

6 WHEN LOVE CALLS MEN TO ARMS

Where was the rest of them? The laird's men could overcome three such clumsy craft as this, especially with such a crew.

Nevertheless, I was filled with excitement and some fright, and started running toward the castle to warn the old laird, for I suddenly remembered that Master Archibald, the young laird, had gone off after his wife's death to fight the Spaniards with the English admirals. The old laird was in his frosty years and, forbye his grandson — Master Archibald's son, Jamie — a lad of my age — there was none else in the castle, beyond the vassals, but Mistress Mary, the laird's bonny daughter. A fine state of affairs! I mind thinking — Master Archibald gone off to fight the Spanish, who were here knocking at his very door. The milk splashed from the pails as I kept speed with my growing excitement, but I was all unconscious of the trail that lengthened behind me, blue as a hedge-sparrow's egg.

On the wide steps by the big-knobbed door of the castle, I found the old laird and Mistress Mary and young Jamie, backed by a throng of gawping vassals. They, too, had seen the ship through a spy-hole, and they, too, were full of wonder. Jamie caught sight of me as I came splashing along, and cried:

"Look, Rorie Maclean! Yon's the Spanish!"

"Spanish!" sneered the laird, who had buckled on his claymore. "If yon's the Spanish, then