himself, but we'll not do it."

Christopher paused. What should he do? Go back down into the church and risk being recognized by Captain Dell, caught, and shot as a spy in Roundhead garb? Or should he die in the steeple with Conn?

Dell himself made up the boy's mind for him, shouting from below. "Where are you, lad? I have need of you."

Christopher plunged past the guard and, with Conn trailing him, climbed to the steeple loft. His hope of escaping Drogheda was lost forever—thanks to Peter Dell.

Always Dell had controlled the game! Now he'd called "checkmate" to Christopher's last desperate move.

Saint Peter's steeple was packed with Irish below the five great bronze church bells. They sat or lay on the wooden floor—women, men, and children. Babies slept in their mother's arms while the women wept silently. All Irish who were awake stared at Christopher's lantern and Roundhead armor, but Conn told them, "He is Aston's servant and a friend."

Christopher ran to look out the steeple windows. It was many feet to the ground, and by the light of the torches they held, he saw that Saint Peter's was surrounded by Cromwell's red-coat soldiers. In despair he turned back to Conn, who had gone to his knees to finger his rosary.

Christopher cried to the Irish, "Yield! Yield to Parliament or the man below will kill you all!"

He saw the people look away from him, but they did not move. Christopher sat down in a corner, the lantern at his feet. He gnawed at his thumb. He knew not one thing about gunpowder, but he knew much of Peter Dell. And Dell had said he meant to blow up the steeple!

Conn came over to sit beside him, his prayers done.

"We shall die within minutes," Christopher told him. He added, "I saw Father Brian killed by a pikeman and saw my godfather beaten to death with his own wooden leg."

Conn's face was bleak. "I saw my father killed.

Then the Roundhead who killed him came after me and cut my shoulder open.”

There was nothing more to say. Christopher saw no reason to speak of the Roundhead he had shot and the other he might have killed in Mill Mount. The boys waited.

Then came Dell's hoarse shout, “Yield! I set match to the powder now.”

Christopher bowed his head and began the Twenty-third Psalm once more. As he muttered the last words, he heard the hideous roar from below and next he felt the sickening, rumbling swaying of the tower. Knocked off his balance onto his side by the blast, Christopher stared up at the church bells, jangling wild music in their belfry. And then gradually they stopped. So did the trembling of the steeple floor. The charge of gunpowder had failed. A miracle!

The boy from Chester joined in the Irish cheering and knelt with them to give thanks for the Lord's mercy and protection.

Dawn came blowing in with a rainswept wind. Christopher, whose cheek and ear ached too terribly for him to sleep, went to look out a window. Drogheda burned! A black reek of smoke rose from the south part of the town. The corpses of the Irish were being piled into carts by Roundhead soldiers, ever fearful of the plague. The boy watched the laden

carts head toward the Boyne, guessing the dead were to be dumped into it. A few officers with orange sashes over their shoulders walked about ordering the soldiers gathering up the dead. But try as he might Christopher could not make out Peter Dell among them. He hoped the man had gone up with his gunpowder, yet in his heart he knew he had not. No, the spy had reached safety long before the charge exploded.

The Roundheads were too far away for him to fire on them with his pistol. Christopher sighed. Conn had told him the few muskets in the steeple were useless—all their ammunition had been expended.

After a time Conn came to him at the window. He held one hand to the blood-stained bandage on his shoulder. He was deadly pale and his eyes dark-circled. "What will the Roundheads do now, Kit? Starve us out?" Conn motioned to the people behind him. "We have no food and no water here."

Christopher thought, then asked, "Do they know you have no balls for the muskets?"

"No, Kit."

"Then I think they will not come near the church till nightfall when we cannot see them. Did you know there are men loyal to King Charles still in Bowlters' and Tooting Towers, Conn?"

"I pray they live," said the Irish boy. "I thirst now, Kit. Do you?"

“Aye, Conn. It rains still. I’ll hold out my helmet and catch what water I can.”

The long day passed. Sometimes the Irish prayed together, though there was no priest to lead them. Christopher learned, horrified, that every priest in Drogheda had been slain. Any man who bore the customary knife at his belt to cut his meat at supper had been considered “under arms” and a worthy foe by the Roundheads. Christopher spoke that afternoon, his back propped against the wall, his eyes on the bells, of Mill Mount and his godfather’s death. It seemed to him as if another person described it, someone who had not been there at all.

When he’d finished an Irishwoman who’d heard him started a soft mournful keening. Over it, Conn asked him, “Did you love your godfather, Kit?”

“I do not know.” A long time later Christopher added, “It was Captain Dell I truly loved. My godfather did his duty to me, and I by him at the last. I do not know. I think not.”

Christopher slept later that day; then when an Irishman awakened him he went to the window with him and Conn to look below.

