

THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

THE PAGE OF JAMES V. OF SCOTLAND.

Translated from the French by S. A. C., with the author's permission.

CHAPTER VII.

LORD ARCHIBALD ANGUS.

The Queen Regent lived with the young King, her son, in the Palace of Holyrood, Angus, her husband, also having apartments there. But, because of the aversion each now felt for the other, the rooms occupied by the Queen were situated in one wing of the palace, whilst those of Margaret—far less splendid than those of Angus—were in the opposite wing, so that the whole length of the castle divided them. The central portion of the building was assigned to the young King and his household. The Queen and Angus met each other only in the Council chamber, and never in the palace, the interview, between Margaret and the young King always taking place in the private apartments of the Queen. Angus, by the King's leave, had the free entrance of the royal apartments, and it was there that his visits to the young Sovereign were paid.

Let us now pass through the courtyard, crowded with soldiers, and direct our steps towards the left wing of the palace, where are situated the apartments of Archibald Douglas. The room we enter is large, and appears still larger from the splendor of its appointments, for a carved table and a few chairs are all the furniture it contains. The sole adornment of the chamber is a profusion of weapons. They hang on the walls, lie on the chairs, in the corners of the room, and even on the floor. You might imagine yourself in an armory, and, indeed, there are arms enough to furnish a regiment.

Angus is a man of war, fond of anything that reminds him of battle, and so has surrounded himself with his favorite objects. He is a great connoisseur of weapons of all kinds, and never lets slip an opportunity of adding to his collection. At the present moment he is closely examining a little sword with an agate pommel, which an armorer has just brought in. This sword, so small that you might imagine it to be a dagger, is like a toy in the hands of such a man as Angus; nevertheless, he is looking at it with the same serious attention he would bestow on a serviceable weapon. The armorer meanwhile waits respectfully in a corner of the chamber, and two gentlemen are conversing together in a low tone in the embrasure of a window.

Let us seize this opportunity, whilst the chief of the Douglas is thus occupied, to study him in our turn. His age might be about thirty-five, and his nature is one of those powerful ones that, as it were, breathe forth strength. His stature is not colossal, but well above middle height, and had he not become prematurely corpulent his figure would have been elegant. His large, square shoulders are strong enough to bear with ease the heaviest cuirass, and his athletic limbs seem fashioned to make sport of the greatest fatigue. The Earl is a typical Scot of every sense of the word, and that particular shade of hair which is peculiar to Northern peoples. His features are fine and regular, his nose is aquiline, and the teeth in his large mouth are of a glittering whiteness. At the first sight the appearance of the man might favorably impress you, but a closer inspection excites an impression that is far from a pleasing one. His features bear the stamp of an audacity which verges on insolence, and of a severity which might degenerate into cruelty. In truth, arrogance, pride, and cruelty were the principal traits of his character. Pursuing, without any consideration for others, his own path, he crushed without pity all that opposed him. Naturally cruel, he had become brutal by habit. Such was the chief of the Douglas clan, the most powerful of Scottish peers and the rival of the Chancellor Beaton.

For some minutes he silently examined the sword in his hand, and then, turning to the armorer, "Come here," he said abruptly. The man came forward, but not without fear. "This sword is very well made," said the Earl, "how much do you ask for it?" "Ten crowns," said the armorer. "Ten crowns! So be it; go!"

The man had held out his hand to receive the payment when he heard his dismissal pronounced; but the surprise, the shattering of his hopes, the thought that he must return home with out food for his family, kept him rooted to the spot.

"Go, I say!" repeated Angus, who had replaced the little sword in its scabbard. "But, my lord," the man ventured to say, "those ten crowns are all I have to look to; and he again stretched forth his hand.

"By St. Andrew's cross!" cried Angus, "I believe the clown dares to ask me for payment."

"Mercy, my lord!" ejaculated the poor workman.

"Do you belong to Edinburgh?" asked the Earl.

"No, my lord."

"What county do you come from, then?"

