



## HOW JOCK NESBIT SAW THE KING

BY LIZZIE REID

THE grey tenement houses rose on each side of Wilson's Wynd, with only a narrow strip of sky between. It was an entertainment to Jock to watch the changes of the weather as he lay, week in week out, on his little cot in a corner of the bare room. On windy days the clouds scudded merrily across the blue, and the opposite neighbor's washing, that she had hung out on a pole from her window, flled into funny shapes, and executed a jolly dance.

Then there were days when the clouds covered all the blue, and Jock could count the raindrops on the grimy panes and watch them running races with one another. Then the sun came out, and the raindrops turned to diamonds. "It's poor fun for a bairn like you, laddie," said the kindly Mrs. McNab. "You should see the wind on a field of clover, with the big purple an' white heads o' the bonnie flowers sweepin' this way an' that, like the waves o' the sea." Jock's grey eyes beamed on her; she was the best of company, with her talk of clover fields.

"Tell me more," he said eagerly. "Tell me more!"

His good neighbor came to sit with him when his mother was out chiring. He loved to hear her stories of the country that he had never seen. The late Andrew McNab had been a gardener, and Mrs. McNab had helped Jock to tend a scraggy rose-bush on the window-sill, till it was showing a pale pink bud at last.

"An' the sun glintin' on the gillowans, an' the red poppies among the yellow corn"—Mrs. McNab warmed to her beloved theme—"an' the bit hirdies singin' on the thorn. In your rose? Ay, laddie, it's geys improven. But ye should have seen my Andra's garden! Heaps o' roses, red an' white an' pink, an' v'lets in the springtime."

Tears of memory filled her eyes, and Jock's were wet in sympathy.

He was a cheery little lad as a rule, making light of the pains that gnawed at his crippled limbs; but sometimes a wild longing for green fields surged over him as he listened to Mrs. McNab. His thin face grew more eager; he pushed the damp, red curls from his brow.

"It'll be maist like heaven in the country, will it no?" he asked.

"Ay, laddie, but heaven's a deal bonnier. There's nae sorrow there, there's neither cauld nor heat, the day is aye fair," as the song says."

"Missus McNab," said Jock one day to his friend, "d'ye ken they're sayin' the King's comin' to Glesca? He'll maybe come doon Wilson's Wynd, will he no?"

"Eh, laddie! What pit sic a notion in your head?" she asked. "Na, na, I'm fearin' the King's no' like to come doon the Wynd; a queer-like place yon for a king to come doon."

"Then he's no' like yon King of Glory that Miss Lou sings about," said Jock disappointedly. "He aye comes doon from heaven itse' to save us."

"Eh, but Jock, ye ken He was the Lord," said Mrs. McNab reverently. "The King is a real guid man an' a

wise-like King, but he's no' like the King o' Glory."

"D'ye think, Missus McNab, if the King of Glory cam' to Glesca, would He come doon the wynd?"

"Ay, would He!" said Mrs. McNab heartily. "Mo' a time He has come doon, an' mony a pair sinner He has ta'en by the haun an' led them oot o' a darksome room into the light o' heaven. He cam' for my Andra as he was enterin' the Valley o' the Shadow, an' a wee bit feat for the gloom o' it. Puir body! He was sair wearit wi' the rheumatics that had gotten into his bones wi' the gardenin'. But one night he stretched oot his haun, an' the light that dazzles mortal eyes was on his face—a bonnie face it was aye to me. 'Jessie, woman,' says he, 'it's the Lord Himsel!' An' syne he left me."

It was not the first time Jock had



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heard the story, but he never wearied of it.

"Missus McNab," he said, "will he come for me?"

"Ay, will He, bairn. But, maybe, no' for a while yet. Ye're but young, an' maybe ye'll mend an' grow up to be a man," she answered hopefully.

"I'd like fine to see yon other King," said Jock wistfully. "D'ye think I'd get a chance to see him when he comes to Glesca?"

Somebody came liting up the stairs before Mrs. McNab could answer him.

Jock's face flushed with pleasure. "It's Miss Lou!" he cried.

A girl in a white serge frock and a wide, white chip hat, wreathed with pink-tipped daisies, came in like a ray of sunshine to the poor room.

"Why, Mrs. McNab and Jock! How

are you both?" she asked, giving a hand to each.

"I'm fine, Miss Lou, an' real pleased to see ye."

A wide smile wrinkled Jock's thin cheeks.

"Ou ay!" said Mrs. McNab. "Jock an' me's in the best o' health. There's seldom aught the matter with Jock, by his own showin'; he ne'er loses heart. Him an' me's divertin' oorsels by a bit crack about the King comin' to Glesca."

Miss Lou sat down by the cot. "Yes, Jock," she said, "it's quite true the King is coming, and the city is being all decorated. You can't think how lovely it will look with the flags and banneters and the flowers. And then the King's carriage with the lovely Queen beside him, will sweep through the streets, and the soldiers, with their waving plumes, will prance along so gaily."

"Eh, my word!" Jock's eyes glowed. "It would be geys sport to see them. I wish he would come doon the wynd. Dada, I'm sure I might get a peep at him. But Missus McNab says he willna."

Miss Lou laughed.

"No, no, Jock! We can't expect him to come doon Wilson's Wynd. Though I do think if he guessed there was a little sick lad that wanted awfully to see him he would come; for he's a real kind-hearted king. But—stop a minute—let me think! Couldn't we fix it up somehow that you would get a peep at him? I do believe we could!"

Miss Lou's cheeks grew pinker than the tips of the daisies in her hat.

"Yes, yes! I know! I have a plan, Mrs. McNab! I'll send my hammock and two of the men from the warehouse; we'll put Jock in it, and set him in one of the windows; the King is to pass father's warehouse. Now, dear woman, don't look so dubious! See Jock's face! Why it's shining!"

"I'm no' meanin' to be a spoil-sport. I'd like fine for him to see it a', but"—she drew Miss Lou aside—"he's geys an' far through, ye ken, an' he isna well cared for exceptin' when I can spare a while to sort him. He'd go oot like the snuff o' a candle if it werena for the spirit o' him."

Jock watched their faces anxiously. Miss Lou calmed Mrs. McNab's fears. "Well, well, have your way, missie," she yielded. "It'll maybe put new life in the bairn."

So it was decided that Jock should be taken to Mr. Cameron's warehouse to see the King pass. His hard pallet became a bed of roses in the joyful outlook.

"Sing me about the King of Glory, Miss Lou," he begged.

The girl's sweet voice rang through the shabby little room; the power that of a Glasgow wynd was glorified by a Gracious Presence.

"Who is He in yonder stall, At whose feet the shepherds fall?  
"Tis the Lord; O, wondrous story!  
"Tis the Lord, the King of Glory!  
At His feet the angels fall,  
Crown Him, crown Him, Lord of all!"

The child's weary eyelids drooped; he had not slept for two nights. Miss Lou rose softly and kissed the sleeper's brow.

"I really think he is a little better, Mrs. McNab, don't you?"

The good woman shook her head. "He's no' far frae the kingdom, Miss Lou," she whispered. "Ay! tho' I'll miss him I'll be real glad when he's in."

Some hours later Jock waked from a sweet dream of rose gardens and fields golden with gillowans. A smoky lamp sent an ill odour through the room; it cast a woman's wavering shadow on the ceiling. She was pouring something from a black bottle into a glass, the