The Irishman pointed and asked, “Is it the English spy I see?”

Christopher looked down. Aye, surely it was Dell striding along in the rain. He knew his swaggering, rolling gait all too well. From the clatter below he knew also the Roundheads were once more busy in-

side Saint Peter's. What new mischief had Dell in mind? Christopher leaned out over the window. No, Dell had no gunpowder with him. Christopher took his pistol from his belt and aimed it at Dell, but the Englishman always kept out of range, entering the church outside of Christopher's vision.

He spoke to Conn and the Irishman. "Let me guard the steps tonight." Not waiting for agreement, he hurried down and told the weary Irishman below to go up. Hunched over, his pistol ready, Christopher Barstow came down as far as possible. He pressed himself to the wall, listening, and heard English voices below him. English guards were set at the foot of the steeple steps!

"What is the watchword?" one man asked another.

"The king's knight's town is taken." The man coughed and added something more Christopher didn't catch. Then he said, "Damme, I have the country sickness. I trust that madman Colonel Frane can fire the steeple quickly. He promised General Cromwell he'd smoke out the Irish rats this time or burn them down with the steeple."

Christopher stiffened. He heard another sound—of wood being smashed. The church pews were being broken up for firewood. The boy guessed Peter Dell would set the blaze himself. The failure of the gunpowder must have rankled him. He'd make sure

this time, but first he'd send the other Roundheads out to safety.

For a long time Christopher waited, sitting on the step, and then he heard Dell's voice. Afterward he heard him come to the foot of the stairs and bellow, "Yield or die!" He knew Dell had fired the wood for he'd caught the man's first cry, "It kindles. Flee the church, guards!" And Christopher heard the scuffling sound the boots of the guards made as they left Saint Peter's.

He waited until he scented smoke; then he started slowly down the stairs. Blinking, he came out onto the church floor and looked through the smoke. He saw Captain Dell frantically throwing pieces of a pew onto the roaring blaze.

The boy shouted, "Captain!" and raised his pistol.

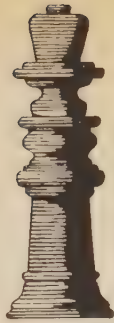
The Roundhead looked up, quick anger on his face. "I told you! Leave this place."

"No, Captain Dell!" Christopher called to him across the flames.

An expression of astonishment came into the man's eyes as Christopher clawed off his helmet to be recognized. "*Kit!*" Dell shouted.

Christopher Barstow did not speak again. He did exactly as he'd been taught by the Englishman. He squeezed the trigger.

Caught in the chest by the ball, his breastplate pierced, the Roundhead fell into the flames. "*Kit?*"



XI

CHECKMATE

Three steps at a time Christopher ran to the steeple. "The Roundheads have fired the church. Fly! Fly!" he shouted to the Irish.

Then he whirled about and hurried down, knowing only that Conn Magowan stumbled weakly at his heels. Together the boys skirted the blaze that already licked fierce tongues of flame toward the floor of the wooden steeple. The gunpowder had blown out breaches in the church's stone walls, and Christopher and Conn fled through one of them on the west side into the cool darkness. There Christopher fell down onto the rain-soaked turf and stared fascinated at the fire. But Conn lay on his face, head buried in his arms as he wept.

Christopher shook him. "There is no time for that! Will more Irish come down, do you think?"

Conn looked up, tears rolling down his face. "I left them, Kit, when I should not. I was too much afraid of the flames. I could not stay and be burned to death. They will not come down. They will stay and die rather than be put to pike or sword by the Roundheads. They will not believe in English mercy. They choose to die in their own church." His mouth twisted. "Kit, I did not tell you, but I took up a cobblesstone to kill a Roundhead, too, and threw it at his face. I shall never. . . ."

Christopher cut him short. "I say there is no time for this. You must take my helmet. I shall keep the breastplate. You could not wear it over your wound."

"What will you do, Kit?"

"Escape from Drogheda--with you!"

"But Captain Dell might see us and know us!"

Christopher laughed sharply. "Nay, I've shot and killed him. I found some boldness." He gestured toward the fire in the church. "He is there in the flames he set, Conn. If the steeple falls, it will fall on him!"

Christopher saw how Conn gaped at the fire then. Shuddering, he got to his feet to put on the pot helmet Christopher held out to him. "I should not leave Drogheda, Kit. I should be in the steeple still."

“It would be folly to stay.” Inspired suddenly, the English boy added, “Conn, I think we are meant to try to escape. God saved us twice—first when the gunpowder failed to bring the steeple down and now the second time.”

Conn hesitated, then asked, “Where do we go?”