"From your own county of Angus, sir. I came to Edinburgh to gain my livelihood, for my father has only seven oxen and some cows in his stable, and he is too poor to support ten children, and I am married."

"Well, and what is your name?"

"Tib Tibby, my lord."

"Make a note of the name Park," said the Earl, addressing Sir Parkhead, whose name he thus cut short for convenience. "And"—to the armorer—"when we return to our country, we will visit your father, and see if his oxen and cows are worth taking. Here, fellow, are your ten crowns."

He threw the money as he spoke across the table, and the man, gathering it up, left the room quite frightened at the thought that the Earl might put into execution his threat of robbing his

father, for he knew he was quite capable of such an act of tyranny.

"I fear he will do as he says," thought the poor man to himself as he hastened away from the palace. "The Douglas are a pitiless lot, and would just as soon ruin one of their vassals as drink a glass of wine."

Meanwhile Angus had placed the sword on the table, saying as he did so: "Another present for the young spark of a King."

"By my father's soul, Archibald! what are you thinking of," said Sir George Douglas, "occupying yourself with such frivolous matters as making presents to a King of thirteen?"

"Patience! they will be repaid by and by."

"Oh, I am not speaking of those good golden coins you spent on that toy, but I fear that you only lose your time. And, besides, is it fitting to see you occupying yourself with a sprat of a sword only fit to be a child's plaything?"

"What would you say, George, if you saw me playing at bones?"

"I should say, Archibald, that you were daff."

"And, by the Mass!" broke in Parkhead, "he would be right. Would it not, if he went on, 'be better, cousin, to seize upon the King at once than to lower yourself in such a way?'"

A coup de main, Park, would be dangerous just now. I am not yet sure that I have gained the affection of the King."

"And what does his friendship matter," said Sir George with an oath, "as long as he is in our power?"

"Ah, but it does matter, George; for if the young King comes with us of his own accord our power is assured. The nobles will side with us—I mean, those nobles who have not as yet declared for either party; whilst, if we employ violent measures, we should range against us not only the partisans of my royal consort, Margaret, Chancellor Beaton, and the Hamiltons, but also all those as yet indifferent, but who would in such a case, you may be sure, at once ally themselves with our enemies. I know well that the trade of a spy is not worthy of my name of Douglas, and that I make but a poor content for a man of my rank."

But what would you? One must hunt with the hounds, and his cautious policy, which he would oppose with like weapons, know that by having recourse to arms we could soon walk over the Hamiltons, but the Cardinal would know how to make profit of our carrying off the King, to raise the country against us; and we should in the end gain nothing. As it is, he has not already divined by plans, and tried to oppose them by placing a boy between himself and the King, hoping thus to supplant me? Happily, I have taken good care to frustrate his design, and this very hour Andrew Cessford should be receiving my young rival, to hand him over to my faithful Wedderburn, who will rid me of him. Ha, ha! I have managed beautifully. If I had not thought of attacking Percy, the Cardinal's messenger, I should have played at bones to no purpose. But, talking of bones, the King will be waiting for me to play at catch ball with him."

"What folly!" said George, shrugging his shoulders.

"Rather, what a humiliation!" added Parkhead.

"Yes, I am mad; I humble myself very low," returned Angus, taking up the sword; "but once get the King within the walls of one of my good castles, and by St. Andrew, he shall pay for all! Not that I intend him any harm, but I wish that he should love me more than he now loves me."

With this threat Angus left the room, crossed the courtyard, and mounted the stairs leading to the King's apartments, where James the Fifth was impatiently awaiting him.

The King, was, as we said before, thirteen years of age, but he did not look more than eleven. He was of good stature, indeed, but very delicate and frail. Perhaps this weakness was the cause of the extreme weakness and languor from which the royal child suffered. His countenance wore an habitual look of fretfulness and suffering, and it was rarely that his pale face was brightened by the healthy colour usual to children of his age. Since the fatal disaster of Flodden, which had placed him on the Scottish throne and deprived him of his father, he had become the pivot of intrigue. Enjoying a doubtful liberty, it was with difficulty that he could indulge in those bodily exercises which are so necessary for the young.

