

The ROMANTIC DEFENCE of the BASS ROCK



An epic of the
17th century.

Telling how four young cavalier prisoners of war captured the Bass Rock, an island fortress, and, with other Jacobites, successfully defied the Government for four years.

Prisoners of War

THE most amazing and romantic siege in English history was that of the Bass Rock, the island—or, rather, great pinnacle of rock in the Firth of Forth, about a mile and a half from the shore of Haddingtonshire, in Scotland.

Nearly of a round shape, the rock resembles the base of a huge sugar-loaf, with the top, measuring seven acres in area, cut off at an angle of forty-five degrees, so that one side is much higher than the other. Everywhere the cliffs rise precipitous and sheer from the sea, and are unscalable except on the lowermost side, that facing the Scottish coast. There the rocky face is broken by a steep and slippery chasm, leading down to the only possible landing-place, which is most difficult to use, even in calm weather, owing to the heavy surf.

Some ninety feet above this landing-place still stand the remains of an old fortress and state prison, which was surrounded by a battlemented wall, loopholed for musketry and embrasured for twenty-one pieces of heavy cannon.

In the year 1689 four young Scottish

cavalier officers, who had been captured while on their way to join King James II's forces after the famous battle of Killiecrankie, were confined as prisoners of war in the fortress.

Their names were Lieutenants Haliburton and Michael Middleton, and Ensigns Roy and Dunbar, and four dashing, adventurous young blades they were. In charge of the rock was a detachment of twenty Scots Foot Guards, under a Lieutenant Wood.

Not being confined to their cells, but allowed to wander at will about the lofty surface—to fish over the precipices and gather the eggs of the solan geese frequenting the rock in myriads—the four young cavaliers noted that whenever the supply boat came with coal and provisions the entire garrison, save only three men, descended the chasm to the landing-place to bring up the stores.

Seizing the Fortress

On the 15th of June, 1689, Lieutenant or Governor Wood was absent in Edinburgh when the supply boat came, and a sergeant named La Fosse was in authority. As soon

as the soldiers, with the exception of Sergeant La Fosse, the master gunner—Swan—and the sentinel on duty at the entrance, had gone down the rocks as usual, the four bold young cavalier prisoners acted promptly.

Rushing upon the sentinel, they overpowered and disarmed him, and also quickly made prisoners of La Fosse and Gunner Swan. Then they dropped the massive iron portcullis, or grille, and closed, locked, and barred the three strong gates. Next, the cavaliers seized the loaded muskets in the guard-room, and when the startled and unarmed soldiers came stumbling in hot haste up the steep path from the landing-place, they were hailed by Middleton through one of the loopholes and told to take themselves off in the boat, or they would be fired on with both cannon and musketry. So the shut-out soldiery had no option but to clear off in the tender.

Hoisting the standard of King James, the four young heroes then fired a salute of a couple of guns, and determined to hold the rock fortress against all comers.

The astounding news quickly spread, and six young Jacobites ashore immediately put off under cover of the darkness to join the intrepid quartet on the island. These six men were Captain Maitland, David Blair, William Crawford, Crawford's servant-man, and two Irish seamen named Newport and Cornelius O'Brien. The six landed safely, and were warmly welcomed.

Warned Off!

Steps were speedily taken by the Scottish Privy Council to recover the stronghold, but the ten defenders warned off the boats of armed men, who did not dare to approach for fear of being blown out of the water by the heavy guns trained upon them.

The only thing that could be done was to blockade the islet with two small ships of war, which cruised between it and the shore. As these could achieve nothing in the face of the fourteen guns pointing their way, a sergeant and a drummer, bearing a flag of truce, were sent in a boat to summon the defenders to surrender. Captain Maitland, who was now in command, allowed the

pair to land, and then made prisoners of them.

Another boat was then sent to a part of the isle which was not overlooked by cannon, and the officer in charge demanded the release of the two men and their craft. The sergeant and the drummer were allowed to depart, as their mouths would have helped to deplete the food in the fortress, but the boat was not surrendered. Along with the two other boats in which Maitland and his five companions had gone to the isle it was hoisted up by means of a crane to the gateway of the castle and kept there.

Securing Stores

Next, a Danish galliot came within range of the cannon of the island. A shot was fired over it, and Maitland compelled it to come alongside the landing-place and put ashore all its stores of food, etc.