Christopher took a deep breath. Conn appeared in a sort of trance. Clearly their escape had fallen entirely onto Christopher’s shoulders. Always before Conn had seemed the leader, but not he was like a rudderless ship. “We make for Saint Sunday’s Gate and then the north country. I was bound for it when I saw Dell on the bridge with the gunpowder cart.”

Putting on the helmet, the Irish boy asked dully, “What am I to do?”

“Nothing, Conn, but walk with me. Show your wound only. Do not speak a word. They’ll know you as Irish by your voice. Let me speak the watchword if they demand it.”

“How do you know it?” asked Conn with a heartening spark of his old intelligent spirit.

“I am not certain that I do. I heard the guards at the bottom of the steps say, ‘The king’s knight’s town is taken.’ What else they said I could not hear.” Christopher pulled in his lower lip. “Perhaps what I heard is the watchword or perhaps what I did not hear is. We’ll have to hazard it. We must

go now. We may be too near the church to be safe.”

Pulling Conn by the hand, Christopher led the way over the piles of stones, blasted out of the church's side the day before, toward a group of Roundheads who stood transfixed, staring open-mouthed at the fire. The flames licked greedily at the steeple's flooring. Suddenly Conn jerked away from Christopher and stopped to look over his shoulder at the furious blaze. Dazed, he would have halted among the Roundheads, but Christopher grabbed him, holding onto his unwounded arm.

Past Cromwell's men who'd paid them no heed at all, Christopher permitted the Irish boy to pull free again. “Conn,” he pleaded, “make haste.”

“Nay, Kit.” Conn stood facing Saint Peter's and would not be moved.

“Stand with me in a doorway then, so the Roundheads won't mark you out, Conn!” begged Christopher.

Like a puppet, Conn allowed himself to be dragged backward into a deserted doorway. Christopher stood beside him, his eyes on the steeple, too. Tongues of fire climbed up its sides. The shrieks of terror and pain from the Irish inside rose over the fire's fierce crackling. Christopher looked on, his scalp prickling, as the black figure of a man leaped out of the steeple to fall screaming below, his leg twisted askew, broken. Roundheads ran to him.

Christopher knew Conn prayed beside him. He could not. He could only look on in helpless horror.

And now the steeple collapsed into the ruined church. With an awful sound it fell—a mingled horror of burning wood, howling screams, and the insane medley of the great bells. Christopher bit his hand till the blood came, to keep from crying out and attracting the Roundheads' attention. He had not believed he ever would hear a sound so horrible as the groan in London when the king's head was shown to the crowd, but this was more dreadful yet!

Conn Magowan was sobbing. By the blaze Christopher saw his agonized, tear-streaked face as he crossed himself.

Christopher drew back his hand and with his palm struck Conn hard across the mouth. He hissed at him, "You cannot weep now and you must not cross yourself again, or I shall kill you myself! They said 'boldness' to us—my godfather and your own priest. Show it now. Help me, Conn. Remember, you are a Roundhead. See the Roundheads. They do not mourn!"

The English who had watched the steeple fall were laughing and congratulating one another.

Conn wiped his face on his cloak. "You say Captain Dell died in Saint Peter's too?"

"Aye, Colonel Frane died there. That is his true

name. Saint Sunday's Gate is not far. When I have my pistol loaded, we'll make for it." Grimly, Christopher loaded once more, and as he handled the pistol he thought of his godfather. Aston would have been well pleased to know of the good use Christopher, a straw in the wind, had made of his gift. He would have been better pleased to know that the boy had shot the English spy who had taught him how to fire it.

Walking together in the rain and dark, the boys made their way without incident to the north gate of Drogheda. But there they found many Roundheads gathered by torchlight, and Christopher recalled with a pang that Bowlters' and Tooting Towers held out yet against the English. He ducked back behind the side of a house, reached down into the mire between the rain-streaming cobblestones, and daubed his face with filth. Then he smeared mud on Conn's also. "I spy Colonel Hewson there by the gate," Christopher told Conn. "He saw me at Mill Mount, and the Roundhead who cut your shoulder could be here too. Remember, hold your tongue, and if you pray do it without moving your lips—and do not cross yourself. Pray I have the watchword that will pass us through." Christopher knew he need not add "or both of us shall die tonight."

Christopher and Conn went forward once more,

walking slowly, Christopher supporting Conn. No one paid any attention to them until fifty paces from the sentries posted at the gate, a loud voice hailed them.

“Ho, lads, where do you go?” It was Colonel Hewson.

Christopher froze in fear, then stuttered, “To—to the surgeons, sir.”

Hewson strode over to them. He stared at Christopher's bandage. Then Christopher twitched back Conn's cloak to show his blood-soaked bandage, too, and white shirt. That should explain why Conn had no coat or breastplate.

“Where do you serve, lads?” asked the one-eyed officer.