The natural character of the Prince was charming. He was affable to all, and so full of gratitude for any service rendered him that he was beloved by all who attended on him.

The poor little King longed to bestow his affections on someone, but upon whom? Deprived as he was of the games and companionship suited to his years, his life was a very lonely one, and the sense of his loneliness often weighed heavily upon him.

It was just when this need of friendship was most acutely felt by the young monarch that Angus conceived the idea of winning his affection and confidence. He had no difficulty in making his plan successful. Solitary almost abandoned in his palace, James felt grateful to this powerful Baron, who, notwithstanding his numerous occupations, found time to visit him every morning, bringing him presents and joining in his childish games. "From gratitude to love," it is said, "there is but one step, and so it was with the young Prince, and thus Angus soon gained his affection. Each morning James awaited with impatience the advent of the Earl.

"Perhaps," he would say to himself, "he will have some nice surprise for me to-day; he is so kind. Cardinal Beaton also is very kind, but I can't play with him as I do with Angus. Oh, how late he is this morn-

ing! I do believe he is not coming at all."

Then, when the Earl entered, he would spring up in delight, and hasten to begin the game.

On the day of which we are speaking Angus was a quarter of an hour behind the usual hour for his visit to the King. This delay had doubtless been caused by the conversation with his brother and cousin related above. James was rather out of temper at being kept waiting, and determined to revenge himself on his friend by being sulky.

"Yes, yes," he said to himself; "it is too bad. I am quite tired of waiting. When he does come I will treat him coldly, that he may learn not to repeat this offence. But I believe I hear his step. Yes, I know it is his," he said listening attentively. "It is so noisy and such a tramp, tramp, tramp, he cannot be anything but a fool. Here he comes, laughing and imitating the heavy walk of his friend."

James then retired into a corner of the apartment, and by the time Angus opened the door he had succeeded in assuming an appearance of vexation and ill-humour.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GAME AT BONES.

"How is your Majesty this morning?" asked the Earl, as he entered.

"His Majesty is in a bad temper," replied the King, trying to preserve his assumed manner.

"Am I so unfortunate as to be the cause of your vexation?" asked Angus.

"Am I so unhappy as to be the cause?" repeated the boy, imitating Angus's voice. "How could you ask such a question when I have kept you waiting more than a quarter of an hour. Ah, I see you, like all the rest of us, are going to give me up as well. It is too bad! I shall not love you any more."

"Ah, Sir!" cried Angus, in a tone of feigned despair.

"I have made him unhappy," thought James, and, going up to the visitor, he added aloud, in a most gracious tone: "I fear I have grieved you; but it is your fault. Why did you not come and let me embrace you as I do every day?"

"This is my excuse," said the Earl, producing the little sword.

"Oh, how pretty!" cried the boy, dancing round the weapon in admiration. "What a charming sword! And how grand one would look with it at one's side!"

"Yes, Sir, that is my excuse, and you shall see how I was buying myself about you."

"What, that sword for you, Sir, if you will gratify my most faithful subject by accepting it?"

"If I will! I certainly will," said James quickly, at the same time seizing the weapon eagerly, and proceeding to draw it from its scabbard and brandish it in the air. "Thank you, Angus; you are really very kind; you are going to put me in the way of becoming a great man, and I shall count the day when I shall count for something in the State, instead of being a mere puppet, in whose name, indeed, they act, but whom they leave alone in a corner, then you will see. I shall make you presents—lands, castles, large domains—and I trust that my presents will give you as much pleasure as you have to-day given me."

Looking at the boy-King at that moment, you would have said, "He is really beautiful." His face, usually so pale, was tinted with a deep crimson flush, and his whole person was animated by the sudden burst of gratitude and generous feeling. He raised his eyes towards Angus, eyes expressive of love, joy, and the other sentiments that filled his soul. The Earl smiled in his turn. What made him smile I cannot say, but what I do know is that when the young King saw it his enthusiasm died away. The sudden colour which the warmth of his words had caused to mount to his face was faded, and as if by magic, he became as pallid as before. The smile was impossible even for a child to remain happy under its influence.