After this the little garrison of ten men took it in turn to sally forth at night-time in one or other of their three boats and run up or down the coast to get in more provisions. On one of these daring night expeditions a ship out of Leith, laden with salt, was seized and taken to the island fortress, where it was covered by the guns until the ship's owners agreed to ransom it, and sent the ransom to the isle.

On another occasion, though, Lieutenant Haliburton and three others were captured by one of the blockading vessels while trying to return to the isle with a ship, loaded with grain, which they had held up. Haliburton and his three companions were hanged by the enraged Government, which was powerless to bombard the rock, as it was too far from the mainland for cannon to carry.

It was considered too hazardous to attempt to take the place by storm, as cold shot, dropped from the hand over the fortress wall, would dash any boats to pieces at the landing-place. One dark night, however, nine infantrymen were landed quietly at the rock. They crept undiscovered up the chasm to the gates of the fortress, and found one of the boats lying, upturned and unsecured, just outside.

Stealthily they carried the boat down the steep path, launched it, and towed it away to the mainland.

Shortly afterwards Lieutenant Middleton and William Crawford slipped away from the isle in one of their two other boats, with the intention of bringing back ample provisions within a fortnight at latest.

The fortnight went by, and they had not returned. Provisions were running low on the isle; and, seeing nothing before him but starvation, Captain Maitland sent Ensign Dunbar to Castleton to confer about a capitulation. But before Dunbar could return or terms be agreed upon, a large barge ran the blockade and got to the island. It was manned by Middleton, Crawford, and eight others, and was loaded with stores; so Maitland broke off the negotiations, and declared he would continue to hold the place.

Ensign Dunbar was, of course, detained as a prisoner by the Williamite officer at Castleton.

Reduced to Six

About a week later the barge was detected trying to get away from the isle at night by one of the blockading vessels. It was captured, and in it were found four seamen, four women, Swan the gunner, and the soldier who had been sentinel when the fortress was seized. The garrison was thus reduced to five men and one prisoner.

Nothing occurred after that for more than a year. The tiny garrison of the Bass Rock was impregnable, and had a good store of provisions, including thirteen sheep, which were put to graze on the lofty summit, sixty stand of arms, ten casks of powder, and plenty of small shot, as well as 400 cannon-balls.

Then a small vessel from France ran the blockade, and brought more stores and two boats for the use of the defenders, whose number was brought up to sixteen all told by certain volunteers who remained behind when the craft departed.

At last, in March, 1692, the Admiralty dispatched two frigates to bombard the Bass. These frigates were the *Sheerness*, under Captain Roope, and the *London Merchant*, under Captain Orton. The *Sheer-*



Rushing upon the sentinel, the four prisoners of war quickly overpowered and disarmed him.

ness carried thirty guns and 130 men, and she and her consort vigorously bombarded the island for several hours on end, but in vain. Their shot only killed a few of the sheep and a goat, and drove away the wild geese.

The garrison was not slow in responding, and with their heavy cannon killed and wounded over a dozen men on board the frigates, and nearly crippled both craft by bringing down spars and rigging. They were forced to draw off.

On a daring night expedition for provisions, four of the Bass Rock garrison captured a ship out of Leith and held it to ransom.



A 50-gun ship, the *Lion*, commanded by Captain Burd, was then sent to try to reduce the place, in conjunction with a large armed pinnace and a six-gun "dogger." They did no better, and also had to withdraw baffled and much the worse for the hot reception they got. The *Lion* and another ship of war, the *Neptune*, now blockaded the isle in the hope of starving its defenders into surrender.

A French privateer from Dunkirk managed to elude their vigilance, and put ten men ashore on the rock, but was discovered and forced to run before it could land any stores. This was in August, 1693.

Surrender on Terms

The beginning of the next year saw the gallant little garrison starving. They held out until the 18th of April, when Lieutenant Middleton, who was again in command as

Captain Maitland was ill, raised a white flag and offered to surrender on certain terms.

It was useless to continue the defence in the circumstances. There was no hope of succour. King James had been beaten out of Ireland, and was an exile in France.

So glad was the Williamite Government to get possession of the Bass Rock that they readily acceded to the terms Middleton proposed, and these were truly as amazing as the defence itself.

Not only did the little garrison march out with all the honours of war, but the members were to be allowed absolute freedom. All the booty the garrison had seized was to be retained, and *every one of the Scottish officers was to receive four years' back pay from the Exchequer, just as if they had been fighting for the Government instead of against it!*

These astounding conditions were actually observed!