Christopher took in a deep breath. He knew no other Roundhead officers but Cromwell and Hewson himself. And then he thought of Dell. “We served with Colonel Frane.”

Hewson called over his shoulder to some tall Roundhead officers conferring below Bowlters' Tower. His words struck such fright in Christopher that he felt his stomach turn to ice. “General Cromwell, here's a lad who served with Frane and has been wounded. He may know somewhat of Frane's whereabouts.”

Christopher caught hold of Conn's arm, warning him to silence.

Oliver Cromwell came walking across to the gate, his left hand easy on the hilt of his sword. His cloak was somber black, not scarlet, but he still wore his plumed helmet and his breastplate. He towered over short Hewson and the two boys. Christopher stared up into a strong brown face marked with a firm mouth, a long, hooked nose, and sharp, darkish, heavy-lidded eyes. Cromwell's hair was curling, long, thick, and gray. His voice was high and surprisingly thin. "Where is Colonel Frane?"

Christopher had been forewarned by Hewson's words. He told Cromwell the truth. "I last saw him, sir, in Saint Peter's Church setting the blaze that brought the steeple down."

"Then he is outside capering about in joy," said Hewson dryly. "Moonjean will pay him well for this bit of work. That is what makes Frane most glad! Money is his master!"

"Aye," agreed Cromwell. "Frane ever plays at his own hot and parlous games. He comes and goes at his own good time. I have waited for him before." Christopher thought he saw disgust on the general's stern face. But the look changed as he faced the boys, and it seemed to Christopher for a moment as if Cromwell might smile.

"Where is your home?" he asked Christopher.

"Chester, sir. My father is an innkeeper."

"And your home, lad?" the man asked Conn.

Christopher answered quickly. "He is weak, sir, and has not spoken for an hour, and he is fevered. He is my friend." The boy cast about desperately for a birthplace for Conn, then, remembering Aston's, said "His home is in Middlesex, sir—Fulham. His father keeps a school."

Cromwell stood aside, nodding. "Where do you go now?"

"To the surgeons, sir. I'm told they lie outside the gate."

"Some do. A regiment is encamped there too." Cromwell turned away, Hewson going with him.

"Now, Conn, for the gate! Pray, Conn, pray!" whispered Christopher, dragging the boy along.

They came to the sentries, one of whom barked out, "What is the watchword?"

Christopher was ready. "The king's knight's town is taken!"

The musketeer stepped away from the open gate. "Pass through, lads."

His heart pounding fit to burst, Christopher hauled Conn through Saint Sunday's Gate out among the rain-sodden tents of the Roundheads. No man challenged them here, though an English soldier accompanied them in the darkness for a time, chatting of the two towers where the Irish still held forth.

"Aye, we'll summon the Irish down once more

tomorrow. They starve and die of thirst. When they come, Cromwell has said we'll put all officers to the sword, knock every tenth common soldier on the head and kill him, and convey those who remain to the West Indies. No king's man has escaped we know of. Three thousand were slain here. A 'marvelous great mercy' Cromwell calls it!" The Roundhead clapped his hand on Christopher's shoulder. "God gave us the victory! Aye, General Cromwell's made an example of Drogheda for all the world to see—and he'll do the same for Wexford. A good night to ye, lads. Sleep well." And the Roundhead went off to his tent.

Neither boy spoke a word until the English camp was a mile past and they were alone on the north road in the downpour. Then Conn said, "I know a farmer who dwells not far from here to the east."

"Will he give us shelter?"

"Aye, he'll hide us. Kit, I must sit down to rest."

The boys left the road for the scanty shelter of some gorse bushes. There they lay on the ground, using their hands to scoop up rainwater from a nearby puddle. Never had water tasted so fine to Christopher Barstow.

"Where do we go from the farmer's house?" asked Christopher. "I'd thought I'd make for a seaport the Roundheads have not taken yet."

"And from there we shall go to King Charles."

Conn said this calmly, as he flung away his Round-head helmet and started to fumble in the blackness at the buckles at the side of Christopher's breast-plate. "Kit, I think we shall find the king and tell him the news from Ireland."

Christopher shook his head. "He will not be happy to have it."

"He will never forget it if we tell it to him." Conn paused, then added, "I do not think Ireland will ever forget it either."

Christopher shivered in the cold rain as he discarded his red coat. Aye, he knew he would not forget Drogheda though he lived a thousand years. He would "remember" always!

"King Charles is twenty. We are both near to fifteen," Conn Magowan went on. "I do not think Cromwell can triumph for all time, Kit. I think it will be a young man's war someday." Conn was not rudderless now. He was the Conn Christopher had come to love.

Christopher reflected in silence. Sir Arthur Aston had been old, so had King Charles the First, and Peter Dell had not been young either. Nor were Cromwell and Hewson young men. "Will you be a soldier for the king now, Conn?"