He was conscious of the feeling without being able to analyze it. His joy was suddenly extinguished, and he believed that his pleasant intercourse with Angus was at an end. However, he was delighted with the sword, and admired it much.

"How nice it is!" he said. "And its pommel is so handsome, and then so small—just suited to me."

"It will go well," remarked the Earl, "with the musket and the Spanish genet."

"Your presents also, Angus."

"I did not mean to remind you of that, Sir."

"Ah, but I do not forget. I always remember things that have given me pleasure. Now, thanks to you, I am armed from head to foot."

"Like a little knight, Sir," said Angus, laughing ironically.

"Patience, patience, you naughty jester! Though I am little now, I shall one day grow big, please God, and then I shall be strong and powerful."

"If it please God," repeated the Earl, with a peculiar expression of voice.

The boy looked at him with surprise. "What do you mean, Angus? Do you doubt?"

"No, Sir, no, I do not doubt your growing up strong and powerful; but—"

"But what?"

Angus was silent a moment, and appeared to be revolving something in his mind.

"Ah," he said to himself, "George and Park think I have already wasted too much time. Perhaps the moment has come to act decisively. If I could persuade the child to go to one of my castles, from there I should dictate the law, and the Regency would be mine; so let us make an essay."

"Well, my lord, you have not answered me. You really are tiresome this morning. I do not know what to make of you."

"You are right, Sir; but I ought

not to have these ideas," replied Angus intentionally, "and I am a fool to let you see how they preoccupy me."

"What is it, then?"

"Nothing, nothing, Sir," and, adroitly turning the conversation, he added, "I have quite forgotten that I owe you another chance, as I beat you yesterday."

"Ah, so you did!" replied James, who, with all the carelessness of a child, forgot that his friend was about to explain his counting words, and ran to fetch the bones.

Angus, however, had made up his mind to carry his point, and resolved to return to the charge. The King soon came back with his playthings, saying, "Now we shall see if you will count me to-day."

"I am ready, Sir, to enter the lists," said Angus gaily, waiting himself as he spoke on the carpet with his legs outstretched and wide apart. In an instant James was seated opposite him in a like position, and the warlike of the dreaded Douglas, the chief of numerous partisans, began his game with a child of thirteen, the secret stake being nothing less than the Regency of Scotland.

"Let us see who is to begin," cried the boy; and, grasping five of the bones, he threw them into the air, catching three of them on the back of his hand as they fell. "There!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "Now you try."

Douglas imitated the King, but only caught two of the bones.

"Two!" said the young King, laughing. "I am first; that is a good sign. I shall be your master to-day, Angus."

"True; but who knows? to-morrow, perhaps, I may be yours, Sir," answered the Earl.

"Just listen to him!" laughed the boy. "What ambition! That is yet to be seen, Sir. I warn you I should defend myself. But whilst waiting for that, and as the primacy is mine, at all events for to-day, I shall begin."

"Start, Sir," said Angus.

"One," said James, beginning to play, "two, three, four. I have lost."

"Now for my turn," said the Baron.

"One, two—Ah, failed too!" cried the Prince, clapping his hands gleefully.

"The advantage is certainly on my side."

"Will it always be so, Sir?" asked Angus.

"There you are, doubting again! What is the matter with you this morning? Just now when I said I should one day be strong and powerful you seemed as if you did not believe me, and you did not explain why; and now again."

"Ah, well, Sir, I will tell you what I think," replied Angus appearing as if yielding to entreaty; "but, what I added, with some hesitation, 'what good is it to occupy ourselves with such grave matters as Court intrigues? I did not come for that. Let us go on with our game.'"