THE END

REFORMING THE REMOVE

By ALONZO TODD

Here are a few suggestions for the improvement of the Remove at Greyfriars. Coming as they do from the gentle Alonzo, they should be "digested" with the proverbial grain of salt.

WHILE I have for my Form-fellows the utmost admiration and esteem, I really consider that there are certain features in their behaviour which are sadly in need of reform.

Consequently, I am very happy indeed to avail myself of the opportunity so kindly offered by the Editor of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL for putting forward my suggestions for the moral improvement of the Remove Form at Greyfriars.

Now, the first improvement I would suggest is the abolition of slang. How often have I grieved to hear my brethren using such terms as "Cheese it!" or "Buzz off!" Would it not be better if they substituted "Pray terminate your remarks!" and "Your proximity is no longer desired!" for two such unfortunate expressions? Again, at leap-frog, I have many times heard the particularly absurd command: "Tuck in your tuppenny!" Surely, my friends, it is just as easy to call out: "Kindly arch your anatomy for the purpose of my proposed leap!"

Turning from slang to eating. I am afraid many members of the Remove do not exercise enough discrimination in food. To see Bolsover masticating stewed steak in the Hall immediately after consuming doughnuts in the tuck-shop is horrifying to one with a knowledge of the digestive system, while as to Bunter— But let us not dwell on the habits of that unfor-



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tunate boy! The problem of food is a big one. It is seldom meet to eat meat, while fish is usually foul, and a fowl is often fishy. Personally, I recommend my friends to adopt the same diet as myself, namely, plenty of cold water and an occasional caraway seed.

Another point where my ideas are not

quite in harmony with those of the rest of the Form is practical joking. My Uncle Benjamin always impressed me with the fact that practical joking causes unnecessary mental suffering to fellow human beings. In the Remove the suffering would appear to be physical as well as mental. Only yesterday I saw a pail of dirty water fall on the head of Skinner when he innocently opened the door of his study. How much nicer it would have been had the practical joker put a basket of flowers there instead!

Then we come to sport. The sports and pastimes of the Remove are, I fear me, much too rough and lacking in refinement to merit the approval of a genuine reformer. The brutal art of fisticuffs is encouraged on the plea that it makes the fellows nimble on their feet and quick-witted. But cannot the excellent games of tag and hopscotch produce equally good results? At football the fellows charge each other in the fiercest manner imaginable.

On last compulsory practice day Bolsover, who was playing against me, deliberately impeded my progress, in spite of the fact that I called out: "My dear Bolsover, pray allow me to kick the ball for my side!" How much more noble and altruistic it would have been if he had gracefully stood aside! At such a gesture, I would cheerfully have allowed him to kick the ball.

Instead of which, I was unceremoniously and brutally charged to the ground, suffering excruciating pain from the force of the impact with which I struck the earth. It was some seconds before I regained my equilibrium and equanimity, and by that time Bolsover had, I regret to say, suffered in the same ungentlemanly manner with which he had treated me. The perpetrator of the cruel action was Cherry, and he smiled broadly at the unhappy Bolsover and said: "How d'you like your eggs cooked?" What the translation of that slang expression is I am unaware.

Ah, my friends, there are many suggestions I could make for reforming the Remove. But I am sorely afraid that the Remove will take a lot of reforming!

THE END

High Days & Holidays



CHRISTMAS AT WHARTON LODGE

THE Close is carpeted with snow,
The elms agleam with icicles;
Gay schoolboys scurry to and fro
With boxes, bags, and bicycles.
The Christmas Vac. begins at last,
The cream of all the holidays;
Term, with its fights and feuds, is past—
Now for a feast of jolly days!

The Famous Five set off from school;
There's Wharton and the gay Bob,
And smiling Frank, and beaming Bull,
And Hurree Singh, the Nabob.
To Wharton Lodge they wend their way,
The scene of great festivities;
Footer and snow-fights every day,
And other gay activities!

The gallant Colonel Wharton's there;
He greets his guests with cheeriness;
And, gathered round the log-fire's glare,
They soon forget their weariness.
Soon, in the spacious drawing-room,
They romp and revel merrily;
For Christmastide dispels all gloom
From schoolboy hearts—yea, verily!

Swiftly the days go speeding by,
Days crammed with fun and jollities;
With not a cloud in all the sky
To mar the gay frivolities.
Then trunks are packed; the motor waits;
Our chums are in the colours;
For Greyfriars opens wide her gates
To welcome back her scholars!