"No," came the Irish boy's voice out of the rain, "but I'll serve as a clerk or secretary if the king will have me."

“I think I could be a king’s musketeer,” put in Christopher. He tacked on hastily, “But, Conn, I will not stick to that as my trade. I do not want to be like unto my godfather or Captain Dell—not a soldier.”

“What will you do then, Kit, when King Charles has his throne again?”

Christopher had thought of this before as he’d sat huddled below the south wall of Drogheda hearing the thunder of Cromwell’s siege guns. Then it had seemed hopeless. Now he vowed grimly, “Do as I should have done. I *will* find a ship bound for the New World and seek my fortune there—perhaps in Virginia where there are other Cavaliers from England.” He asked, “Will you come with me?”

Conn answered after a very long silence. “No, I will return home to Ireland.” He coughed. “That day will not be for years, I think. Oliver Cromwell will have all Ireland soon and hold it well. Perhaps I can become a priest in a seminary in France.”

Christopher got up, then reached down and pulled Conn to his feet. They stood for a long moment looking behind at Drogheda. A fire burned dimly in the north part of the town. Both knew it to be Saint Peter’s Church.

Christopher felt, rather than saw, the Irish boy cross himself and bow his head. He waited. There was time enough now for these things.

“The farmhouse lies three miles ahead over the fields,” said Conn Magowan. “If you’ll help me, Kit, we can be there before dawn catches us.”

“Aye, Conn, we shall be.”

His arm about the Irish boy’s waist, Christopher led the way across the fields that lay to the east. The second stile they went over took them out of sight of Drogheda.

From *Cromwell in Ireland* by Reverend Denis Murphy, S. J.:

Except these [three officers] and some few others, who during the assault escaped at the other side of the town, and others who, mingling with the rebels [Cromwell’s men] as their own men, disguised themselves so as not to be discovered, there was not one officer, soldier or religious person belonging to that garrison left alive, and all this within the space of nine days after the enemy appeared before the walls [September 12, 1649].

AUTHORS' NOTES

In 1967 when we were in Ireland for a brief visit, we decided to see some of the places of great historical interest that are reasonably close to Dublin. We hired a car and a driver (coincidentally and remarkably his name was Patrick Beatty) and took off to see what could be seen in a limited time. Our tour took us to four very memorable places: Tara, where once the high kings of Ireland ruled and where Saint Patrick is said to have converted the Irish to Christianity; Monasterboys, a ruined monastery destroyed about one thousand years ago, where one of the great Irish national treasures, Murdoch's Cross, is still to be seen; the gentle rolling country where the Battle of the Boyne was fought in 1690; and Drogheda (pronounced Draw-uh-da). Our driver was somewhat reluctant to take us to Drogheda, but we insisted. Putting the two things

together—the scene of a major battle, or massacre, or however the event might be described, and the passion of intensity the name Cromwell excites in Ireland—we decided to examine the whole combination in more detail.

The result is the present novel. We hope that our course through the myths, the contradictions, the exaggerations, the vagueness, the uncertainties has arrived at some semblance of the historical truth.

It is next to impossible to date the start of the resentment felt by the Irish toward the English. Perhaps the attempt of the Norman conquerors of England to extend their rule into Ireland in the twelfth century was the real beginning, but most historians feel that Poyning's Law of 1494 was what led to the tragic outcome. Poyning's Law established English control over the Irish Parliament as a device to control and govern the Irish. Sir Edward Poyning set up the area around Dublin as the English Pale—an area where civilization prevailed—and “beyond the Pale” was a venture into uncharted, barbaric lands.

The next century marked a very fundamental shift in what were already uneasy relationships, for the English became Protestant in religion while the Irish remained Catholic. Resentment of English political and economic domination, plus the very basic conflict over religion, led to a series of wars and atrocities that lasted into the middle of the seventeenth century. Basic to these conflicts was the policy started by James the First, who in 1619 set aside large areas of northern Ireland to be settled or “planted” (as it was called) by people from lowland Scotland. These people, who were moved over to Ireland by the thousands,

are the ancestors of the strong Protestant party in Ulster today.

Oliver Cromwell, by simple force, ended the open resistance to English rule, but the basic problems remained. Cromwell sought to solve them by extending the institution of Protestant settlements throughout most of Ireland. Largely Cromwell's plan failed, but one part of the plan took firm hold. He placed great areas of Irish land in the hands of English landlords, who seldom even visited their Irish estates, but collected the rents from the peasants without any concern over their conditions or situations. This dreadful means of control, and the fear and hatred of the English landlords by the Irish, can be measured by the fact that in the middle of the nineteenth century the Irish peasantry, who were starving to death by the hundreds of thousands because of the potato crop failure, still chose to ship off their wheat to pay their rents rather than risk losing their positions on the rented land. They chose, out of fear, to starve rather than be displaced.