"No, no!" said James, rising as he spoke, and throwing away his toys. "No, Sir, I do not understand to what you refer, but you seem so uneasy that I would not oblige you to go on with a silly game; and," he continued graciously, "I can be serious also when there is need."

"Very well, Sir, since you wish it," said Angus, rising in his turn. "I will tell you all."

"My God!" ejaculated the boy with uneasiness, "what has he to tell me?"

"Your health, Sir, is suffering from the dullness of your life," began the Earl.

"Do you think so, Angus? I never felt better than I do now."

"You may believe that, Sir, but it is not so."

"What?" asked the poor boy, much troubled. "Am I ill?"

"More, perhaps, than you are aware of," replied Angus, noticing with pleasure the fear that his words awakened in the mind of the young Prince.

"But in what way am I suffering?"

"From languor, Sir, and it is gradually leading you to your grave."

"Oh! what do you say?" cried out the alarmed boy; and his face grew even paler than before.

Yet Angus pitilessly went on: "Yes, Sir, you are always in the same room, breathing always the same air, seeing always the same things. All this is quite enough to cause weariness and fatigue, and, in consequence, ser-

"Oh, my God! but you frighten me, Angus."

"So much the better, Sir," he replied, in a brutal tone. "One is often obliged to cause pain to those one loves—above all, when the pain will produce good effects."

"But you are really mistaken," said the King, with a trembling voice. "I do not feel any bad symptoms, and since you have been so kind as to come every day to play with me I have not felt so dull."

"But how do you know, Sir, if that can continue? In fact, I never know from day to day that I may not be obliged to leave."

"Oh, surely that is not true! You are not really going, are you?"

"Yes, I am obliged to go and put down some rebel lords in my county of Angus, and it is on that account that I am uneasy."

"Oh, how unhappy I shall be," said the little boy, "not to see you any more, and perhaps for a long time!"

"A whole month, Sir."

"I could not do without you all that time," cried the poor Prince; "and," he added, in a voice that betrayed the tears he could hardly restrain, "I might never see you again if I am as ill as you say."

"You are ill, Sir, certainly, but it has not gone as far as that yet. Listen, Sir; I can tell you what will cure you."

"What?" asked the boy eagerly.

"It is chiefly the air of this place that injures you. If you were in a more healthy air—"

"Really?" said James, listening attentively.

"Then," continued Angus, "all your surroundings here tire you with their sameness. Elsewhere there are

many new things you could see and enjoy."

"That is true," replied the King, feeling more reassured.

"These old palace walls and the sombre hangings of your apartments," said Douglas, "are enough to make you feel gloomy, whilst in other places there are fields, and woods and rich and picturesque scenery which rejoice the eye and distract the mind."

"True! true!" cried the poor child, already feeling himself cured of his imaginary illness.

"Well, Sir," rejoined Angus, much pleased at finding himself so good a politician, "that is the remedy for your malady: new objects to interest you, a healthy situation and beautiful country, and you are saved."

But James was not listening now; he was thinking. Then suddenly he spoke his thoughts.

"How is it," he asked, "if I am as ill as you think—how is it possible, Angus, that my mother, whom I see every day, should not have noticed it?"

The astute politician was taken aback for a moment by this question, but quickly recovered himself.

"The Queen, your mother, Sir," he replied, "loves you certainly. Yes, that is true; but preoccupied as she always is with the intrigues of Beaton and his party, and absorbed also by the weighty business of her import and export office, it is not to be wondered at that when she daily embraces you with great tenderness and love—far be it from me to doubt that—yet, with so many important affairs on her mind, she does not notice that your eyes look more or less heavy, that your color gradually decreases and assumes a livid hue. All this demands a searching examination."