It is little wonder then that today's Catholic Irish hate the English and the Protestants—and especially the memory of Oliver Cromwell!

The Protestants who live nowadays in England-protected Ulster have an equal loathing of the Catholic Irish in the Republic of Ireland and in particular of the Catholics living among them in Ulster itself. The combination of these two ancient hatreds leads to the current outbreaks of violence and rioting in Ulster. Added to this is the desire of the Catholics in the Republic of Ireland to claim Ulster from England domination. Ulster has most of the heavy

industry in Ireland while the Republic of Ireland is largely agricultural and a good deal less prosperous.

THE TAKING OF DROGHEDA

To begin with, some readers may cavil at the thought that most Irish people spoke English and wore English-type clothing in 1649. Irish historians, however, vouch for these facts and for the remarks we've made about Irish history prior to Cromwell's arrival and the movements of Lord Ormonde's army.

Many things we have written regarding Cromwell in Ireland and Drogheda may seem wild figments of our imaginations. They are not.

The constant rains in eastern Ireland in September, 1649, are fact, though we wonder ourselves how the Roundhead gunners managed to fire their cannon with the "matches" of that day. It is also fact that Cromwell's New Model Army infantry advanced singing hymns.

The letter Oliver Cromwell wrote to Sir Arthur Aston demanding Drogheda's surrender is the very letter Cromwell wrote. The words recited by Captain Dell and the Roundhead spy master sent from Dublin to him are drawn from an English pamphlet of the period.

Mill Mount was topped with a palisade and a windmill. It was there that some of the fiercest fighting took place, and it was there that Sir Arthur Aston died in the exact manner that we have depicted.

Saint Peter's Church was set with barrels of gunpowder

on September 11. The charges failed to bring down the steeple, but blew out the walls of the church. The next night the church pews were broken up and a fire kindled, which took down the steeple—bells, Irish, and all. The sound, according to eyewitness (earwitness) accounts, was indescribably horrible and unforgettable (as was the groan of the London throng at the public execution of Charles the First). An Irishman leaped from the burning steeple, breaking his leg. In tribute to his courage the English spared his life. He was one of the very few to survive Drogheda's taking.

Estimates of the slaughter at Drogheda vary widely; 2500 killed is a very conservative one. This includes Aston's officers, his garrison soldiers, and some townfolk. The Irish in the various towers and gates of Drogheda surrendered to Cromwell before long. Their officers were indeed clubbed to death, every tenth common soldier killed, and the remainder transported to Barbados.

Oliver Cromwell left soldiers to hold conquered Drogheda. He next went to Wexford, where he put its garrison, also, to the sword. As lord lieutenant for the Parliament, Cromwell remained in Ireland until early 1650, taking other towns loyal still to King Charles the Second. From Ireland Cromwell went to Scotland, where the young king's forces were gathering once more. In September, 1650, he crushed a Scots army at Dunbar; in September, 1651, he defeated an army of Scots and English at Worcester in England. This 1651 battle put an end to significant Cavalier attempts to put Charles the Second on his father's throne, though plots continued thick and fast. It was not

until 1660, two years after Cromwell's death, that Charles the Second became king of England.

As lord protector, the ruler of England, Cromwell dealt very harshly with Ireland. During the 1650's he "planted" the island with more Protestants, Scots and English. Ten counties were set aside for colonists (called "adventurers"), fourteen for former Roundhead soldiers, two for the Parliamentary government, and three only, in the west of Ireland, for the native Roman Catholic Irish. To accomplish this plan, the Irish were ejected from their former homes to make way for the incoming English settlers.

In doing so, Cromwell and the Parliament hoped to assure that there would never be another murderous onslaught against Protestants, as in 1641, and that Ireland could not become a haven for Spanish armies as in the sixteenth century.

To this twentieth century day the name of Oliver Cromwell is detested by Roman Catholic Irish, who well remember the massacres at Drogheda and Wexford.

THE PEOPLE IN THIS BOOK

Oliver Cromwell was born in 1599 and educated at Cambridge. The "gentleman farmer" was past forty when he took up soldiering. His knowledge of military strategy came at first from books he'd read. But he proved to be a natural soldier, winning battle after battle against the armies of Charles the First and Charles the Second.

Cromwell was personally brave and resolute and, like many men of his time, extremely religious. He felt he was an instrument of God, that his victories were God-given. He hated Roman Catholics and persecuted them as lord protector. However, on the other hand, he protected the Jews and the Quakers, religious groups hated by many Englishmen.

In 1658 Cromwell died. His son was not strong enough to hold England. Parliament invited Charles the Second to take the throne. Charles the Second came in peace to London.

(It is fascinating to conjecture what would have happened if Cromwell had emigrated to America as he thought of doing in the 1630's. There is even a legend that he was aboard a ship bound for the New World and at the last moment changed his mind about going. Would he have become a great leader here, too?)

James Butler, Marquess of Ormonde, was born in 1610. Ormonde's life was a strange one. Born a Roman Catholic, in Ireland, he was made a ward of the king of England as a child and raised as a Protestant in England. Returning to Ireland in 1633, Ormonde began to take part in politics. He supported King Charles for the most part, with occasional flirtations with Parliament. Ormonde survived Cromwell's awful punishment of Ireland. He fled Ireland in 1650 and functioned for a time in Europe as a diplomatic representative of the exiled Charles the Second. In 1660 he came back to England with the new king. At his coronation Ormonde served as lord high steward. In 1661

he was created duke of Ormonde in the Irish peerage and made lord lieutenant of Ireland. At the death of Charles the Second in 1685, Ormonde served Charles's brother, King James the Second, and was lord high steward at his coronation also. Ormonde died in 1688.

Charles Stuart, who was to be the tragic Charles the First, was born in Scotland in 1600, the son of King James the Sixth of Scotland, soon to be James the First of England.

Charles the First felt he ruled by the favor of God. He could not get along with his Parliaments, which refused to vote him money, and he tried to impose the Anglican religion on people in England and Scotland, who preferred other faiths.

In 1642 he declared war on Parliament. The war went badly for his Cavaliers. In 1645 Charles surrendered and was brought from Scotland to England, a prisoner. The Roundhead army demanded his death. In 1649 Charles Stuart was tried on a charge of treason against England, condemned, and on January 30 beheaded. We have described his execution as eyewitnesses saw it.

Sir Arthur Aston served first as a soldier for the tsar of Russia from 1613 to 1618. From 1618 to 1631 he soldiered for the king of Poland against the Turks. During the 1630's he served under Gustavus Adolphus, warrior king of Sweden, a military genius much admired by Oliver Cromwell. In 1640 Aston was in Scotland serving Charles the First as a sergeant-major-general. He was knighted in 1641 and during the English Civil War became governor of first Reading, then Oxford.

It is true his leg had been amputated as the result of a fall from his horse in 1644. In Ireland as early as 1646, Aston was appointed by Lord Ormonde in 1649 to command at strategic Drogheda. He was killed there by the Roundheads with his own peg leg, which was thought to be gold. A money belt, containing gold pieces, according to one account, was found on Aston's body after his death.

In depicting Sir Arthur Aston as a harsh man, more dutiful soldier than anything else, we have drawn him as his contemporaries saw him. The date of his birth is unknown, though it is established that he was born at Fulham in Middlesex.

One-eyed Colonel John Hewson was at one time a humble shoemaker in England. In 1647, however, he had become a Roundhead commander and a force in the Parliamentary army. Hewson signed the death warrant of Charles the First with Cromwell and then headed Cromwell's infantry at Drogheda. While Cromwell was lord protector, Hewson sat in his Parliament—ironically, first representing Dublin. In 1657, he became a member of Cromwell's House of Lords. In 1660 Hewson left England, knowing that King Charles the Second would deal harshly with those men who sent his father to the scaffold and block. He died abroad in 1662.

SOURCES

In writing this novel we have used many sources, gathered from many libraries. Most of the books came from our per-

sonal library. Others were loaned from the Library of Congress; Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore; the Reese Library of the University of California, Berkeley; the libraries of the University of California at Los Angeles and at Riverside; and the Riverside Public Library.

For their help with reference questions and in ordering books, we extend our particular gratitude to Dorothea Berry and Hazel Schupbach of the reference staff of the University of California, Riverside. For their aid in "matters Irish" we wish to thank Sister M. de Chantal and the other Ireland-born nuns of Saint James Convent, Perris, California.

Sources we used dealing with Oliver Cromwell are: *Oliver Cromwell* by Sir Charles H. Firth, *Oliver Cromwell* by Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *The Greatness of Oliver Cromwell* by Maurice Ashley, *Oliver Cromwell* by John Buchan, and the article on Cromwell in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Books dealing with the general history of Ireland are: *A History of Ireland* by Edmund Curtis and *The Course of Irish History*, edited by T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin.

Those pertaining to Ireland in the seventeenth century are: *Ireland Under the Stuarts and During the Interregnum*, 3 volumes, by Richard Bagwell; *The Economic History of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century* by George O'Brien; *The Puritans in Ireland, 1647-1661* by Reverend St. John D. Seymour; *Oxford Historical and Literary Studies*, volume XII; *Stuart Ireland, Catholic and Puritan* by Major B. B. O'Conner; *Cromwell in Ireland* by Reverend Denis Murphy, S.J.; *The Life of James First Duke of Ormonde*, volumes I and II, by Lady Burghelere.