"But, Sir, with me it is different. I love you, not because you are my mother, but because you are my friend," continued Angus, trying with supreme diplomacy to effect a good-natured pleasantry. "Such an honor is not mine. No, Sir, the attachment I feel for you is not one of duty. I love you because—because I do love you. No reasoning can explain the affection I bear you, and for that very reason I am more apt to be misled than to discover the traces of a malady which is slow in its effects, but which, nevertheless, will pursue its course to the end; at least," he added, after a moment's pause, "unless it is arrested, and that is what I wish to bring about. Now you know why, when you just now spoke of becoming strong and powerful, I expressed my doubts; for I did not know, and even now do not know, if you will accept the proffered remedy. If you do accept it, I shall be only too happy to run any risk to which it may expose me."

"How could that be?" inquired James.

"Yes, Sir, yes, by such a proposal I know and feel I am compromising my self; yet so real as my devotion to you, and so true my love for you, that I do not hesitate a moment."

"And what is your remedy?"

"Freed, Sir, to live in the open air, on the plains and moorlands, the country—and, in short, change," answered the Earl.

"You are right, I believe. To-morrow I will speak to my mother on the subject."

"Take care, Sir, not to do that," said Angus quickly. "Guided as she is by the perfidious Beaton, she would never let you leave her, and even the small amount of liberty you have at present would then be compromised."

"I do not understand you," said James.

"Listen, Sir. If it were not for me, you would soon have at your side a man who would control all your acts—a child! That is the worst part of it. The Cardinal meant to employ a child for this disgraceful work. Yes, Sir, a child, who would have been set over you as nothing more nor less than a spy."

"A spy! echoed James. "And a child to do this? I do not believe one could be found who would consent to do such work."

"Ah, Sir, your indignation does honor to the nobility of your nature; but, alas! it is only too true: he had, unhappily, found one," said Angus, sighing, as if lamenting over the depravity of mankind.

"Oh, Angus, all that you have said frightens me. It seems as if I could trust no one. Even Beaton, whom I love! A child! Whom shall I trust now?"

"Trust to me," replied his companion—"to me, who wish to cure and save you. Thanks to me, who, like a faithful friend, have long watched over you in secret, that child is no longer to be feared. I have removed him from your path, and you cannot sufficiently appreciate the service I have thus done you. To have had at your side a being who would follow you everywhere like a shadow, spying your every act—"

"Oh, God!" ejaculated the poor boy; "how insupportable it would have been!"

"You need not speak of it, Sir. Happily for you, I was able to frustrate the design, for that daily obsession would have sufficed to kill you. That danger at least is over; but there is another to be feared, and to overcome that also I propose this plan."

"Well, let us hear it."

"I am leaving shortly for the county of Angus. Will you go with me, Sir?"

"Do you mean it seriously? And my mother?"

"I shall notify your abode to your mother, Sir, but—after—when you have honored my beautiful castle in Angus with your presence. Then, Sir, then I shall hasten to write to her."

"And in the meanwhile my mother will be devoured by anxiety. Oh, no, no! Rather than cause her this anxiety and sorrow, I would expose myself to the worst effects of the malady you spoke of just now."

"As it pleases you, Sir," replied Angus—"as it pleases you; but do not think me a selfish and unfeeling friend, for your complaint would be cured, and I could answer you truthfully."

"Sir, I loved you; I wished to save

you, and you repulsed the means I offered you."

"Oh, God!" cried the boy, much troubled. "But I consent, Angus, if I yield to your wishes. How should I manage? How shall I withdraw myself from that surveillance which, if you speak truly, extends over all my actions?"

"Nothing is easier, Sir," answered Angus. "All know that I had the pleasure of presenting you with a Spanish genet and arms suited to your age; therefore it would seem but natural to everyone that you should wish to try your horse and your weapons."

"Yes, that would be very nice," said the boy eagerly.

"Delighted, Sir! Once obtain permission to ride out, and you can direct your course to the Netherbow Gate, where I, with my brother George and my cousin Parkhead, two of your faithful subjects, will meet you. From there we will escort you to a certain place, whence you will ride on in advance with me. It will thus be easy to lose sight of your attendants, and then liberty and long life to old Scotland!"

"And my mother all the time will be sad and weeping, asking in vain for her son. Who knows but that in her just anger she may not