Brief articles dealing chiefly with the controversy that rages over Cromwell's behavior at Drogheda appear in *The Nineteenth Century*, years 1912 and 1913. Two are written by J. B. Williams, one by Robert H. Murray.

More general works are: *The Trial of Charles I* by C. V. Wedgwood; *The Great Civil War, a Military History of the First Civil War, 1642-1646*, by Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred H. Burne and Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Young (for the description of the battle of Rowton Heath).

For information on Cromwell's army we used *Regimental History of Cromwell's Army*, volumes I and II, by Sir Charles Firth, assisted by Godfrey Davies.

To describe swordsmanship as it was taught in Cromwell's day we used *English Master-of-Arms, from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century*, by J. D. Aylward.

We have checked the seventeenth century conversation of our characters with the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* edited by C. T. Onions. There are two things that might seem definite modernities in this novel. We have referred to the "shorthand writers" on the scaffold with King Charles, who took down his final words. Forms of shorthand were current in England as early as 1636. The other unlikely item as pertains to the seventeenth century is the passport. This document was often required then for travelers leaving England for foreign countries and was issued by various authorities. The worrisome inconvenience was known under the exact name of passport as early as 1536.

Throughout this novel we have often utilized chess terms. As knowledgeable readers who are chess players

have undoubtedly discovered, the chapter headings can be played move by move on a chessboard. We hope these readers will see (by the ineptness of one player and the skill of the other) parallels within the progress and action of the characters in *King's Knight's Pawn*.

John and Patricia Beatty

September 12, 1970

BY JOHN AND PATRICIA BEATTY

THE ROYAL DIRK

Endpaper by Franz Altschuler

“For loyally helping Bonnie Prince Charlie to flee the Scottish Highlands, young Alan Macrae is rewarded with the Prince’s own garnet-studded silver dagger—the royal dirk. With it Alan hastens to exciting adventures in the atmosphere of mid-eighteenth-century Britain, authentically reproduced here by John and Patricia Beatty. This is a romance—and a splendid one.”—*N. Y. Times*

Selected by the Southern California Council on Children’s and Young People’s Literature as an Award Book.

WITCH DOG

*Endpaper and map by
Franz Altschuler*

“This is not merely a story about a dog but actually a romantic and sympathetic portrait of Rupert, Prince of Bohemia, who served as a cavalry commander for his uncle, Charles I, during the English Civil War. But Boye the witch dog, Rupert’s pet poodle, played a historical role in the war as the object of the superstitious fears of the Roundheads, who thought him a talisman, the source of Rupert’s phenomenal good fortune. A good novel of adventure that will introduce readers to some fascinating historical figures.”—*Horn Book*

William Morrow and Company

BY PATRICIA BEATTY

BLUE STARS WATCHING. *Endpapers by Franz Altschuler.* "Suspense well sustained; background skillfully integrated; atmosphere of San Francisco in the 1860's forcefully evoked."—*Library Journal*

BONANZA GIRL. *Illustrated by Liz Dauber.* "Exciting, engrossing, and told with a light touch. Silver fever, gunplay, and an avalanche get top billing."—*N. Y. Times*

HAIL COLUMBIA. *Illustrated by Liz Dauber.* "A view of the feminist movement in Oregon in the 1890's; informed and informative; excellent."—*Christian Science Monitor*

A LONG WAY TO WHISKEY CREEK. *Frontispiece by Franz Altschuler.* "Set in Texas in 1879, this is a humorous story with memorable characters."—*Publishers' Weekly*

ME, CALIFORNIA PERKINS. *Illustrated by Liz Dauber.* "This entertaining story with an intriguing cast of characters gives a flavorsome picture of life in the Mojave Desert in the 1880's."—*ALA Booklist*

THE NICKEL-PLATED BEAUTY. *Illustrated by Liz Dauber.* "The earning-money-for-a-good-cause theme is given fresh, amusing treatment. Flavorful, fast moving, easy to read."—*Horn Book*

THE QUEEN'S OWN GROVE. *Illustrated by Liz Dauber.* "This story set in the 1880's tells the hilarious history of an English family's discovery of California."—*Publishers' Weekly*

THE SEA PAIR. *Illustrated by Franz Altschuler.* "Conflicts in Washington's Quileute Indian village. Told with impressive integrity to the time and the place and the people."—*The Kirkus Reviews*

SQUAW DOG. *Illustrated by Franz Altschuler.* "An excellent dog story that features a steady build-up of action and an underlying gift of humor."—*The Kirkus Reviews*